The Modern Vikings

By

H. H. Boyesen

THE MODERN VIKINGS

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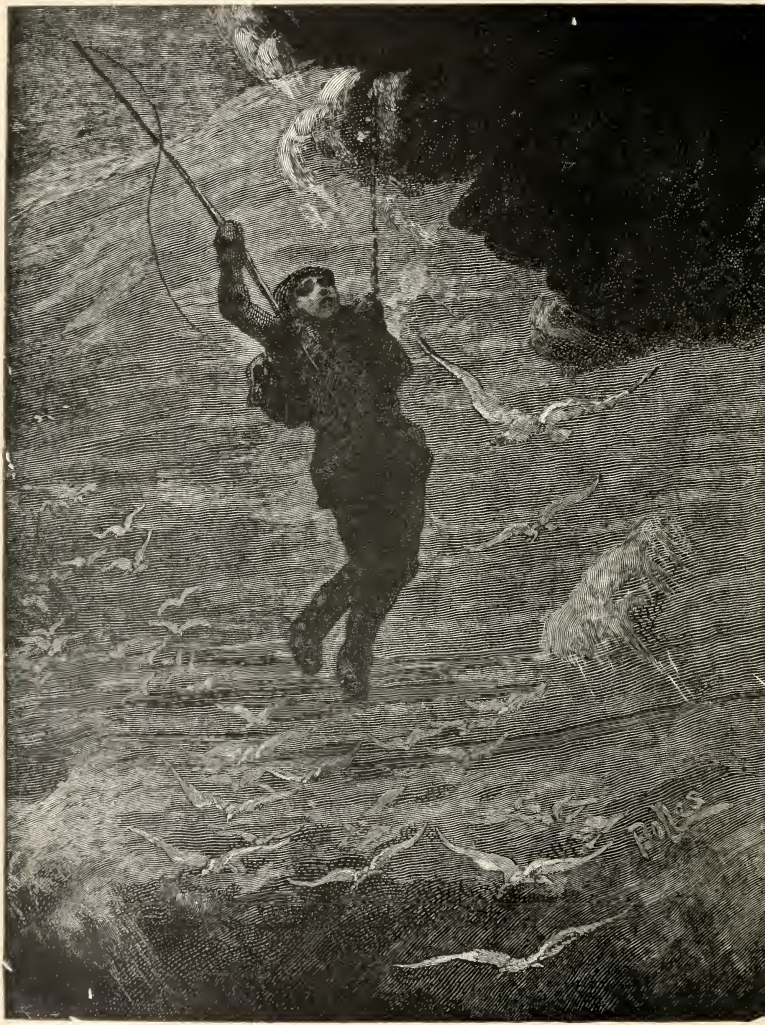

BETWEEN SEA AND SKY.

THE NORSELAND SERIES

THE MODERN VIKINGS

STORIES OF LIFE AND SPORT IN THE NORSELAND

BY

HJALMAR HJORTH BOYESEN

ILLUSTRATED

TWELFTH EDITION

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1910

TO THE THREE VIKINGS:

HJALMAR, ALGERNON, AND BAYARD.

Three little lovely Vikings
Came sailing over the sea,
From a fair and distant country,
And put into port with me.

The first—how well I remember—
Sir Hjalmar was he hight.
With a lusty Norseland war-whoop,
He came in the dead of night.

He met my respectful greeting
With a kick and a threatening frown;
He pressed all the house in his service,
And turned it upside-down.

He thrust, when I meekly objected,
A clinched little fist in my face;
I had no choice but surrender,
And give him charge of the place.

He heeded no creature's pleasure;
But oft, with a conqueror's right,
He sang in the small hours of morning,
And dined in the middle of night.

And oft, to amuse his Highness—
For naught we feared as his frowns—
We bleated and barked and bellowed,
And danced like circus-clowns.

Then crowed with delight our despot;
So well he liked his home,
He summoned his brother, Algie,
From the realm beyond the foam.

And he is a laughing tyrant,
With dimples and golden curls;
He stole a march on our heart-gates,
And made us his subjects and churls.

He rules us gayly and lightly,
With smiles and cajoling arts;
He went into winter-quarters
In the innermost nooks of our hearts.

And Bayard, the last of my Vikings,
As chivalrous as your name!
With your sturdy and quaint little figure,
What havoc you wrought when you came!

There's a chieftain in you—a leader
Of men in some glorious path—
For dauntless you are, and imperious,
And dignified in your wrath.

You vain and stubborn and tender
Fair son of the valiant North,
With a voice like the storm and the north-wind,
When it sweeps from the glaciers forth.

With the tawny sheen in your ringlets,
And the Norseland light in your eyes,
Where oft, when my tale is mournful,
The tears unbidden arise.

For my Vikings love song and saga,
Like their conquering fathers of old;
And these are some of the stories
To the three little tyrants I told.

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THARALD'S OTTER.

THARALD and his brother Anders were bathing one day in the lake. The water was deliciously warm, and the two boys lay quietly floating on their backs, paddling gently with their hands. All of a sudden Tharald gave a scream. A big trout leaped into the air, and almost in the same instant a black, shiny head rose out of the water right between his knees. The trout, in its descent, gave him a slap of its slimy tail across his face. The black head stared out at him, for a moment, with an air of surprise, then dived noiselessly into the deep.

Anders hurried to shore as rapidly as arms and legs would propel him.

"It was the sea-serpent," said he.

He was so frightened that he grew almost numb; his breath stuck in his throat, and the blood throbbed in his ears.

"Oh, you sillibub!" shouted his brother after him, "it was an otter chasing a salmon-trout. The trout will always leap, when chased."

He had scarcely spoken when, but a few rods from Anders, appeared the black, shiny head again, this time with the trout in its mouth.

"He has his lair somewhere around here," said Tharald; "let us watch him, and see where he is going."

The otter was nearing the shore. He swam rapidly, with a slightly undulating motion of the body, so that, at a distance, he might well have been mistaken for a large water-snake. When he had reached the shore, he dragged the fish up on the sand, spied cautiously about him, to see if he was watched, and again seizing the trout, slid into the underbrush. There was something so delightfully wild and wary about it that the boys felt the hunter's passion aroused in them, and they could scarcely take the time to fling on their clothes before starting in pursuit. Like Indians, they crept on hands and feet over the mossy ground, bent aside the bushes, and peered cautiously between the leaves.

"Sh—sh—sh! we are on the track," whispered Tharald, stooping to smell the moss. "He has been here within a minute."

"Here is a drop of fish-blood," answered Anders, pointing to a twig, over which the fish had evidently been dragged.

"Serves him right, the rascal," murmured his elder brother.

"If we haven't got him now, my name is not Anders," whispered the younger.

They had advanced about fifty rods from the water, when their attention was arrested by two faint tracks among the stones—so faint, indeed, that no eyes but those of a hunter would have discovered them. A strange pungent odor, as of something wild, pervaded the

air; the whirring of the crickets in the tree-tops seemed hushed and timid, and little silent birds hopped about in the elder-bushes as if afraid to make a noise.

The boys lay down flat on the ground, and following the two tracks, discovered that they converged toward a frowsy-looking juniper-bush which grew among the roots of a big old pine. Very cautiously they bent the bush aside.

What was that? There stood the old otter, tearing away at his trout, and three of the prettiest little black things your eyes ever fell upon were gambolling about him, picking up bits of the fish, and slinging them about in their efforts to swallow.

The boys gave a cry of delight. But the otter—what do you think he did? He showed a set of very ugly teeth, and spat like an angry cat. It was evidently not advisable to molest him with bare hands.

In hot haste Tharald and Anders by their united weight broke off a young elder-tree and stripped off the leaves. Now they could venture a battle. Eagerly they pulled aside the juniper. But alas, Mr. Otter was gone, and had taken his family with him.

To track him through the tangled underbrush, where he probably knew a hundred hiding-places, would be a hopeless task. The boys were about to return, baffled and disappointed, to the lake, when it occurred to Tharald to explore the den.

There was a hole under the tree-root, just big enough to put a fist through, and, without thought of harm, the boy flung himself down and thrust his arm in to the very

elbow. He fumbled about for a moment—ah, what was that?—something soft and hairy, that slipped through his fingers. Tharald made a bold grab for it—then with a yell of pain pulled out his hand. The soft thing followed, but its teeth were not soft. As Tharald rose to his feet, there hung a tiny otter with its teeth locked through the fleshy part of his hand, at the base of the thumb.

"Look here, now," cried his brother; "sit down quietly, and I will soon rid you of the little beast."

Tharald, clinching his teeth, sat down on a bowlder. Anders drew his knife.

"No, I thank you," shouted Tharald, as he saw the knife, "I can do that myself. I don't want you to harm him."

"I don't intend to harm him," said Anders. "I only want to force his mouth open."

To this Tharald submitted. The knife was carefully inserted at the corner of the little monster's mouth, when lo! he let the hand go, and snapped after the knife-blade. Anders quickly threw his hat over him, and held it down with his knees, while he tore a piece off the lining of his coat to bandage his brother's wound. Then they trudged home together with the otter imprisoned in the hat.

You would scarcely have thought that "Mons"—for that became the otto's name—would have made a pleasant companion; but strange as it may seem, he improved much, as soon as he got into civilized society. He soon learned that it was not good-manners to snarl and show

his teeth when politely addressed, and if occasionally he forgot himself, he got a little tap on the nose which quickened his memory. He was scarcely six inches long when he was caught, not reckoning the tail; and so sleek and nimble and glossy, that it was a delight to handle him His fur was of a very dark brown, and when it was wet looked black. It was so dense that you could not, by pulling the hair apart, get the slightest glimpse of the skin. But the most remarkable things about Mons were the webs he had between his toes, and his long glossy whiskers. Of the latter he was particularly proud; he would allow no one to touch them.

Tharald taught him a number of tricks, which Mons learned with astonishing ease. He was so intelligent that Sultan, the bull-terrier, grew quite jealous of him.

Inquisitiveness seemed to be the strongest trait in Mons's character. His curiosity amounted to an overmastering passion. There was no crevice that he did not feel called upon to investigate, no hole which he did not suspect of hiding some interesting secret. Again and again he made explorations in the flour-barrel, and came out as white as a miller. Once, for the sake of variety, he put his nose into the inkstand, and in attempting to withdraw it, poured the contents over his head.

In the part of Norway where Tharald's father lived, the people added largely to their income by salmon-fishing. Nay, those who had no land made their living entirely by fishing and shooting. Every spring the salmon migrated from the sea into the rivers, to deposit their spawn; you could see their young darting in large schools

over the pebbles in the shallows of the streams, pursued by the big fishes that preyed upon them. Then the perch and the trout grew fat, and the pike and the pickerel made royal meals out of the perch and trout. All along the coast lay English schooners, ready to buy up the salmon and carry it on ice to London. Everywhere there was life and traffic; everybody felt prosperous and in good-humor.

It was during this season that Tharald one day walked down to the lake to try his luck with a fly. It had been raining during the night; and the trees along the shore shivered and shook down showers of raindrops. The only trouble was that the water was so clear that you could see the bottom, which sloped gently outward for fifty or a hundred feet. Mons, who was now a year old, was sitting in his usual place on Tharald's shoulder, and was gazing contentedly upon the smiling world which surrounded him. He was so fond of his master, now, that he followed him like a dog, and could not bear to be long away from him.

"Mons," said Tharald, after having vainly thrown the alluring fly a dozen times into the river, "I think this is a bad day for fishing; or what do you think?"

At that very instant a big salmon-trout—a six-pounder at the very least—leaped for the fly, and with a splash of its tail sent a shower of spray shoreward. The line flew with a hum from the reel, and Tharald braced himself to "play" the fish, until he should tire him sufficiently to land him.

But the trout was evidently of a different mind. He

sprang out of the water, and his beautiful spotted sides gleamed in the sun.

That was a sight for Mons! Before his master could prevent him, he plunged from his shoulder into the lake, and shot through the clear tide like a black arrow. The trout saw him coming, and made a desperate leap!

The line snapped; the trout was free!

Free! It was delightful to see Mons's supple body as it glided through the water, bending upward, downward, sideward, with amazing swiftness and ease. His two big eyes (which were conveniently situated so near the tip of his nose that he could see in every direction with scarcely a turn of the head) peered watchfully through the transparent tide, keeping ever in the wake of the fleeing fish. If the latter had had the sense to keep straight ahead, he might have made good his escape. But he relied upon strategy, and in this he was no match for Mons. He leaped out of the water, darted to the right and to the left, and made all sorts of foolish and flurried manœuvres. But with the calmness of a Von Moltke, Mons outgeneralled him. He headed him off whenever he turned, and finally by a brisk turn plunged his teeth into the trout's neck, and brought him to land.

I need not tell you that Tharald made a hero of him. He hugged him and patted him and called him pet names, until Mons grew quite bashful. But this exploit of Mons's gave Tharald an idea. He determined to train him as a salmon-fisher.

It was in the spring of 1880, when Mons was two years old and fully grown, that he landed his first salmon. And when he had landed the first, it cost him little trouble to secure the second and the third. Tharald felt like a rich man that day, as he carried home in his basket three silvery beauties, worth, at the very least, a dollar and a half apiece. He made haste to dispose of them to an English yachtsman at that figure, and went home in a radiant humor, dreaming of "gold and forests green," as the Norwegians say.

"Now, Mons," he said to his friend, whom he was leading after him by a chain, "if we do as well every day as we have done to-day, we shall soon be rich enough to go to school. What do you think of that, Mons?"

One day a big fish-tail splashed out of an eddy, and a black furry head and back rose for an instant and were whirled out of sight.

"Oh, dear, dear," cried Tharald, "he will die! He will drown! How often have I told you, Mons," he shouted, "that you shouldn't attack fishes that are bigger than yourself."

"Whom are you talking to?" asked a fisherman named John Bamle, who had come to look after his traps.

"To Mons," answered the boy, anxiously.

"You don't mean to say your brother is out there in the water!" shouted John Bamle, in amazement.

"Yes, Mons, my otter," cried Tharald, piteously.

"Mons, your brother!" yelled the man, and seizing a boat-hook, he ran out on the beams from which the traps were suspended. The roar of the waters was so loud that

it was next to impossible to distinguish words, and "Mons, my otter," and "Mons, my brother," sounded so much alike that it was not wonderful that John mistook the former for the latter. For awhile he balanced himself by means of the boat-hook on the slippery beams, peering all the while anxiously into the rapids.

Suddenly he saw something struggling in the water; showers of spray whirled upward. Could it be possible that a fish had attacked the drowning child? Full of pity, he stretched himself forward, extending the boat-hook before him, when lo! he lost his balance, and tumbled headlong into the cataract.

Half a dozen other fishermen who were sauntering down the hill-sides saw their comrade fall, and rushed into the water to rescue him.

One man, bolder than the rest, sat astride a floating log and rode out into the seething current. Now he was thrown off; now he scrambled up again; at last, as his drowning comrade appeared for the third time, with an arm extended out of a whirling eddy, he caught him deftly with his boat-hook, and pulled him up toward the log.

As John Bamle lay there, more dead than alive, upon the bank, emitting streams of water through mouth and nostrils, the question was asked how he came to endanger his life in such a reckless manner. At that very instant the head of a black otter was seen emerging from the water, dragging a huge salmon up among the stones.

"Look, the otter, the otter!" cried the men; and a

shower of stones hailed down upon the bowlder upon which Mons had sought refuge.

"Let him alone, I tell you!" screamed Tharald; "he is mine."

And with three leaps he was at Mons's side, wringing wet from top to toe, but happy to have his friend once more in safety. He seized him in his arms, and would have borne him ashore, if the enormous salmon had not demanded all his strength.

As they again reached the bank, the fishermen gathered about them; but Mons slunk cautiously at his master's heels. He understood the growling comments, as one man after the other lifted the big salmon and estimated its weight. John Bamle had now so far regained consciousness that he could speak, and he stared with no friendly eye at the boy who had come near causing his death.

"Come, now, Mons," said Tharald, "come, and let us hurry home to breakfast."

"Mons!" repeated John Bamle; "is *that* your Mons?"

"Yes, that is my Mons," answered Tharald, innocently.

"Then you just wait till I am strong enough to stand on my legs, and I'll promise to give you a thrashing that you'll remember to your dying day," said John, and shook his big fist.

Tharald was not anxious to wait under such circumstances, but betook himself homeward as rapidly as his legs would carry him.

During the next week Tharald did his best to avoid the fishermen. And yet, try as he might, he could not help meeting them on the road, or on the river-bank, as he carried home his heavy load of salmon.

"Hallo! How is your brother Mons?" they jeered, when they saw him.

Occasionally they stopped and glanced into his basket; and Tharald noticed that they glowered unpleasantly at him, whenever he had caught a fine fish. The fact was, he had had extraordinary luck this week; for Mons was getting to be such an expert, that he scarcely ever dived without bringing something or other ashore.

He had almost money enough now to pay for a year's schooling, and he could scarcely sleep for joy when he thought of the bright future that stretched out before him. He saw himself in all manner of delightful situations. Mons, in the meanwhile, who was not troubled with this kind of ambition, snoozed peacefully in his box, at the foot of his master's bed. He did not dream what a rude awakening was in store for him.

It had been a very bad week for John Bamle and his comrades. Morning after morning their traps were empty, or one solitary fish lay sprawling at the bottom of the box.

"I tell you, boys," said John, spitting into his fist, and shaking it threateningly against the sky, "I am bewitched; that's what I am. And so are you, boys—every mother's son of you. It is that Gimlehaug boy that has bewitched us. Are you fools enough to suppose

that it is a natural beast—that black thing—that trots at his heels, and empties the river of its fish for his benefit? Not by a jugful, lads—not by a big jugful! The devil it is—the black Satan himself—or my name is not John Bamle. You never saw a beast act like that before, plunging into the yellow whirlpools, and coming back unscathed every time, and with a fish as big as himself dangling after him. Now, shall we stand that any longer, boys? We have wives and babies at home, crying for food! And here we come daily, and find empty traps. Now wake up, lads, and be men! There has come a day of reckoning for him who has sold himself to the devil. I, for my part, am just mad enough to venture on a tussle with old Nick himself."

Every word that John uttered fell like a firebrand into the men's hearts. They shouted wildly, shook their fists, and swung their long boat-hooks.

"We'll kill him, the thief," they cried, "the scoundrel! He has sold himself to the devil."

Up they rushed from the river-bank, up the green hillsides, up the rocky slope, until they reached the gate at Gimlehaug. It was but a small turf-thatched cottage, with tiny lead-framed window-panes and a rude stone chimney. The father was out working by the day, and the two boys were at home alone. Tharald, who was sitting at the window reading, felt suddenly a paw tapping him on the cheek. It was Mons. In the same instant an angry murmur of many voices reached his ear, and he saw a crowd of excited fishermen, with boat-hooks in their hands, thronging through the gate. There were

twenty or thirty of them at the very least. Tharald sprang forward and bolted the door. He knew why they had come. Then he snatched Mons up in his arms, and hugged him tightly.

"Let them do their worst, Mons," he said; "whatever happens, you and I will stand by each other."

Anders, Tharald's brother, came rushing in by the back door. He, too, had seen the men coming.

"Hide yourself, hide yourself, Tharald!" he cried in alarm; "it is you they are after."

Hide yourself! That was more easily said than done. The hut was now surrounded, and there was no escape.

"Climb up the chimney," begged Anders; "hurry, hurry! you have no time to lose."

Happily there was no fire on the hearth, and Tharald, still hugging Mons tightly, allowed himself to be pushed by his brother up the sooty tunnel. Scarcely was Anders again out on the floor, when there was a tremendous thump at the door, so that the hut trembled.

"Open the door, I say!" shouted John Bamle without.

Anders, knowing how easily he could force the door, if he wished, drew the bolt and opened.

"I want the salmon-fisher," said John, fiercely.

"Yes, we want the salmon-fisher," echoed the crowd, wildly.

"What salmon-fisher?" asked Anders, with feigned surprise.

"Don't you try your tricks on me, you rascal," yelled John, furiously; and seizing the boy by the collar, flung him out through the door. The crowd stormed in after

him. They tore up the beds, and scattered the straw over the floor; upset the furniture, ransacked drawers and boxes. But no trace did they find of him whom they sought. Then finally it occurred to someone to look up the chimney, and a long boat-hook was thrust up to bring down whatever there might be hidden there. Tharald felt the sharp point in his thigh, and he knew that he was discovered. With the strength of despair he tore himself loose, leaving part of his trousers on the hook, and, climbing upward, sprang out upon the roof. His thigh was bleeding, but he scarcely noticed it. His eyes and hair were full of soot, and his face was as black as a chimney-sweep's. The men, when they saw him, jeered and yelled with derisive laughter.

"Hand us down your devilish beast there, and we won't hurt you!" cried John Bamle.

"No, I won't," answered Tharald.

"By the heavens, lad, if you don't mind, it will go hard with you."

"I am not afraid," said Tharald.

"Then we'll make you, you beastly brat," yelled a furious voice in the crowd; and instantly a stone whistled past the boy's ear, and fell with a thump on the turf below.

"Now, will you give up your beast?"

Tharald hesitated a moment. Should he give up Mons, who had been his friend and playmate for two years, and see him stoned to death by the cruel men? Mons fixed his black, liquid eyes upon him as if he would ask him that very question. No, no, he could not for-

sake Mons. A second stone, bigger than the first, flew past him, and he had to dodge quickly behind the chimney, as the third and fourth followed.

"Tharald, Tharald!" cried Anders, imploringly; "do let the otter go, or they will kill both you and him."

Before Tharald could answer, a shower of stones fell about him. One hit him in the forehead; the sparks danced before his eyes. A warm current rushed down his face; dizziness seized him; he fell, he did not know where or how. John Bamle with a yell sprang forward, climbed up the low wall to the roof, and saw the boy lying, as if dead, behind the chimney. He turned to call for his boat-hook, when suddenly something black shot toward him from the chimney-top, and a set of terrible teeth buried themselves in his throat. The mere force of the leap made him lose his balance, and he tumbled backward into the yard.

In the same instant Mons bounded forward, lighted on somebody's shoulder, and made for the woods. Before anybody had time to think, he was out of sight.

Thus ended the famous battle of Gimlehaug, of which the salmon-fishers yet speak in the valley. Or rather, I should say, it did not end there, for John Bamle lay ill for several weeks, and had to have his wound sewed up by the doctor.

As for Tharald, he got well within a few days. But a strange uneasiness came over him, and he roamed through the woods early and late, seeking his lost friend. At the end of a week, as he was sitting, one night, on the rocks at the river, he suddenly felt something hairy rubbing

against his nose. He looked up, and with a scream of joy clasped Mons in his arms. Then he hurried home, and had a long talk with his father. And the end of it was, that with the money which Mons had earned by his salmon-fishing, tickets were bought for New York for the entire family. About a month later they landed at Castle Garden.

Tharald and Mons are now doing a large fish-business, without fear of harm, in one of the great lakes of Wisconsin. Some day, he hopes yet, it may lead to a parsonage. Since he learned that some of the apostles were fishermen, he feels that he is on the right road to the goal of his ambition.

BETWEEN SEA AND SKY.

I.

"ICELAND is the most beautiful land the sun doth shine upon," said Sigurd Sigurdson to his two sons.

"How can you know that, father," asked Thoralf, the elder of the two boys, "when you have never been anywhere else?"

"I know it in my heart," said Sigurd, devoutly.

"It is, after all, a matter of taste," observed the son. "I think if I were hard pressed, I might be induced to put up with some other country."

"You ought to blush with shame," his father rejoined warmly. "You do not deserve the name of an Icelander, when you fail to see how you have been blessed in having been born in so beautiful a country."

"I wish it were less beautiful and had more things to eat in it," muttered Thoralf. "Salted codfish, I have no doubt, is good for the soul, but it rests very heavily on the stomach, especially when you eat it three times a day."

"You ought to thank God that you have codfish, and

are not a naked savage on some South Sea isle, who feeds, like an animal, on the herbs of the earth."

"But I like codfish much better than smoked puffin," remarked Jens, the younger brother, who was carving a pipe-bowl. "Smoked puffin always makes me sea-sick. It tastes like cod-liver oil."

Sigurd smiled, and, patting the younger boy on the head, entered the cottage.

"You shouldn't talk so to father, Thoralf," said Jens, with superior dignity; for his father's caress made him proud and happy. "Father works so hard, and he does not like to see anyone discontented."

"That is just it," replied the elder brother; "he works so hard, and yet barely manages to keep the wolf from the door. That is what makes me impatient with the country. If he worked so hard in any other country he would live in abundance, and in America he would become a rich man."

This conversation took place one day, late in the autumn, outside of a fisherman's cottage on the north-western coast of Iceland. The wind was blowing a gale down from the ice-engirdled pole, and it required a very genial temper to keep one from getting blue. The ocean, which was but a few hundred feet distant, roared like an angry beast, and shook its white mane of spray, flinging it up against the black clouds. With every fresh gust of wind, a shower of salt water would fly hissing through the air and whirl about the chimney-top, which was white on the windward side from dried deposits of brine. On the turf-thatched roof big pieces of drift-

wood, weighted down with stones, were laid lengthwise and crosswise, and along the walls fishing-nets hung in festoons from wooden pegs. Even the low door was draped, as with decorative intent, with the folds of a great drag-net, the clumsy cork-floats of which often dashed into the faces of those who attempted to enter. Under a driftwood shed which projected from the northern wall was seen a pile of peat, cut into square blocks, and a quantity of the same useful material might be observed down at the beach, in a boat which the boys had been unloading when the storm blew up. Trees no longer grow in the island, except the crippled and twisted dwarf-birch, which creeps along the ground like a snake, and, if it ever dares lift its head, rarely grows more than four or six feet high. In the olden time, which is described in the so-called sagas of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Iceland had very considerable forests of birch and probably also of pine. But they were cut down; and the climate has gradually been growing colder, until now even the hardiest tree, if it be induced to strike root in a sheltered place, never reaches maturity. The Icelanders therefore burn peat, and use for building their houses driftwood which is carried to them by the Gulf Stream from Cuba and the other well-wooded isles along the Mexican Gulf.

"If it keeps blowing like this," said Thoralf, fixing his weather eye on the black horizon, "we shan't be able to go a-fishing; and mother says the larder is very nearly empty."

"I wish it would blow down an Englishman or some-

thing on us," remarked the younger brother; "Englishmen always have such lots of money, and they are willing to pay for everything they look at."

"While you are a-wishing, why don't you wish for an American? Americans have mountains and mountains of money, and they don't mind a bit what they do with it. That's the reason I should like to be an American."

"Yes, let us wish for an American or two to make us comfortable for the winter. But I am afraid it is too late in the season to expect foreigners."

The two boys chatted together in this strain, each working at some piece of wood-carving which he expected to sell to some foreign traveller. Thoralf was sixteen years old, tall of growth, but round-shouldered, from being obliged to work when he was too young. He was rather a handsome lad, though his features were square and weather-beaten, and he looked prematurely old. Jens, the younger boy, was fourteen years old, and was his mother's darling. For even up under the North Pole mothers love their children tenderly, and sometimes they love one a little more than another; that is, of course, the merest wee bit of a fraction of a trifle more. Icelandic mothers are so constituted that when one child is a little weaker and sicklier than the rest, and thus seems to be more in need of petting, they are apt to love their little weakling above all their other children, and to lavish the tenderest care upon that one. It was because little Jens had so narrow a chest, and looked so small and slender by the side of his robust brother, that his mother always singled him out for favors and caresses.

II.

All night long the storm danced wildly about the cottage, rattling the windows, shaking the walls, and making fierce assaults upon the door, as if it meant to burst in. Sometimes it bellowed hoarsely down the chimney, and whirled the ashes on the hearth, like a gray snowdrift, through the room. The fire had been put out, of course; but the dancing ashes kept up a fitful patter, like that of a pelting rainstorm, against the walls; they even penetrated into the sleeping alcoves and powdered the heads of their occupants. For in Iceland it is only well-to-do people who can afford to have separate sleeping-rooms; ordinary folk sleep in little closed alcoves, along the walls of the sitting-room; masters and servants, parents and children, guests and wayfarers, all retiring at night into square little holes in the walls, where they undress behind sliding trapdoors which may be opened again, when the lights have been put out, and the supply of air threatens to become exhausted. It was in a little closet of this sort that Thoralf and Jens were lying, listening to the roar of the storm. Thoralf dozed off occasionally, and tried gently to extricate himself from his frightened brother's embrace; but Jens lay with wide-open eyes, staring into the dark, and now and then sliding the trapdoor aside and peeping out, until a blinding shower of ashes would again compel him to slip his head under the sheepskin coverlet. When at last he summoned courage

to peep out, he could not help shuddering. It was terribly cheerless and desolate. And all the time his father's words kept ringing ironically in his ears: "Iceland is the most beautiful land the sun doth shine upon." For the first time in his life he began to question whether his father might not possibly be mistaken, or, perhaps, blinded by his love for his country. But the boy immediately repented of this doubt, and, as if to convince himself in spite of everything, kept repeating the patriotic motto to himself until he fell asleep.

It was yet pitch dark in the room, when he was awakened by his father, who stood stooping over him.

"Sleep on, child," said Sigurd; "it was your brother I wanted to wake up, not you."

"What is the matter, father? What has happened?" cried Jens, rising up in bed, and rubbing the ashes from the corners of his eyes.

"We are snowed up," said the father, quietly. "It is already nine o'clock, I should judge, or thereabouts, but not a ray of light comes through the windows. I want Thoralf to help me open the door."

Thoralf was by this time awake, and finished his primitive toilet with much despatch. The darkness, the damp cold, and the unopened window-shutters impressed him ominously. He felt as if some calamity had happened or were about to happen. Sigurd lighted a piece of driftwood and stuck it into a crevice in the wall. The storm seemed to have ceased; a strange, tomb-like silence prevailed without and within. On the hearth lay a small

snowdrift which sparkled with a starlike glitter in the light.

"Bring the snow-shovels, Thoralf," said Sigurd. "Be quick; lose no time."

"They are in the shed outside," answered Thoralf.

"That is very unlucky," said the father; "now we shall have to use our fists.

The door opened outward and it was only with the greatest difficulty that father and son succeeded in pushing it ajar. The storm had driven the snow with such force against it that their efforts seemed scarcely to make any impression upon the dense white wall which rose up before them.

"This is of no earthly use, father," said the boy; "it is a day's job at the very least. Let me rather try the chimney."

"But you might stick in the snow and perish," objected the father, anxiously.

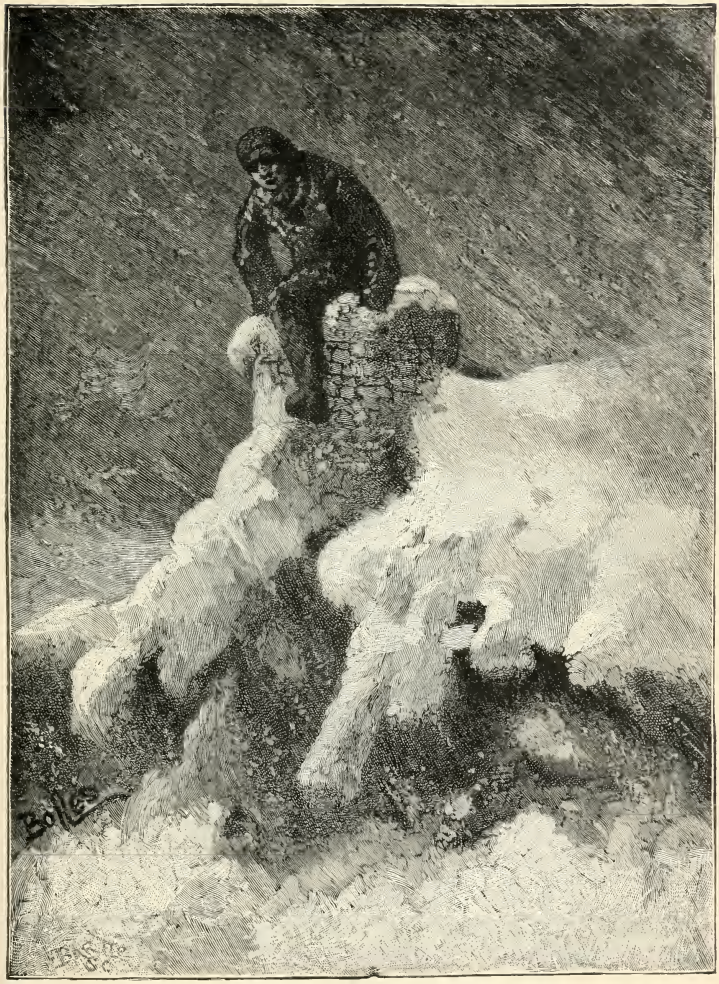
"Weeds don't perish so easily," said Thoralf. "Stand up on the hearth, father, and I will climb up on your shoulders."

Sigurd half reluctantly complied with his request. Thoralf crawled up his back, and soon planted his feet on the parental shoulders. He pulled his knitted woollen cap over his eyes and ears so as to protect them from the drizzling soot which descended in intermittent showers. Then groping with his toes for a little projection of the wall, he gained a securer foothold, and pushing boldly on, soon thrust his sooty head through the snow-crust. A chorus as of a thousand howling wolves burst

upon his bewildered sense; the storm raged, shrieked, roared, and nearly swept him off his feet. Its biting breath smote his face like a sharp whip-lash.

"Give me my sheepskin coat," he cried down into the cottage; "the wind chills me to the bone."

The sheepskin coat was handed to him on the end of a pole, and seated upon the edge of the chimney, he pulled it on and buttoned it securely. Then he rolled up the edges of his cap in front and cautiously exposed his eyes and the tip of his nose. It was not a pleasant experiment, but one dictated by necessity. As far as he could see, the world was white with snow, which the storm whirled madly around, and swept now earthward, now heavenward. Great funnel-shaped columns of snow danced up the hillsides and vanished against the black horizon. The prospect before the boy was by no means inviting, but he had been accustomed to battle with dangers since his earliest childhood, and he was not easily dismayed. With much deliberation, he climbed over the edge of the chimney, and rolled down the slope of the roof in the direction of the shed. He might have rolled a great deal farther, if he had not taken the precaution to roll against the wind. When he had made sure that he was in the right locality, he checked himself by spreading his legs and arms; then judging by the outline of the snow where the door of the shed was, he crept along the edge of the roof on the leeward side. He looked more like a small polar bear than a boy, covered, as he was, with snow from head to foot. He was prepared for a laborious descent, and raising himself up he



HE CLIMBED OVER THE EDGE OF THE CHIMNEY.

jumped with all his might, hoping that his weight would carry him a couple of feet down. To his utmost astonishment he accomplished considerably more. The snow yielded under his feet as if it had been eiderdown, and he tumbled headlong into a white cave right at the entrance to the shed. The storm, while it had packed the snow on the windward side, had naturally scattered it very loosely on the leeward, which left a considerable space unfilled under the projecting eaves.

Thoralf picked himself up and entered the shed without difficulty. He made up a large bundle of peat, which he put into a basket which could be carried, by means of straps, upon his back. With a snow-shovel he then proceeded to dig a tunnel to the nearest window. This was not a very hard task, as the distance was not great. The window was opened and the basket of peat, a couple of shovels, and two pairs of skees* (to be used in case of emergency) were handed in. Thoralf himself, who was hungry as a wolf, made haste to avail himself of the same entrance. And it occurred to him as a happy afterthought that he might have saved himself much trouble, if he had selected the window instead of the chimney when he sallied forth on his expedition. He had erroneously taken it for granted that the snow would be packed as hard everywhere as it was at the front door. The mother, who had been spending this exciting half-hour in keeping little Jens warm, now lighted a fire and

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* Skees are a kind of snowshoe, four to six feet long, bent upward in front, with a band to attach it to the foot in the middle.

made coffee; and Thoralf needed no coaxing to do justice to his breakfast, even though it had, like everything else in Iceland, a flavor of salted fish.

III.

Five days had passed, and still the storm raged with unabated fury. The access to the ocean was cut off, and, with that, access to food. Already the last handful of flour had been made into bread, and of the dried cod which hung in rows under the ceiling only one small and skinny specimen remained. The father and the mother sat with mournful faces at the hearth, the former reading in his hymn-book, the latter stroking the hair of her youngest boy. Thoralf, who was carving at his everlasting pipe-bowl (a corpulent and short-legged Turk with an enormous mustache), looked up suddenly from his work and glanced questioningly at his father.

"Father," he said, abruptly, "how would you like to starve to death?"

"God will preserve us from that, my son," answered the father, devoutly.

"Not unless we try to preserve ourselves," retorted the boy, earnestly. "We can't tell how long this storm is going to last, and it is better for us to start out in search of food now, while we are yet strong, than to wait until later, when, as likely as not, we shall be weakened by hunger."

"But what would you have me do, Thoralf?" asked the father, sadly. "To venture out on the ocean in this weather would be certain death."

"True; but we can reach the Pope's Nose on our skees, and there we might snare or shoot some auks and gulls. Though I am not partial to that kind of diet myself, it is always preferable to starvation."

"Wait, my son, wait," said Sigurd, earnestly. "We have food enough for to-day, and by to-morrow the storm will have ceased, and we may go fishing without endangering our lives."

"As you wish, father," the son replied, a trifle hurt at his father's unresponsive manner; "but if you will take a look out of the chimney, you will find that it looks black enough to storm for another week."

The father, instead of accepting this suggestion, went quietly to his book-case, took out a copy of Livy, in Latin, and sat down to read. Occasionally he looked up a word in the lexicon (which he had borrowed from the public library at Reykjavik), but read nevertheless with apparent fluency and pleasure. Though he was a fisherman, he was also a scholar, and during the long winter evenings he had taught himself Latin and even a smattering of Greek.* In Iceland the people have to spend their evenings at home; and especially since their millennial celebration in 1876, when American

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* Lord Dufferin tells, in his Letters from High Latitudes, how the Icelandic pilots conversed with him in Latin, and other travellers have many similar tales to relate.

scholars * presented them with a large library, books are their unfailing resource. In the case of Sigurd Sigurdson, however, books had become a kind of dissipation, and he had to be weaned gradually of his predilection for Homer and Livy. His oldest son especially looked upon Latin and Greek as a vicious indulgence, which no man with a family could afford to foster. Many a day when Sigurd ought to have been out in his boat casting his nets, he stayed at home reading. And this, in Thoralf's opinion, was the chief reason why they would always remain poor, and run the risk of starvation, whenever a stretch of bad weather prevented them from going to sea.

The next morning—the sixth since the beginning of the storm—Thoralf climbed up to his post of observation on the chimney top, and saw, to his dismay, that his prediction was correct. It had ceased snowing, but the wind was blowing as fiercely as ever, and the cold was intense.

"Will you follow me, father, or will you not?" he asked, when he had accomplished his descent into the room. "Our last fish is now eaten, and our last loaf of bread will soon follow suit."

"I will go with you, my son," answered Sigurd, putting down his Livy reluctantly. He had just been reading for the hundredth time about the expulsion of the Tarquins from Rome, and his blood was aglow with sympathy and enthusiasm.

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* Professor Willard Fiske, formerly of Cornell University, was instrumental in collecting in the United States a library of several thousand volumes, which he presented to the Icelanders on the one thousandth birthday of their nation.

"Here is your coat, Sigurd," said his wife, holding up the great sheepskin garment, and assisting him in putting it on.

"And here are your skees and your mittens and your cap," cried Thoralf, eager to seize the moment, when his father was in the mood for action.

Muffled up like Esquimaux to their very eyes, armed with bows and arrows and long poles with nooses of horsehair at the ends, they sallied forth on their skees. The wind blew straight into their faces, forcing their breath down their throats and compelling them to tack in zigzag lines like ships in a gale. The promontory called "The Pope's Nose" was about a mile distant; but in spite of their knowledge of the land, they went twice astray, and had to lie down in the snow, every now and then, so as to draw breath and warm the exposed portions of their faces. At the end of nearly two hours they found themselves at their destination, but, to their unutterable astonishment, the ocean seemed to have vanished, and as far as their eyes could reach, a vast field of packed ice loomed up against the sky in fantastic bastions, turrets, and spires. The storm had driven down this enormous arctic wilderness from the frozen precincts of the pole; and now they were blockaded on all sides, and cut off from all intercourse with humanity.

"We are lost, Thoralf," muttered his father, after having gazed for some time in speechless despair at the towering icebergs; "we might just as well have remained at home."

"The wind, which has blown the ice down upon us

can blow it away again, too," replied the son, with forced cheerfulness.

"I see no living thing here," said Sigurd, spying anxiously seaward.

"Nor do I," rejoined Thoralf; "but if we hunt, we shall. I have brought a rope, and I am going to pay a little visit to those auks and gulls that must be hiding in the sheltered nooks of the rocks."

"Are you mad, boy?" cried the father in alarm. "I will never permit it!"

"There is no help for it, father," said the boy resolutely. "Here, you take hold of one end of the rope; the other I will secure about my waist. Now, get a good strong hold, and brace your feet against the rock there."

Sigurd, after some remonstrance, yielded, as was his wont, to his son's resolution and courage. Stepping off his skees, which he stuck endwise into the snow, and burrowing his feet down until they reached the solid rock, he tied the rope around his waist and twisted it about his hands, and at last, with quaking heart, gave the signal for the perilous enterprise. The promontory, which rose abruptly to a height of two or three hundred feet from the sea, presented a jagged wall full of nooks and crevices glazed with frozen snow on the windward side, but black and partly bare to leeward.

"Now let go!" shouted Thoralf; "and stop when I give a slight pull at the rope."

"All right," replied his father.

And slowly, slowly, hovering in mid-air, now yielding to an irresistible impulse of dread, now brave, cautious,

and confident, Thoralf descended the cliff, which no human foot had ever trod before. He held in his hand the pole with the horse-hair noose, and over his shoulder hung a foxskin hunting-bag. With alert, wide-open eyes he spied about him, exploring every cranny of the rock, and thrusting his pole into the holes where he suspected the birds might have taken refuge. Sometimes a gust of wind would have flung him violently against the jagged wall if he had not, by means of his pole, warded off the collision. At last he caught sight of a bare ledge, where he might gain a secure foothold; for the rope cut him terribly about the waist, and made him anxious to relieve the strain, if only for a moment. He gave the signal to his father, and by the aid of the pole swung himself over to the projecting ledge. It was uncomfortably narrow, and, what was worse, the remnants of a dozen auks' nests had made the place extremely slippery. Nevertheless, he seated himself, allowing his feet to dangle, and gazed out upon the vast ocean, which looked in its icy grandeur like a forest of shining towers and minarets. It struck him for the first time in his life that perhaps his father was right in his belief that Iceland was the fairest land the sun doth shine upon; but he could not help reflecting that it was a very unprofitable kind of beauty. The storm whistled and howled overhead, but under the lee of the sheltering rock it blew only in fitful gusts with intermissions of comparative calm. He knew that in fair weather this was the haunt of innumerable sea birds, and he concluded that even now they could not be far away. He pulled up his legs, and crept care-

fully on hands and feet along the slippery ledge, peering intently into every nook and crevice. His eyes, which had been half-blinded by the glare of the snow, gradually recovered their power of vision. There! What was that? Something seemed to move on the ledge below. Yes, there sat a long row of auks, some erect as soldiers, as if determined to face it out; others huddled together in clusters, and comically woe-begone. Quite a number lay dead at the base of the rock, whether from starvation or as the victims of fierce fights for the possession of the sheltered ledges could scarcely be determined. Thoralf, delighted at the sight of anything eatable (even though it was poor eating), gently lowered the end of his pole, slipped the noose about the neck of a large, military-looking fellow, and, with a quick pull, swung him out over the ice-field. The auk gave a few ineffectual flaps with his useless wings,* and expired. His picking off apparently occasioned no comment whatever in his family, for his comrades never uttered a sound nor stirred an inch, except to take possession of the place he had vacated. Number two met his fate with the same listless resignation; and numbers three, four, and five were likewise removed in the same noiseless manner, without impressing their neighbors with the fact that their turn might come next. The birds were half-benumbed with hunger, and their usually alert senses were drowsy and stupefied. Nevertheless, number six, when it felt the noose about its neck, raised a hubbub that suddenly

* The auk cannot fly well, but uses its wings for swimming and diving.

aroused the whole colony, and, with a chorus of wild screams, the birds flung themselves down the cliffs or, in their bewilderment, dashed headlong down upon the ice, where they lay half stunned or helplessly sprawling. So, through all the caves and hiding-places of the promontory the commotion spread, and the noise of screams and confused chatter mingled with the storm and filled the vault of the sky. In an instant a great flock of gulls was on the wing, and circled with resentful shrieks about the head of the daring intruder who had disturbed their wintry peace. The wind whirled them about, but they still held their own, and almost brushed with their wings against his face, while he struck out at them with his pole. He had no intention of catching them; but, by chance, a huge burgomaster gull* got its foot into the noose. It made an ineffectual attempt to disentangle itself, then, with piercing screams, flapped its great wings, beating the air desperately. Thoralf, having packed three birds into his hunting-bag, tied the three others together by the legs, and flung them across his shoulders. Then, gradually trusting his weight to the rope, he slid off the rock, and was about to give his father the signal to hoist him up. But, greatly to his astonishment, his living captive, by the power of its mighty wings, pulling at the end of the pole, swung him considerably farther into space than he had calculated. He would have liked to let go both the gull and the pole, but he perceived in-

* The burgomaster gull is the largest of all gulls. It is thirty inches long, exclusive of its tail, and its wings have a span of five feet.

stantly that if he did, he would, by the mere force of his weight, be flung back against the rocky wall. He did not dare take that risk, as the blow might be hard enough to stun him. A strange, tingling sensation shot through his nerves, and the blood throbbed with a surging sound in his ears. There he hung suspended in mid-air, over a terrible precipice—and a hundred feet below was the jagged ice-field with its sharp, fiercely-shining steeples! With a powerful effort of will, he collected his senses, clinched his teeth, and strove to think clearly. The gull whirled wildly eastward and westward, and he swayed with its every motion like a living pendulum between sea and sky. He began to grow dizzy, but again his powerful will came to his rescue, and he gazed resolutely up against the brow of the precipice and down upon the projecting ledges below, in order to accustom his eye and his mind to the sight. By a strong effort he succeeded in giving a pull at the rope, and expected to feel himself raised upward by his father's strong arms. But, to his amazement, there came no response to his signal. He repeated it once, twice, thrice; there was a slight tugging at the rope, but no upward movement. Then the brave lad's heart stood still, and his courage wellnigh failed him.

"Father!" he cried, with a hoarse voice of despair; "why don't you pull me up?"

His cry was lost in the roar of the wind, and there came no answer. Taking hold once more of the rope with one hand, he considered the possibility of climbing; but the miserable gull, seeming every moment to re-

double its efforts at escape, deprived him of the use of his hands unless he chose to dash out his brains by collision with the rock. Something like a husky, choked scream seemed to float down from above, and staring again upward, he saw his father's head projecting over the brink of the precipice.

"The rope will break," screamed Sigurd. "I have tied it to the rock."

Thoralf instantly took in the situation. By the swinging motion, occasioned both by the wind and his fight with the gull, the rope had become frayed against the sharp edge of the cliff, and his chances of life, he coolly concluded, were now not worth a sixpence. Curiously enough, his agitation suddenly left him, and a great calm came over him. He seemed to stand face to face with eternity; and as nothing else that he could do was of any avail, he could at least steel his heart to meet death like a man and an Icelander.

"I am trying to get hold of the rope below the place where it is frayed," he heard his father shout during a momentary lull in the storm.

"Don't try," answered the boy; "you can't do it alone. Rather, let me down on the lower ledge, and let me sit there until you can go and get someone to help you."

His father, accustomed to take his son's advice, reluctantly lowered him ten or twenty feet until he was on a level with the shelving ledge below, which was broader than the one upon which he had first gained foothold. But—oh, the misery of it!—the ledge did not project far

enough! He could not reach it with his feet! The rope, of which only a few strands remained, might break at any moment and—he dared not think what would be the result! He had scarcely had time to consider, when a brilliant device shot through his brain. With a sudden thrust he flung away the pole, and the impetus of his weight sent him inward with such force that he landed securely upon the broad shelf of rock.

The gull, surprised by the sudden weight of the pole, made a somersault, strove to rise again, and tumbled, with the pole still depending from its leg, down upon the ice-field.

It was well that Thoralf was warmly clad, or he could never have endured the terrible hours while he sat through the long afternoon, hearing the moaning and shrieking of the wind and seeing the darkness close about him. The storm was chilling him with its fierce breath. One of the birds he tied about his throat as a sort of scarf, using the feet and neck for making the knot, and the dense, downy feathers sent a glow of comfort through him, in spite of his consciousness that every hour might be his last. If he could only keep awake through the night, the chances were that he would survive to greet the morning. He hit upon an ingenious plan for accomplishing this purpose. He opened the bill of the auk which warmed his neck, cut off the lower mandible, and placed the upper one (which was as sharp as a knife) so that it would inevitably cut his chin in case he should nod. He leaned against the rock and thought of his mother and the warm, comfortable chimney-corner

at home. The wind probably resented this thought, for it suddenly sent a biting gust right into his face, and he buried his nose in the downy breast of the auk until the pain had subsided. The darkness had now settled upon sea and land; only here and there white steeples loomed out of the gloom. Thoralf, simply to occupy his thought, began to count them. But all of a sudden one of the steeples seemed to move, then another —and another.

The boy feared that the long strain of excitement was depriving him of his reason. The wind, too, after a few wild arctic howls, acquired a warmer breath and a gentler sound. It could not be possible that he was dreaming, for in that case he would soon be dead. Perhaps he was dead already, and was drifting through this strange icy vista to a better world. All these imaginings flitted through his mind, and were again dismissed as improbable. He scratched his face with the foot of an auk in order to convince himself that he was really awake. Yes, there could be no doubt of it; he was wide awake. Accordingly he once more fixed his eyes upon the ghostly steeples and towers, and—it sent cold shudders down his back—they were still moving. Then there came a fusillade as of heavy artillery, followed by a salvo of lighter musketry; then came a fierce grinding, and cracking, and creaking sound, as if the whole ocean were of glass and were breaking to pieces. "What," thought Thoralf, "is the ice breaking up!" In an instant the explanation of the whole spectral panorama was clear as the day. The wind had veered round to the southeast,

and the whole enormous ice-floe was being driven out to sea. For several hours—he could not tell how many—he sat watching this superb spectacle by the pale light of the aurora borealis, which toward midnight began to flicker across the sky and illuminated the northern horizon. He found the sight so interesting that for a while he forgot to be sleepy. But toward morning, when the aurora began to fade and the clouds to cover the east, a terrible weariness was irresistibly stealing over him. He could see glimpses of the black water beneath him; and the shining spires of ice were vanishing in the dusk, drifting rapidly away upon the arctic currents with death and disaster to ships and crews that might happen to cross their paths.

It was terrible at what a snail's pace the hours crept along! It seemed to Thoralf as if a week had passed since his father left him. He pinched himself in order to keep awake, but it was of no use; his eyelids would slowly droop and his head would incline—horrors! what was that? Oh, he had forgotten; it was the sharp mandible of the auk that cut his chin. He put his hand up to it, and felt something warm and clammy on his fingers. He was bleeding. It took Thoralf several minutes to stay the blood—the wound was deeper than he had bargained for; but it occupied him and kept him awake, which was of vital importance.

At last, after a long and desperate struggle with drowsiness, he saw the dawn break faintly in the east. It was a mere feeble promise of light, a remote sugges-

tion that there was such a thing as day. But to the boy, worn out by the terrible strain of death and danger staring him in the face, it was a glorious assurance that rescue was at hand. The tears came into his eyes—not tears of weakness, but tears of gratitude that the terrible trial had been endured. Gradually the light spread like a pale, grayish veil over the eastern sky, and the ocean caught faint reflections of the presence of the unseen sun. The wind was mild, and thousands of birds that had been imprisoned by the ice in the crevices of the rocks whirled triumphantly into the air and plunged with wild screams into the tide below. It was hard to imagine where they all had been, for the air seemed alive with them, the cliffs teemed with them; and they fought, and shrieked, and chattered, like a howling mob in times of famine. It was owing to this unearthly tumult that Thoralf did not hear the voice which called to him from the top of the cliff. His senses were half-dazed by the noise and by the sudden relief from the excitement of the night. Then there came two voices floating down to him—then quite a chorus. He tried to look up, but the beetling brow of the rock prevented him from seeing anything but a stout rope, which was dangling in mid-air and slowly approaching him. With all the power of his lungs he responded to the call; and there came a wild cheer from above—a cheer full of triumph and joy. He recognized the voices of Hunding's sons, who lived on the other side of the promontory; and he knew that even without their father they were strong enough to pull up a man three times his weight. The difficulty now was

only to get hold of the rope, which hung too far out for his hands to reach it.

"Shake the rope hard," he called up; and immediately the rope was shaken into serpentine undulations; and after a few vain efforts, he succeeded in catching hold of the knot. To secure the rope about his waist and to give the signal for the ascent was but a moment's work. They hauled vigorously, those sons of Hunding—for he rose, up, along the black walls—up—up—up—with no uncertain motion. At last, when he was at the very brink of the precipice, he saw his father's pale and anxious face leaning out over the abyss. But there was another face too! Whose could it be? It was a woman's face. It was his mother's. Somebody swung him out into space; a strange, delicious dizziness came over him; his eyes were blinded with tears; he did not know where he was. He only knew that he was inexpressibly happy. There came a tremendous cheer from somewhere—for Icelanders know how to cheer—but it penetrated but faintly through his bewildered senses. Something cold touched his forehead; it seemed to be snow; then warm drops fell, which were tears. He opened his eyes; he was in his mother's arms. Little Jens was crying over him and kissing him. His father and Hunding's sons were standing, with folded arms, gazing joyously at him.

MIKKEL.

I.

HOW MIKKEL WAS FOUND.

You may find it hard to believe what I am going to tell you, but it is, nevertheless, strictly true. I knew the boy who is the hero of this story. His name was Thor Larsson, and a very clever boy he was. Still I don't think he would have amounted to much in the world, if it had not been for his friend Michael, or, as they write it in Norwegian, Mikkel. Mikkel, strange to say, was not a boy, but a fox. Thor caught him, when he was a very small lad, in a den under the roots of a huge tree. It happened in this way. Thor and his elder brother, Lars, and still another boy, named Ole Thomlemo, were up in the woods gathering faggots, which they tied together in large bundles to carry home on their backs; for their parents were poor people, and had no money to buy wood with. The boys rather liked to be sent on errands of this kind, because delicious raspberries and blueberries grew in great abundance in the woods, and gathering faggots was, after all, a much manlier occupation than staying at home minding the baby.

Thor's brother Lars and Ole Thomlemo were great

friends, and they had a disagreeable way of always plotting and having secrets together and leaving Thor out of their councils. One of their favorite tricks, when they wished to get rid of him, was to pretend to play hide-and-seek; and when he had hidden himself, they would run away from him and make no effort to find him. It was this trick of theirs which led to the capture of Mikkel, and to many things besides.

It was on a glorious day in the early autumn that the three boys started out together, as frisky and gay as a company of squirrels. They had no luncheon-baskets with them, although they expected to be gone for the whole day; but they had hooks and lines in their pockets, and meant to have a famous dinner of brook-trout up in some mountain glen, where they could sit like pirates around a fire, conversing in mysterious language, while the fish was being fried upon a flat stone. Their *tolle* knives* were hanging, sheathed, from their girdles, and the two older ones carried, besides, little hatchets wherewith to cut off the dry twigs and branches. Lars and Ole Thomlemo, as usual, kept ahead and left Thor to pick his way over the steep and stony road as best he might; and when he caught up with them, they started to run, while he sat down panting on a stone. Thus several hours passed, until they came to a glen in which the blueberries grew so thickly that you couldn't step without crushing a handful. The boys gave a shout of

* The national knife of Norway. It has a round or oblong handle of wood, bone, or ivory, often beautifully carved, and a slightly curved, one-edged blade, with a sharp point.

delight and flung themselves down, heedless of their clothes, and began to eat with boyish greed. As far as their eyes could reach between the mossy pine trunks, the ground was blue with berries, except where bunches of ferns or clusters of wild flowers intercepted the view When they had dulled the edge of their hunger, they began to cut the branches from the trees which the lumbermen had felled, and Ole Thomlemo, who was clever with his hands, twisted withes, which they used instead of ropes for tying their bundles together. They had one bundle well secured and another under way, when Ole, with a mischievous expression, ran over to Lars and whispered something in his ear.

"Let us play hide-and-seek," said Lars aloud, glancing over toward his little brother, who was working like a Trojan, breaking the faggots so as to make them all the same length.

Thor, who in spite of many exasperating experiences had not yet learned to be suspicious, threw down an armful of dry boughs and answered: "Yes, let us, boys. I am in for anything."

"I'll blind first," cried Ole Thomlemo; "now, be quick and get yourselves hidden."

And off the two brothers ran, while Ole turned his face against a big tree and covered his eyes with his hands. But the very moment Thor was out of sight, Lars stole back again to his friend, and together they slipped away under cover of the bushes, until they reached the lower end of the glen. There, they pulled out their fish-lines, cut rods with their hatchets, and went

down to the tarn, or brook, which was only a short distance off; the fishing was excellent, and when the large speckled trout began to leap out of the water to catch their flies, the two boys soon ceased to trouble themselves about little Thor, who, they supposed, was hiding under some bush and waiting to be discovered.

In this supposition they were partly right and partly wrong.

No sooner had Ole Thomlemo given the signal for hiding, than Thor ran up the hill-side, stumbling over the moss-grown stones, pushing the underbrush aside with his hands, and looking eagerly for a place where he would be least likely to be found. He was full of the spirit of the game, and anticipated with joyous excitement the wonder of the boys when they should have to give up the search and call to him to reveal himself. While these thoughts were filling his brain, he caught sight of a huge old fir-tree, which was leaning down the mountain-side as if ready to fall. The wind had evidently given it a pull in the top, strong enough to loosen its hold on the ground, and yet not strong enough to overthrow it. On the upper side, for a dozen yards or more, the thick, twisted roots, with the soil and turf still clinging to them, had been lifted, so as to form a little den about two feet wide at the entrance. Here, thought Thor, was a wonderful hiding-place. Chuckling to himself at the discomfiture of his comrades, he threw himself down on his knees and thrust his head into the opening. To his surprise the bottom felt soft to his hands, as if it had been purposely covered with moss and a layer

of feathers and eider-down. He did not take heed of the peculiar wild smell which greeted his nostrils, but fearlessly pressed on, until nearly his whole figure, with the exception of the heels of his boots, was hidden. Then a sharp little bark startled him, and raising his head he saw eight luminous eyes staring at him from a dark recess, a few feet beyond his nose. It is not to be denied that he was a little frightened; for it instantly occurred to him that he had unwittingly entered the den of some wild beast, and that, in case the old ones were at home, there was small chance of his escaping with a whole skin. It could hardly be a bear's den, for the entrance was not half big enough for a gentleman of Bruin's size. It might possibly be a wolf's premises he was trespassing upon, and the idea made his blood run cold. For Mr. Gray-legs, as the Norwegians call the wolf, is not to be trifled with; and a small boy armed only with a knife was hardly a match for such an antagonist. Thor concluded, without much reflection, that his safest plan would be to beat a hasty retreat. Digging his hands into the mossy ground, he tried to push himself backward, but, to his unutterable dismay, he could not budge an inch. The feathers, interspersed with the smooth pine-needles, slipped away under his fingers, and the roots caught in his clothes and held him as in a vice. He tried to force his way, but the more he wriggled the more he realized how small was his chance of escape. To turn was impossible, and to pull off his coat and trousers was a scarcely less difficult task. It was fortunate that the four inhabitants of the den, to whom the glaring eyes

belonged, seemed no less frightened than himself; for they remained huddled together in their corner, and showed no disposition to fight. They only stared wildly at the intruder, and seemed anxious to know what he intended to do next. And Thor stared at them in return, although the darkness was so dense that he could discern nothing except the eight luminous eyes, which were fixed upon him with an uncanny and highly uncomfortable expression. Unpleasant as the situation was, he began to grow accustomed to it, and he collected his scattered thoughts sufficiently to draw certain conclusions. The size of the den, as well as the feathers which everywhere met his fumbling hands, convinced him that his hosts were young foxes, and that probably their respected parents, for the moment, were on a raid in search of rabbits or stray poultry. That reflection comforted him, for he had never known a fox to use any other weapon of defence than its legs, unless it was caught in a trap and had to fight for bare life. He was just dismissing from his mind all thought of danger from that source, when a sudden sharp pain in his heel put an end to his reasoning. He gave a scream, at which the eight eyes leaped apart in pairs and distributed themselves in a row along the curving wall of the den. Another bite in his ankle convinced him that he was being attacked from behind, and he knew no other way of defence than to kick with all his might, screaming at the same time so as to attract the attention of the boys, who, he supposed, could hardly be far off. But his voice sounded choked and feeble in the close den, and he

feared that no one would be able to hear it ten yards away. The strong odor, too, began to stifle him, and a strange dizziness wrapped his senses, as it were, in a gray, translucent veil. He made three or four spasmodic efforts to rouse himself, screamed feebly, and kicked; but probably he struck his wounded ankle against a root or a stone, for the pain shot up his leg and made him clinch his teeth to keep the tears from starting. He thought of his poor mother, whom he feared he should never see again, and how she would watch for his return through the long night and cry for him, as it said in the Bible that Jacob cried over Joseph when he supposed that a wild beast had torn him to pieces and killed him. Curious lights, like shooting stars, began to move before his eyes; his tongue felt dry and parched, and his throat seemed burning hot. It occurred to him that certainly God saw his peril and might yet help him, if he only prayed for help; but the only prayer which he could remember was the one which the minister repeated every Sunday for "our most gracious sovereign, Oscar II., and the army and navy of the United Kingdoms." Next he stumbled upon "the clergy, and the congregations committed to their charge;" and he was about to finish with "sailors in distress at sea," when his words, like his thoughts, grew more and more hazy, and he drifted away into unconsciousness.

Lars and Ole Thomlemo in the meanwhile had enjoyed themselves to the top of their bent, and when they had caught a dozen trout, among which was one three-pounder, they reeled up their lines, threaded the fish on

withes, and began to trudge leisurely up the glen. When they came to the place where they had left their bundles of faggots, they stopped to shout for Thor, and when they received no reply, they imagined that, being tired of waiting, he had gone home alone, or fallen in with some one who was on his way down to the valley. The only thing that troubled them was that Thor's bundle had not been touched since they left him, and they knew that the boy was not lazy, and that, moreover, he would be afraid to go home without the faggots. They therefore concluded to search the copse and the surrounding underbrush, as it was just possible that he might have fallen asleep in his hiding-place while waiting to be discovered.

"I think Thor is napping somewhere under the bushes," cried Ole Thomlemo, swinging his hatchet over his head like an Indian tomahawk. "We shall have to halloo pretty loud, for you know he sleeps like a top."

And they began scouring the underbrush, traversing it in all directions, and hallooing lustily, both singly and in chorus. They were just about giving up the quest, when Lars's attention was attracted by two foxes which, undismayed by the noise, were running about a large fir-tree, barking in a way which betrayed anxiety, and stopping every minute to dig up the ground with their fore-paws. When the boys approached the tree, the foxes ran only a short distance, then stopped, ran back, and again fled, once more to return.

"Those fellows act very queerly," remarked Lars, eying

the foxes curiously; "I'll wager there are young un's under the tree here, but"—Lars gasped for breath—"Ole—Ole—Oh, look! What is this?"

Lars had caught sight of a pair of heels, from which a little stream of blood had been trickling, coloring the stones and pine-needles. Ole Thomlemo, hearing his comrade's exclamation of fright, was on the spot in an instant, and he comprehended at once how everything had happened.

"Look here, Lars," he said, resolutely, "this is no time for crying. If Thor is dead, it is we who have killed him; but if he isn't dead, we've got to save him."

"Oh, what shall we do, Ole?" sobbed Lars, while the tears rolled down over his cheeks, "what shall we do? I shall never dare go home again if he is dead. We have been so very bad to him!"

"We have got to save him, I tell you," repeated Ole, tearless and stern: "we must pull him out; and if we can't do that, we must cut through the roots of this fir-tree; then it'll plunge down the mountain-side, without hurting him. A few roots that have burrowed into the rocks are all that keep the tree standing. Now, act like a man. Take hold of him by one heel and I'll take the other."

Lars, who looked up to his friend as a kind of superior being, dried his tears and grasped his brother's foot, while Ole carefully handled the wounded ankle. But their combined efforts had no perceptible effect, except to show how inextricably the poor lad's clothes were inter-

tangled with the tree-roots, which, growing all in one direction, made entrance easy, but exit impossible.

"That won't do," said Ole, after three vain trials. "We might injure him without knowing it, driving the sharp roots into his eyes and ears, as likely as not. We've got to use the hatchets. You cut that root and I'll manage this one."

Ole Thomlemo was a lumberman's son, and since he was old enough to walk had spent his life in the forest. He could calculate with great nicety how a tree would fall, if cut in a certain way, and his skill in this instance proved valuable. With six well-directed cuts he severed one big root, while Lars labored at a smaller one. Soon with a great crash the mighty tree fell down the mountain-side, crushing a dozen birches and smaller pines under its weight. The moss-grown sod around about was torn up with the remaining roots, and three pretty little foxes, blinded and stunned by the rush of daylight, sprang out from their hole and stared in bewilderment at the sudden change of scene. Through the cloud of flying dust and feathers the boys discerned, too, Thor's insensible form, lying outstretched, torn and bleeding, his face resting upon his hands, as if he were asleep. With great gentleness they lifted him up, brushed the moss and earth from his face and clothes, and placed him upon the grass by the side of the brook which flowed through the bottom of the glen. Although his body was warm, they could hardly determine whether he was dead or alive, for he seemed scarcely to be breathing, and it was not until Ole put a feather before his mouth and

perceived its faint inward and outward movement, that they felt reassured and began to take heart. They bathed his temples with the cool mountain water and rubbed and chafed his hands, until at last he opened his eyes wonderingly and moved his lips, as if endeavoring to speak.

"Where am I?" he whispered at last, after several vain efforts to make himself heard.

"Why, cheer up, old fellow," answered Ole, encouragingly; "you have had a little accident, that's all, but you'll be all right in a minute."

"Unbutton my vest," whispered Thor again; "there is something scratching me here."

He put his hand over his heart, and the boys quickly tore his watstcoat open, but to their unutterable astonishment a little fox, the image of the three that had escaped, put his head out and looked about him with his alert eyes, as if to say: "Here am I; how do you like me?" He evidently felt so comfortable where he was, that he had no desire to get away. No doubt the little creature, prompted either by his curiosity or a desire to escape from the den, had crept into Thor's bosom while he was insensible, and, finding his quarters quite to his taste, had concluded to remain. Lars picked him up, tied a string about his neck, and put him in the side pocket of his jacket. Then, as it was growing late, Ole lifted Thor upon his back, and he and Lars took turns in carrying him down to the valley.

Thor's ankle gave him some trouble, as the wound was slow in healing. With that exception, he was soon

himself again; and he and Mikkel (for that was the name he gave to the little fox) grew to be great friends and had many a frolic together.

But the little fox was not a model of deportment, as you will see when I tell you, in the next chapter, how Mikkel disgraced himself.

II.

HOW MIKKEL DISGRACED HIMSELF.

When Thor was twelve years old, he had to go out into the world to make his own living; for his parents were poor, and they had half a dozen younger children, who also had to be fed and clothed. As it happened, Judge Nannestad, who lived on a large estate down at the fiord, wanted an office-boy, and as Thor was a bright and active lad, he had no difficulty in obtaining the situation. The only question was, how to dispose of Mikkel; for, to be frank, Mikkel (in spite of his many admirable traits) was not a general favorite, and Thor suspected that when his protector was away Mikkel would have a hard time of it. He well knew that Mikkel was of a peculiar temperament, which required to be studied in order to be appreciated, and as there was no one but himself who took this trouble, he did not wonder that his friend was generally misunderstood. Mikkel's was not a nature to invite confidences; he scrupulously kept his own counsel, and was always alert and on his guard. There was a bland expression on his face, a kind of lurking smile, which never varied, and which gave absolutely

no clew to his thoughts. When he had skimmed the cream off the milk-pans on the top shelf in the kitchen, he returned, licking his chops, with the same inscrutable smile, as if his conscience were as clean as a new-born babe's; and when he had slipped his collar over his head and dispatched the kitten, burying its remains in the backyard, he betrayed no more remorse than if he had been cracking a nut. Sultan, the dog, strange to say, had private reasons for being afraid of him, and always slank away in a shamefaced manner, whenever Mikkel gave him one of his quiet sidelong glances. And yet the same Mikkel would roll on his back, and jump and play with the baby by the hour, seize her pudgy little hands gently with his teeth, never inflicting a bite or a scratch. He would nestle on Thor's bosom inside of his coat, while Thor was learning his lesson, or he would sit on his shoulder and look down on the book with his superior smile. It was not to be denied that Mikkel had a curious character—an odd mixture of good and bad qualities; but as, in Thor's judgment, the good were by far the more prominent, he would not listen to his father's advice and leave his friend behind him, when he went down to the judge's at the grand estate.

It was the day after New-year's that Thor left the cottage up under the mountain, and, putting on his skees, slid down the steep hill-side to the fiord. Mikkel was nestling, according to his wont, in the bosom of his master's coat, while his pretty head, with the clean dark snout and dark mustache, was sticking out above the

boy's collar, just under his chin. Mikkel had never been so far away from home before, and he concluded that the world was a bigger affair than he had been aware of.

It was with a loudly thumping heart that Thor paused outside the door of the judge's office, for he greatly feared that the judge might share the general prejudice against Mikkel, and make difficulties about his board and lodgings. Instead of entering, he went to the pump in the yard and washed his friend's face carefully and combed his hair with the fragment of a comb with which his mother had presented him at parting. It was important that Mikkel should appear to advantage, so as to make a good impression upon the judge. And really he did look irresistible, Thor thought, with his bright, black eyes, his dainty paws, and his beautiful red skin. He felt satisfied that if the judge had not a heart of stone he could not help being captivated at the sight of so lovely a creature. Thor took courage and knocked at the door.

"Ah, you are our new office-boy," said the judge, as he entered; "but what is that you have under your coat?"

"It is Mikkel, sir, please your Honor," stammered Thor, putting the fox on the floor, so as to display his charms. But hardly had he taken his hands off him, when a sudden scrambling noise was heard in the adjoining office, and a large hound came bounding with wild eyes and drooping tongue through the open door. With lightning speed Mikkel leaped up on the judge's

writing-desk, scattering his writing materials, upsetting an inkstand by an accidental whisk of his tail, and bespattering the honorable gentleman's face and shirt-front with the black fluid. To perform a similar service on the next desk, where a clerk was writing, to jump from there to the shoulder of a marble bust, which fell from its pedestal down on the hound's head and broke into a dozen pieces, and to reach a place of safety on the top of a tall bookcase were all a moment's work. The hound lay howling, with a wounded nose, on the floor. The judge stood scowling at his desk, rubbing the ink all over his face with his handkerchief, and Mikkel sat smiling on the top of the bookcase, surveying calmly the ruin which he had wrought. But the most miserable creature in the room was neither the judge, with his black face, nor the hound, with the bleeding nose; it was Thor, who stood trembling at the door, expecting that something still more terrible would happen. And knowing that, after having caused such a commotion, his place was forfeited, he held out his arms to Mikkel, who accepted the invitation, and with all speed at their disposal they rushed out through the door and away over the snowy fields, scarcely knowing whither their feet bore them.

After half an hour's run, when he had no more breath left, Thor seated himself on a tree-stump and tried to collect his thoughts. What should he now do? Where should he turn? Go home he could not; and if he did, it would be the end of Mikkel. The only thing he could think of was to go around in the parish, from farm to

farm, until he found somebody who would give him something to do.

"I hope you will appreciate, my dear Mikkel," he said to his fox, "that it is on your account I have all this trouble. It was very naughty of you to behave so badly, and if you do it again I shall have to whip you! Do you understand that, Mikkel?"

Mikkel looked sheepish, which plainly showed that he understood.

"Now, Mikkel," Thor continued, "we will go to the parson; perhaps he may have some use for us. What do you think of trying the parson?"

Mikkel apparently thought well of the parson, for he licked his master behind his ear and rubbed his snout against his cheek. Accordingly, by noon they reached the parsonage, and after a long parley with the pastor's wife, he was engaged as a sort of errand-boy, whose duty it should be to do odd jobs about the house. Mikkel was to have a kennel provided for him in the stable, but was under no circumstances to enter the house. Thor had to vouch for his good behavior, and the moment he made himself in any way obnoxious it was decided that he should be killed. Poor Thor had nominally to accept these hard conditions, but in his own mind he determined to run away with Mikkel the moment he was caught in any kind of mischief. It seemed very hard for Mikkel, too, who had been accustomed to sleep in Thor's arms in his warm bed, to be chained, and to spend the long, dark nights in the stable in a miserable kennel. Nevertheless, there was no help for it; so Thor went to

work that same afternoon and made Mikkel as comfortable a kennel as he could, taking care to make the hole which served for entrance no bigger than it had to be, so that no dog or other enemy should be able to enter.

For about four months all went well at the parsonage. So long as Mikkel was confined in the stable he behaved himself with perfect propriety, and, occasionally, when he was (by special permission) taken into the house to play with the children, he won golden opinions for himself by his cunning tricks, and became, in fact, a great favorite in the nursery. When the spring came and the sun grew warm, his kennel was, at Thor's request, moved out into the yard, where he could have the benefit of the fine spring weather. There he could be seen daily, lying in the sun, with half-closed eyes, resting his head on his paws, seeming too drowsy and comfortable to take notice of anything. The geese and hens, which were at first a trifle suspicious, gradually grew accustomed to his presence, and often strayed within range of Mikkel's chain, and even within reach of his paws; but it always happened that on such occasions either the pastor or his wife was near, and Mikkel knew enough to be aware that goose was forbidden fruit. But one day (it was just after dinner, when the pastor was taking his nap), it happened that a great fat gander, prompted by a pardonable curiosity, stretched his neck a little too far toward the sleeping Mikkel; when, quick as a wink and wide-awake, Mr. Mikkel jumped up, and before he knew it, the gander found himself minus his head. Very cautiously the cul-

prit peered about, and seeing no one near, he rapidly dug a hole under his kennel and concealed his victim there, covering it well with earth, until a more favorable opportunity should present itself for making a meal of it. Then he lay down, and stretched himself in the sun as before, and seemed too sleepy even to open his eyes; and when, on the following day, the gander was missed, the innocent demeanor of Mikkel so completely imposed upon everyone, that he was not even suspected. Not even when the second and the third goose disappeared could any reasonable charge be brought against Mikkel.

When the summer vacation came, however, the even tenor of Mikkel's existence was rudely interrupted by the arrival of the parson's oldest son, Finn, who was a student in Christiania, and his dog Achilles. Achilles was a handsome brown pointer, that, having been brought up in the city, had never been accustomed to look upon the fox as a domestic animal. He, therefore, spent much of his time in harassing Mikkel, making sudden rushes for him when he thought him asleep; but always returning from these exploits shamefaced and discomfited, for Mikkel was always a great deal too clever to be taken by surprise. He would lie perfectly still until Achilles was within a foot of him, and then, with remarkable alertness, he would slip into the kennel, through his door, where the dog's size would not permit him to follow; and the moment his enemy turned his tail to him, Mikkel's face would appear bland and smiling, at the door, as if to say:

"Good-by! Call again whenever you feel like it. Now, don't you wish you were as clever as I am?"

And yet in spite of his daily defeats, Achilles could never convince himself that his assaults upon Mikkel brought him no glory. Perhaps his master, who did not like Mikkel any too well, encouraged him in his enmity, for it is certain that the assaults grew fiercer daily. And at last, one day when the young student was standing in the yard, holding his dog by the collar, while exciting him against the half-sleeping fox, Achilles ran with such force against the kennel that he upset it. Alas! For then the evidence of Mikkel's misdemeanors came to light. From the door-hole of the rolling kennel a heap of goose-feathers flew out, and were scattered in the air; and, what was worse, a little "dug-out" became visible, filled with bones and bills and other indigestible articles, unmistakably belonging to the goose's anatomy. Mikkel, who was too wise to leave the kennel so long as it was in motion, now peeped cautiously out, and he took in the situation at a glance. Mr. Finn, the student, who thought that Mikkel's skin would look charming as a rug before his fire-place in the city, was overjoyed to find out what a rascal this innocent-looking creature had been; for he knew well enough that his father would now no longer oppose his desire for the crafty little creature's skin. So he went into the house, loaded his rifle, and prepared himself as executioner.

But at that very moment, Thor chanced to be coming home from an errand; and he had hardly entered the yard, when he sniffed danger in the air. He knew, with-

out asking, that Mikkel's doom was sealed. For the parson was a great poultry-fancier and was said to be more interested in his ganders than he was in his children. Therefore, without waiting for further developments, Thor unhooked Mikkel's chain, lifted the culprit in his arms, and slipped him into the bosom of his waistcoat. Then he stole up to his garret, gathered his clothes in a bundle, and watched his chance to escape from the house unnoticed. And while Master Finn and his dog were hunting high and low for Mikkel in the barns and stables, Thor was hurrying away over the fields, every now and then glancing anxiously behind him, and nearly smothering Mikkel in his efforts to keep him concealed, lest Achilles should catch his scent. But Mikkel had his own views on that subject, and was not to be suppressed; and just as his master was congratulating himself on their happy escape, they heard the deep baying of a dog, and saw Achilles, followed by the student with his gun, tracking them in fierce pursuit. Thor, whose only hope was to reach the fiord, redoubled his speed, skipped across fences, hedges, and stiles, and ran so fast that earth and stones seemed to be flying in the other direction. Yet Achilles' baying was coming nearer and nearer, and was hardly twenty feet distant by the time the boy had flung himself into a boat, and with four vigorous oar-strokes had shot out into the water. The dog leaped after him, but was soon beyond his depth, and the high breakers flung him back upon the beach.

"Come back at once," cried Finn, imperiously. "It

is not your boat. If you don't obey, I'll have you arrested."

Thor did not answer, but rowed with all his might.

"If you take another stroke," shouted the student furiously, levelling his gun, "I'll shoot both you and your thievish fox."

It was meant only for intimidation; but where Mikkel's life was at stake, Thor was not easily frightened.

"Shoot away!" he cried, thinking that he was now at a safe distance, and that the student's marksmanship was none of the best. But before he realized what he had said, whiz! went a bullet over his head. A stiff gale was blowing, and the little boat was tossed like a foot-ball on the incoming and the outgoing waves; but the plucky lad struggled on bravely, until he hove alongside a fishing schooner, which was to sail the next morning for Drontheim. Fortunately the skipper needed a deck hand, and Thor was promptly engaged. The boat which had helped him to escape was found later and towed back to shore by a fisherman.

III.

HOW MIKKEL MAKES HIS FORTUNE.

In Drontheim, which is a large commercial city on the western coast of Norway, Thor soon found occupation as office-boy in a bank, which did business under the name of C. P. Lyng & Co. He was a boy of an open, fearless countenance, and with a frank and winning manner. Mr. Lyng, at the time when Thor entered his employ, had just separated from his partner, Mr. Tulstrup, because the latter had defrauded the firm and several of its customers. Mr. Lyng had papers in his safe which proved Mr. Tulstrup's guilt, but he had contented himself with dismissing him from the firm, and had allowed him to take the share of the firm's property to which he was legally entitled. The settlement, however, had not satisfied Mr. Tulstrup, and he had, in order to revenge himself, gone about to the various customers, whom he had himself defrauded, and persuaded them to commence suit against Mr. Lyng, whom he represented as being the guilty party. He did not, at that time, know that Mr. Lyng had gained possession of the papers which revealed the real author of the fraud. On the contrary, he flat-

tered himself that he had destroyed every trace of his own dishonest transactions.

The fact that Mr. Lyng belonged to a family which had always been distinguished, in business and social circles, for its integrity and honor only whetted Tulstrup's desire to destroy his good name, and having laid his plans carefully, he anticipated an easy triumph over honest Mr. Lyng. His dismay, therefore, was very great when, after the suit had been commenced in the courts, he learned that it was his own name and liberty which were in danger, and not those of his former partner. Mr. Tulstrup, in spite of the position he had occupied, was a desperate man, and was capable, under such circumstances, of resorting to desperate remedies. But, like most Norwegians, he had a streak of superstition in his nature, and cherished an absurd belief in signs and omens, in lucky and unlucky days, and in spectres and apparitions, foreboding death or disaster. Mr. Tulstrup's father had believed in such things, and it had been currently reported among the peasantry that he had been followed by a spectral fox, which some asserted to be his wraith, or double. This fox, it was said, had frequently been seen during the old man's lifetime, and when he once saw it himself, he was frightened nearly out of his wits. Superstitious stories of this kind are so common in Norway that one can hardly spend a month in any country district without hearing dozens of them. The belief in a *fylgia*, or wraith in the shape of an animal, dates far back into antiquity, and figures largely in the sagas, or ancient legends of the Northland.

It has already been told that Thor had obtained a position as office-boy in Mr. Lyng's bank; and it was more owing to the boy's winning appearance than to any fondness for foxes, on Mr. Lyng's part, that Mikkel also was engaged. It was arranged that a cushion whereupon Mikkel might sleep should be put behind the stove in the back office. At first Mikkel endured his captivity here with great fortitude; but he did not like it, and it was plain that he was pining for the parsonage and his kennel in the free air, and the pleasant companionship of the geese and the stupid Achilles. Thor then obtained permission to have him walk about unchained, and the clerks, who admired his graceful form and dainty ways, soon grew very fond of him, and stroked him caressingly, as he promenaded along the counter or seated himself on their shoulders, inspecting their accounts with critical eyes. Thor was very happy to see his friend petted, though he had an occasional twinge of jealousy when Mikkel made himself too agreeable to old Mr. Barth, the cashier, or kissed young Mr. Dreyer, the assistant bookkeeper. Such faithlessness on Mikkel's part was an ill return for all the sacrifices Thor had made for him; and yet, hard as it was, it had to be borne. For an office-boy cannot afford to have emotions, or, if he has them, cannot afford the luxury of giving way to them.

C. P. Lyng & Co.'s bank was a solid, old-fashioned business-house which the clerks entered as boys and where they remained all their lives. Mr. Barth, the cashier, had occupied his present desk for twenty-one years, and had spent nine years more in inferior posi-

tions. He was now a stout little man of fifty, with close cropped, highly-respectable side-whiskers and thin gray hair, which was made to cover his crown by the aid of a small comb. This comb, which was fixed above his right ear and held the straggling locks together, was a source of great amusement to the clerks, who made no end of witticisms about it. But Mr. Barth troubled himself very little about their poor puns, and sat serenely poring over his books and packages of bank-bills from morning till night. He prided himself above all on his regularity, and it was said that he had never been one minute too late or too early during the thirty years he had been in Mr. Lyng's bank; accordingly, he had little patience with the shortcomings of his subordinates, and fined and punished them in various ways, if they were but a moment tardy; for the most atrocious of all crimes, in Mr. Barth's opinion, was tardiness. The man who suffered most from his severity was Mr. Dreyer, the assistant book-keeper. Mr. Dreyer was a good-looking young man, and very fond of society; and it happened sometimes that, on the morning after a ball, he would sleep rather late. He had long rebelled in silence against Mr. Barth's tyranny, and when he found that his dissatisfaction was shared by many of the other clerks, he conceived a plan to revenge himself on his persecutor. To this end a conspiracy was formed among the younger clerks, and it was determined to make Mikkel the agent of their vengeance.

It was well known by the clerks that Mr. Barth was superstitious and afraid in the dark; and it was generally

agreed that it would be capital fun to give him a little fright. Accordingly the following plan was adopted: A bottle of the oil of phosphorus was procured and Mikkel's fur was thoroughly rubbed with it, so that in the dark the whole animal would be luminous. At five minutes before five, someone should go down in the cellar and turn off the gas, just as the cashier was about to enter the back office to lock up the safe. Then, when the illuminated Mikkel glared out on him from a dark corner, he would probably shout or faint or cry out, and then all the clerks should rush sympathetically to him and render him every assistance.

Thus the plan was laid, and there was a breathless, excited stillness in the bank when the hour of five approached. It had been dark for two hours, and the clerks sat on their high stools, bending silently over their desks, scribbling away for dear life. Promptly at seven minutes before five, up rose Mr. Barth and gave the signal to have the books closed; then, to the unutterable astonishment of the conspirators, he handed the key of the safe to Mr. Dreyer (who knew the combination), and told him to lock the safe and return the key. At that very instant, out went the gas; and Mr. Dreyer, although he was well prepared, could himself hardly master his fright at Mikkel's terrible appearance. He struck a match, lighted a wax taper (which was used for sealing letters), and tremblingly locked the safe; then, abashed and discomfited, he advanced to the cashier's desk and handed him the key.

"Perhaps you would have the kindness, Mr. Dreyer,"

said Mr. Barth, calmly, "to write a letter of complaint to the gas-company before you go home. It will never do in the world to have such things happen. I suppose there must be water in the pipes."

The old man buttoned his overcoat up to his chin and marched out; whereupon a shout of laughter burst forth, in which Mr. Dreyer did not join. He could not see what they found to laugh at, he said. It took him a long while to compose his letter of complaint to the gas-company.

Mikkel in the meanwhile was feeling very uncomfortable. He could not help marvelling at his extraordinary appearance. He rubbed himself against chairs and tables, and found to his astonishment that he made everything luminous that he touched. He had never known any respectable fox which possessed this accomplishment, and he felt sure that in some way something was wrong with him. He could not sleep, but walked restlessly about on the desks and counters, bristled with anger at the slightest sound, and was miserable and excited. He could not tell how far the night had advanced, when he heard a noise in the back office (which fronted upon the courtyard) as if a window was being opened. His curiosity was aroused and he walked sedately across the floor; then he stopped for a moment to compose himself, for he was well aware that what he saw was something extraordinary. A man with a dark-lantern in his hand was kneeling before the safe with a key in his hand. Mikkel advanced a little farther and paused in a threatening attitude on the threshold of the door. With his luminous

WITH HIS LUMINOUS FACE AND BODY, HE WAS TERRIBLE TO BEHOLD.

face and body, and a halo of phosphorescent light round about him, he was terrible to behold. He gave a little snort, at which the man turned quickly about. But no sooner had he caught sight of the illuminated Mikkel than he flung himself on his knees before the little animal, and with clasped hands and a countenance wild with fear exclaimed: "Oh, I know who thou art! Pardon me, pardon me! Thou art my father's spectral fox! I know thee, I know thee!"

Mikkel had never suspected that he was anything so terrible; but, as he saw that the man was bent on mischief, he did not think it worth while to contradict him. He only curved his back and bristled, until the man, beside himself with fear, made a rush for the window and leaped out into the court-yard. Then Mikkel, thinking that he had had excitement enough for one night, curled himself up on his cushion behind the stove and went to sleep.

The next morning, when Mr. Barth arrived, he found a window in the back office broken, and the door of the safe wide open. On the floor lay a bundle of papers, all relating to the transactions of Tulstrup while a member of the firm, and, moreover, a hat, marked on the inside with Tulstrup's name, was found on a chair.

On the same day Mr. Lyng was summoned to the bedside of his former partner, who made a full confession, and offered to return through him the money which he had fraudulently acquired. His leg was broken, and he seemed otherwise shattered in body and mind. It had been his purpose, he said, to drive Mr. Lyng from the

firm in disgrace, and he was sure he could have accomplished it, if Providence itself had not interfered. But, incredible as it seemed, he had seen a luminous animal in the bank, and he felt convinced that it was his father's spectral fox. It was well enough to smile at such things and call them childish, but he had certainly seen, he said, a wonderful, shining fox.

Mr. Lyng did not attempt to convince Mr. Tulstrup that he was wrong. He took the money and distributed it among those who had suffered by Mr. Tulstrup's frauds, and thus many needy people—widows and industrious laborers—regained their hard-earned property, and all because Mikkel's skin was luminous. When Mr. Lyng heard the whole story from Mr. Dreyer, he laughed heartily and long. But from that day he took a warm interest in Thor and his fox, and sent the former to school and, later, to the university, where he made an honorable name for himself by his talents and industry.

Poor Mikkel is now almost gray, and his teeth are so blunt that he has to have his food minced before he can eat it. But he still occupies a soft rug behind the stove in the student's room, and Thor hopes he will live long enough to be introduced to his master's wife. For it would be a pity if she were not to know him to whom her husband owes his position, and she, accordingly, hers.

THE FAMINE AMONG THE GNOMES.

I BELIEVE it was in the winter of 18— (but it does not matter so much about the time) that the servants on the large estate of Halthorp raised a great ado about something or other. Whereupon the Baron of Halthorp, who was too stout to walk down the stairs on slight provocation, called his steward, in a voice like that of an angry lion, and asked him, "Why in the name of Moses he did not keep the rascals quiet."

"But, your lordship," stammered the steward, who was as thin as the baron was stout, "I have kept them quiet for more than a month past, though it has been hard enough. Now they refuse to obey me unless I admit them to your lordship's presence, that they may state their complaint."

"Impudent beggars!" growled the old gentleman. "Tell them that I am about to take my after-dinner nap, and that I do not wish to be disturbed."

"I have told them that a dozen times," whined the steward, piteously. "But they are determined to leave in a body, unless your lordship consents to hear them."

"Leave! They can't leave," cried his honor. "The law binds them. Well, well, to save talking, fling the doors open and let them come in."

The steward hobbled away to the great oak-panelled doors (I forgot to tell you that he limped in his left foot), and, cautiously turning the knob and the key, peeped out into the hall. There stood the servants—twenty-eight in all—but, oh! what a sight! They were hollow-cheeked, with hungry eyes and bloodless lips, and deep lines about their mouths, as if they had not seen food for weeks. Their bony hands twitched nervously at the coarse clothes that flapped in loose folds about their lean and awkward limbs. They were indeed a pitiful spectacle. Only a single one of them—and that was of course the cook—looked like an ordinary mortal, or an extraordinary mortal, if you like, for he was nearly as broad as he was long. It was owing to the fact that he walked at the head of the procession, as they filed into the parlor, that the baron did not immediately discover the miserable condition of the rest. But when they had faced about, and stood in a long row from wall to wall—well, you would hardly believe it, but the baron, hard-hearted as he was, came near fainting. There is a limit to all things, and even a heart of steel would have been moved at the sight of such melancholy objects.

"Steward," he roared, when he had sufficiently recovered himself, "who is the demon who has dared to trifle with my fair name and honor? Name him, sir—name him, and I will strangle him on the spot!"

The steward, even if he had been acquainted with the demon, would have thought twice before naming him under such circumstances. Accordingly he was silent.

"Have I not," continued the baron, still in a voice that

made his subjects quake—"have I not caused ample provisions to be daily distributed among you? Have not you, Mr. Steward, the keys to my store-houses, and have you not my authority to see that each member of my household is properly provided for?"

The steward dared not answer; he only nodded his head in silence.

"If it please your lordship," finally began a squeaky little voice at the end of the row (it was that of the under-groom), "it isn't the steward as is to blame, but it's the victuals. Somehow there isn't any taste nor fillin' to them. Whether I eat pork and cabbage or porridge with molasses, it don't make no difference. It all tastes alike. As I say, your lordship, the old Nick has got into the victuals."

The under-groom had hardly ceased speaking before the baron, who was a very irascible old gentleman, seized his large gold-headed cane and as quickly as his bulk would allow, rushed forward to give vent to his anger.

"I'll teach you manners, you impudent clown!" he bawled out, as, with his cane lifted above his head, he rushed into the ranks of the frightened servants, shouting to the under-groom, "Criticise my victuals, will you, you miserable knave!"

The under-groom having on former occasions made the acquaintance of the baron's cane, and still remembering the unpleasant sensation, immediately made for the door, and slipped nimbly out before a blow had reached him. All the others, who had to suffer for their spokesman's boldness, tumbled pell-mell through the same opening.

jumped, rolled, or vaulted down the steps, and landed in a confused heap at the bottom of the stairs.

The baron, in the meanwhile, marched with long strides up and down the floor, and expressed himself, not in the politest language, concerning the impudence of his domestics.

"However," he grumbled to himself, "I must look into this affair and find out what fraud there is at the bottom of it. The poor creatures couldn't get as lean as that unless there was some real trouble."

About three hours later the baron heard the large bell over the gable of his store-house ring out for dinner. The wood-cutters and the men who drove the snow-plough, and all other laborers on the large estate, as soon as they heard it, flung away their axes and snow-shovels and hurried up to the mansion, their beards and hair and eyebrows all white with hoar-frost, so that they looked like walking snow-men. But as it happened, the under-groom, Nils Tagfat, chanced at that moment to be cutting down a large snow-laden fir-tree which grew on a projecting knoll of the mountain. He pulled off his mittens and blew on his hands (for it was bitter cold), and was about to shoulder his axe, when suddenly he heard a chorus of queer little metallic voices, as it seemed, right under his feet. He stopped and listened.

"There is the bell of Halthorp ringing! Where is my cap? where is my cap?" he heard distinctly uttered, though he could not exactly place the sound, nor did he see anybody within a mile around. And just for the joke of the thing, Nils, who was always a jolly fellow,

made his voice as fine as he could, and, mimicking the tiny voices, squeaked out:

"Where is my cap? Where is my cap?"

But imagine his astonishment when suddenly he heard a voice answer him: "You can take grandfather's cap!" and at the same moment there was tossed into his hands something soft, resembling a small red-peaked cap. Just out of curiosity, Nils put it on his head to try how it would fit him, and small as it looked, it fitted him perfectly. But now, as the cap touched his head, his eyes were opened to the strangest spectacle he ever beheld. Out of the mountain came a crowd of gnomes, all with little red-peaked caps, which made them invisible to all who were not provided with similar caps. They hurried down the hill-side toward Halthorp, and Nils, who was anxious to see what they were about, followed at a proper distance behind. As he had half expected, they scrambled up on the railings at the door of the servants' dining-hall, and as soon as the door was opened they rushed in, climbed up on the chairs, and seated themselves on the backs just as the servants took their places on the seats. And now Nils, who, you must remember, had on the cap that made him invisible, came near splitting his sides with laughter. The first course was boiled beef and cabbage. The smell was delicious to Nils's hungry nostrils, but he had to conquer his appetite in order to see the end of the game. The steward stood at the end of the table and served each with a liberal portion; and at the steward's side sat the baron himself, in a large, cushioned easy-chair. He

did not eat, however; he was there merely to see fair play.

Each servant fell to work greedily with his knife and fork, and just as he had got a delicious morsel half-way to his mouth, the gnome on the back of his chair stretched himself forward and deftly snatched the meat from the end of the fork. Thus, all the way around the table, each man unconsciously put his piece of beef into the wide-open mouth of his particular gnome. And the unbidden guests grinned shrewdly at one another, and seemed to think it all capital fun. Sometimes, when the wooden trays (which were used instead of plates) were sent to be replenished, they made horrrible grimaces, often mimicking their poor victims, who chewed and swallowed and went through all the motions of eating, without obtaining the slightest nourishment. They all would have liked to fling knives and forks and trays out through the windows, but they had the morning's chastisement freshly in mind, and they did not dare open their mouths, except for the futile purpose of eating.

"Well, my lads and lasses," said the baron, when he had watched the meal for some minutes; "if you can complain of food like this, you indeed deserve to be flogged and put on prison fare."

"Very likely, your lordship," said one of the milk-maids; "but if your lordship would demean yourself to take a morsel with us, we would bless your lordship for your kindness and complain no more."

The baron, looking around at all the hopeless eyes and haggard faces, felt that there was something besides

THE BARON SPRANG UP WITH AN EXCLAMATION OF FRIGHT.

vanity that prompted the request; and he accordingly ordered the cook to bring his own plate and drew his chair up to the table. Hardly had he seized his knife when Nils saw a gnome, who had hitherto been seated on the floor awaiting his turn, crawl up on the arm of his big chair and, standing on tiptoe, seize between his teeth the first bit the baron was putting to his mouth. The old gentleman looked astounded, mystified, bewildered; but, fearing to make an exhibition of himself, selected another mouthful, and again conducted it the accustomed way. The gnome came near laughing right out, as he despatched this second morsel in the same manner as the first, and all around the table the little monsters held their hands over their mouths and seemed on the point of exploding. The baron put down knife and fork with a bang; his eyes seemed to be starting out of his head, and his whole face assumed an expression of unspeakable horror.

"It is Satan himself who is mocking us!" he cried. "Send for the priest! Send for the priest!"

Just then Nils crept around behind the baron, who soon felt something soft, like a fine skull-cap, pressed on his head, and before he had time to resent the liberty, he started in terror at the sight of the little creature that he saw sitting on the arm of his chair. He sprang up with an exclamation of fright, and pushed the chair back so violently that it was almost upset upon the floor. The gnome dexterously leaped down and stood staring back at the baron for an instant; then, with a spring, he snatched a potato and half a loaf of bread, and disap-

peared. In his haste, the baron ran against Nils, the under-groom, who (now without a cap) was standing with a smiling countenance calmly surveying all the confusion about him.

"Now, was I right, your lordship?" he asked, with a respectful bow. "Did *you* find the victuals very filling?"

The baron, who was yet too frightened to answer, stood gazing toward a window-pane, which suddenly and noiselessly broke, and through which the whole procession of gnomes, huddled together in flight, tumbled headlong into the snow-bank without.

"And what shall we do, Nils," said the baron, the next day, when he had recovered from his shock, "to prevent the return of the unbidden guests?"

"Stop ringing the great bell," answered Nils. "It is that which invites the gnomes."

And since that day the dinner-bell has never been rung at Halthorp.

But one day, late in the winter, Nils the groom, as he was splitting wood on the mountain-side, heard a plaintively tinkling voice within, singing:

> "Hunger and sorrow each new day is bringing,
> Since Halthorp bell has ceased its ringing."

HOW BERNT WENT WHALING.

Bernt Holter and his sister Hilda were sitting on the beach, playing with large spiral cockles which they imagined were cows and horses. They built stables out of chips, and fenced in their pastures, and led their cattle in long rows through the deep grooves they had made in the sand.

"When I grow up to be a man," said Bernt, who was twelve years old, "I am going to sea and catch whales, as father did when he was young. I don't want to stand behind a counter and sell calico and tape and coffee and sugar," he continued, thrusting his chest forward, putting his hands into his pockets, and marching with a manly swagger across the beach. "I don't want to play with cockles, like a baby, any more," he added, giving a forcible kick to one of Hilda's finest shells and sending it flying across the sand.

"I wish you wouldn't be so naughty, Bernt," cried his sister, with tears in her eyes. "If you don't want to play with me, I can play alone. Bernt, oh—look there!"

Just at that moment a dozen or more columns of water flew high into the air, and the same number of large, black tail-fins emerged from the surface of the fiord, and again slowly vanished.

"Hurrah!" cried Bernt, in great glee, "it is a school of dolphins. Good-by, Hilda dear, I think I'll run down to the boat-house."

"I think I'll go with you, Bernt," said his sister, obligingly, rising and shaking the sand from her skirts.

"I think you'll not," remarked her brother, angrily; "I can run faster than you."

So saying, he rushed away over the crisp sand as fast as his feet would carry him, while his sister Hilda, who was rather a soft-hearted girl, and ready with her tears, ran after him, all out of breath and calling to him at the top of her voice. Finally, when she was more than half way to the boat-house, she stumbled against a stone and fell full length upon the beach. Bernt, fearing that she might be hurt, paused in his flight and returned to pick her up, but could not refrain from giving her a vindictive little shake, as soon as he discovered that she had sustained no injury.

"I do think girls are the greatest bother that ever was invented," he said, in high dudgeon. "I don't see what they are good for, anyway."

"I want to go with you, Bernt," cried Hilda.

Seeing there was no escape, he thought he might just as well be kind to her.

"You may go," he said, "if you will promise never to tell anybody what I am going to do?"

"No, Bernt, I shall never tell," said the child, eagerly, and drying her tears.

"I am going a-whaling," whispered Bernt, mysteriously. "Come along!"

"Whaling!" echoed the girl, in delicious excitement. "Dear Bernt, how good you are! Oh, how lovely! No, I shall never tell it to anybody as long as I live."

It was late in the afternoon, and the sun, which at that time of the year never sets in the northern part of Norway, threw its red, misty rays like a veil of dull flame over the lofty mountains which, with their snow-hooded peaks, pierced the fiery clouds; their huge reflections shone in soft tints of red, green, and blue in the depth of the fiord, whose glittering surface was calm and smooth as a mirror. Only in the bay which the school of dolphins had entered was the water ruffled; but there, high spouts rose every moment into the air and descended again in showers of fine spray.

"It is well that father has gone away with the fishermen," said Bernt, as he exerted himself with all his might to push his small boat down over the slippery beams of the boat-house. "Here, Hilda, hold my harpoon for me."

Hilda, greatly impressed with her own dignity in being allowed to hold so dangerous a weapon as a harpoon, grasped it eagerly and held it up in both her arms. Bernt once more put his shoulder to the prow of his light skiff (which, in honor of his father's whaling voyages, he had named The North Pole) and with a tremendous effort set it afloat. Then he carefully assisted Hilda into the boat, in the stern of which she seated herself. Next he seized the oars and rowed gently out beyond the rocky headland toward which he had seen the dolphins

steer their course. He was an excellent sailor for his years, and could manage a boat noiselessly and well.

"Hilda, take the helm," he whispered, "or, if you were only good for anything, you might paddle and we should be upon them in a minute. Now, remember, and push the tiller to the side opposite where I want to go."

"I'll remember," she replied, breathlessly.

The gentle plashing of the oars and the clicking of the rowlocks were the only sounds which broke the silence of the evening. Now and then a solitary gull gave a long, shrill scream as she dived beneath the surface of the fiord, and once a fish-hawk's loud, discordant yell was flung by the echoes from mountain to mountain.

"Starboard," commanded Bernt, sternly; but Hilda in her agitation pushed the tiller to the wrong side and sent the boat flying to port.

"Starboard, I said!" cried the boy, indignantly; "if I had known you would be so stupid, I should never have taken you along."

"Please, brother dear, do be patient with me," pleaded the girl, remorsefully. "I shall not do it again."

It then pleased his majesty, Bernt Holter, to relent, although his sister had by her awkwardness alarmed the dolphins, sending the boat right in their wake, when it had been his purpose to head them off. He knew well enough that it takes several minutes for a whole school of so large a fish as the dolphin to change its course, and the hunter would thus have a good chance of "pricking" a laggard before he could catch up with his companions. Bernt strained every muscle, while coolly keeping his eye

on the water to note the course of his game. His only chance was in cutting across the bay and lying in wait for them at the next headland. For he knew very well that if they were seriously frightened and suspected that they were being pursued, they could easily beat him by the speed and dexterity of their movements. But he saw to his delight that his calculations were correct. Instead of taking the straight course seaward, the dolphins, being probably in pursuit of fresh herring, young cod, and other marine delicacies which they needed for their late dinner, steered close to land where the young fish are found in greater abundance, and their following the coast-line of the bay gave Bernt a chance of cutting them off and making their acquaintance at closer quarters. Having crossed the little bay, he commanded his sister to lie down flat in the bottom of the boat—a command which she willingly, though with a quaking heart, obeyed. He backed cautiously into a little nook among the rocks from which he had a clear passage out, and having one hand on his harpoon, which was secured by a rope to the prow of the boat, and the other on the boat-hook (with which he meant to push himself rapidly out into the midst of the school), he peered joyously over the gunwale and heard the loud snorts, followed by the hissing descent of the spray, approaching nearer and nearer. Now, steady my boy! Don't lose your presence of mind! One, two, three—there goes! Jumping up, fixing the boat-hook against the rock, and with a tremendous push shooting out into the midst of the school was but a moment's work. Whew! The water spouts and whirls about his

ears as in a shower-bath. Off goes his cap. Let it go! But stop! What was that? A terrific slap against the side of the boat as from the tail of a huge fish. Hilda jumps up with a piercing shriek and the boat careens heavily to the port side, the gunwale dipping for a moment under the water. A loud snort, followed again by a shower of spray, is heard right ahead, and, at the same moment, the harpoon flies through the air with a fierce whiz and lodges firmly in a broad, black back. The huge fish in its first spasm of pain gives a fling with its tail and for an instant the little boat is lifted out of the water on the back of the wounded dolphin.

"Keep steady, don't let go the rope!" shouts Bernt at the top of his voice, "he won't hurt——"

But before he had finished, the light skiff, with a tremendous splash, struck the water again, and the little coil of rope to which the harpoon was attached flew humming over the gunwale and disappeared with astonishing speed into the deep.

Bernt seized the cord, and when there was little left to spare, tied it firmly to the prow of the boat, which then, of course, leaped forward with every effort of the dolphin to rid itself of the harpoon. The rest of the school, having taken alarm, had sought deep water, and were seen, after a few minutes, far out beyond the headland.

"I want to go home, Bernt," Hilda exclaimed, vehemently. "I want to go home; I don't want to get killed, Bernt."

"You silly thing! You can't go home now. You

must just do as I tell you; but, of course—if you only are sensible—you won't get killed, or hurt at all."

While he was yet speaking, the boat began all of a sud den to move rapidly over the water.

The dolphin had bethought him of flight, not knowing that, however swiftly he swam, he pulled his enemy after him. As he rose to the surface, about fifty or sixty yards ahead, a small column of water shot feebly upward, and spread in a fan-like, irregular shape before it fell. The poor beast floundered along for a few seconds, its long, black body in full view, and then again dived down, dragging the boat onward with a series of quick convulsive pulls.

Bernt held on tightly to the cord, while the water foamed and bubbled about the prow and surged in swirling eddies in the wake of the skiff.

"If I can only manage to get that dolphin," said Bernt, "I know father will give me at least a dollar for him. There's lots of blubber on him, and that is used for oil to burn in lamps."

The little girl did not answer, but grasped the gunwale hard on each side, and gazed anxiously at the foaming and bubbling water. Bernt, too, sat silent in the prow, but with a fisherman's excitement in his face. The sun hung, huge and fiery, over the western mountains, and sent up a great, dusky glare among the clouds, which burned in intense but lurid hues of red and gold. Gradu ally, and before they were fully aware of it, the boat began to rise and descend again, and Bernt discovered by

the heavy, even roll of the water that they must be near the ocean.

"Now you may stop, my dear dolphin," he said, coolly. "We don't want you to take us across to America. Who would have thought that you were such a tough customer anyway?"

He let go the rope, and, seating himself again, put the oars into the rowlocks. He tried to arrest the speed of the boat by vigorous backing; but, to his surprise, found that his efforts were of no avail.

"Hilda," he cried, not betraying, however, the anxiety he was beginning to feel, "take the other pair of oars and let us see what you are good for."

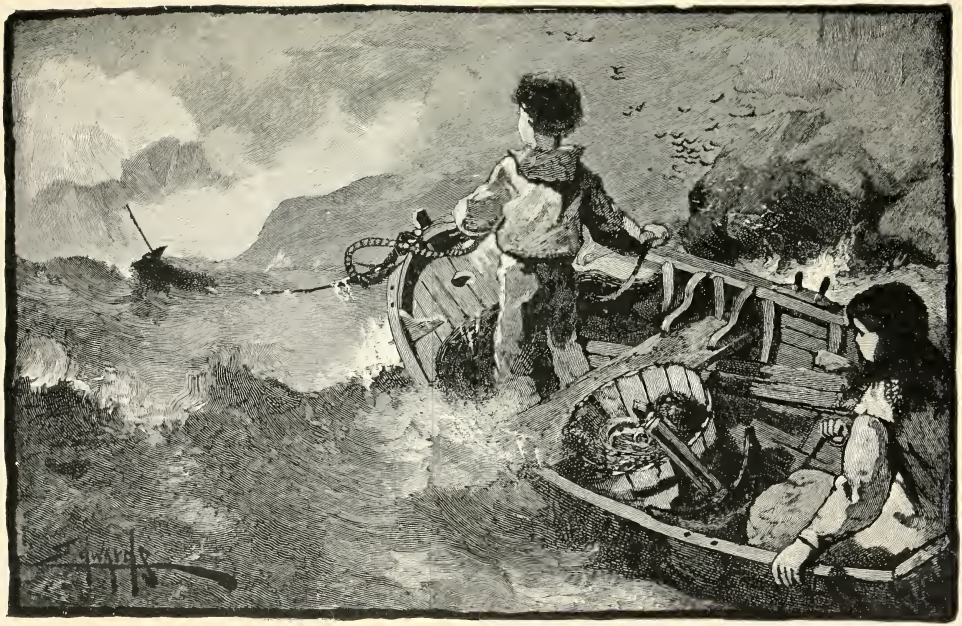
Hilda, not realizing the danger, obeyed, a little tremblingly, perhaps, and put the other pair of oars into their places.

"Now let us turn the boat around," sternly commanded the boy. "It's getting late, and we must be home before bedtime. One—two—three—pull!"

The oars struck the water simultaneously and the boat veered half way around; but the instant the oars were lifted again, it started back into its former course.

"Why don't you cut the rope and let the dolphin go?" asked Hilda, striving hard to master the tears, which again were pressing to her eyelids.

"Not I," answered her brother; "why, all the fellows would laugh at me if they heard how I first caught the dolphin and then the dolphin caught me. No, indeed. He hasn't much strength left by this time, and we shall soon see him float up."



TOWED BY THE WOUNDED DOLPHIN.

He had hardly uttered these words, when they shot past a rocky promontory, and the vast ocean spread out before them. Both sister and brother gave an involuntary cry of terror. There they were, in their frail little skiff, far away from home, and with no boat visible for miles around. "Cut the rope, cut the rope! Dear Bernt, cut the rope!" screamed Hilda, wringing her hands in despair.

"I am afraid it is too late," answered her brother, doggedly. "The tide is going out, and that is what has carried us so swiftly to sea. I was a fool that I didn't think of it."

"But what shall we do—what shall we do!" moaned the girl, hiding her face in her apron.

"Stop that crying," demanded her brother, imperiously. "I'll tell you what we shall have to do. We couldn't manage to pull back against the tide, especially here at the mouth of the fiord, where the current is so strong. We had better keep on seaward, and then, if we are in luck, we shall meet the fishing-boats when they return, which will be before morning. Anyway, there is little or no wind, and the night is light enough, so that they cannot miss seeing us."

"Oh, I shall surely die, I shall surely die!" sobbed Hilda, flinging herself down in the bottom of the boat.

Bernt deigned her no answer, but sat gazing sullenly out over the ocean toward the western horizon, over which the low sun shed its lurid mist of fire. The ocean broke with a mighty roar against the rocks, hushed itself for a few seconds, and then hurled itself

against the rocks anew. To be frank, he was not quite so fearless as he looked; but he thought it cowardly to give expression to his fear, and especially in the presence of his sister, in whose estimation he had always been a hero. The sun sank lower until it almost touched the water. The rope hung perfectly slack from the prow, and only now and then grew tense as if something was feebly tugging at the other end. He concluded that the dolphin had bled to death or was exhausted. In the meanwhile, they were drifting rapidly westward, and the hollow noise of the breakers was growing more and more distant. From a merely idle impulse of curiosity Bernt began to haul in his rope, and presently saw a black body, some ten or twelve feet long, floating up only a few rods from the boat. He gave four or five pulls at the rope and was soon alongside of it. Bernt felt very sad as he looked at it, and was sorry he had killed the harmless animal. The thought came into his mind that his present desperate situation was God's punishment on him for his cruel delight in killing.

"But God would not punish my sister for my wickedness," he reflected, gazing tenderly at Hilda, who lay in the boat with her hands folded under her cheek, having sobbed herself to sleep. He felt consoled, and, murmuring a prayer he had once heard in church for "sailors in distress at sea," lay down at his sister's side and stared up into the vast, red dome of the sky above him. The water plashed gently against the sides of the skiff as it rose and rocked upon the great smooth "ground swell," and again sank down, as it seemed into infinite depths, only to

climb again the next billow. Bernt felt sleepy and hungry, and the more he stared into the sky the more indistinct became his vision. He sprang up, determined to make one last, desperate effort, and strove to row in toward land, but he could make no headway against the strong tide, and with aching limbs and a heavy heart he again stretched himself out in the bottom of the boat. Before he knew it he was fast asleep.

He did not know how long he had slept, but the dim, fiery look of the sun had changed into an airy rose color, when he felt someone seizing him by the arm and crying out: "In the name of wonders, boy, how did you come here?"

He rubbed his eyes and saw his father's shaggy face close to his.

"And my dear little girl too," cried the father, in a voice of terror. "Heaven be praised for having preserved her!"

And he lifted Hilda in his arms and pressed her close to his breast. Bernt thought he saw tears glistening in his eyes. That made him suddenly very solemn. For he had never seen his father cry before. Around about him was a fleet of some thirty or forty boats laden to the gunwale with herring. He now understood his rescue.

"Now tell me, Bernt, truthfully," said his father, gravely, still holding the sobbing Hilda tightly in his embrace, "how did this happen?"

"I went a-whaling," stammered Bernt, feeling not at all so brave as he had felt when he started on his voyage. But he still had courage enough to point feebly to the

dead dolphin which lay secured a short distance from the skiff.

"Wait till we get home," said his father, "then *I'll* go a-whaling."

He stood, for a while, gazing in amazement at the huge fish, then again at his son, as if comparing their bulk. He felt that he ought to scold the youthful sportsman, but he knew it was in the blood, and was therefore more inclined to praise his daring spirit. Accordingly, when he got home, he did not go a-whaling.

"Bernt," he said, patting the boy's curly head, "you may be a brave lad; but next time your bravery gets the better of you—leave the little lass at home."

THE COOPER AND THE WOLVES.

TOLLEF KOLSTAD was a cooper, and a very skilful cooper he was said to be. He had a little son named Thor, who was as fond of his father as his father was of him. Whatever Tollef did or said, Thor was sure to imitate; if Tollef was angry and flung a piece of wood at the dog who used to come into the shop and bother him, Thor, thinking it was a manly thing to do, flung another piece at poor Hector, who ran out whimpering through the door.

Thor, of course, was not very old before he had a corner in his father's shop, where, with a small set of tools which had been especially bought for him, he used to make little pails and buckets and barrels, which he sold for five or ten cents apiece to the boys of the neighborhood. All the money earned in this way he put into a bank of tin, made like a drum, of which his mother kept the key. When he grew up, he thought, he would be a rich man.

The last weeks before Christmas are, in Norway, always the briskest season in all trades; then the farmer wants his horses shod, so that he may take his wife and children to church in his fine, swan-shaped sleigh; he wants bread and cakes made to last through the holidays,

so that his servants may be able to amuse themselves, and his guests may be well entertained when they call; and, above all, he wants large tubs and barrels, stoutly made of beech staves, for his beer and mead, with which he pledges every stranger who, during the festival, happens to pass his door. You may imagine, then, that at Christmas time coopers are much in demand, and that it is not to be wondered at if sometimes they are behindhand with their orders. This was unfortunately the case with Tollef Kolstad at the time when the strange thing happened which I am about to tell you. He had been at work since the early dawn, upon a huge tub or barrel, which had been ordered by Grim Berglund, the richest peasant in the parish. Grim was to give a large party on the following day (which was Christmas-Eve), and he had made Tollef promise to bring the barrel that same night, so that he might pour the beer into it, and have all in readiness for the holidays, when it would be wrong to do any work. It was about ten o'clock at night when Tollef made the last stroke with his hatchet on the large hollow thing, upon which every blow resounded as on a drum. He went to a neighbor and hired from him his horse and flat sleigh, and was about to start on his errand, when he heard a tiny voice calling behind him:

"Father, do take me along, too!"

"I can't, my boy. There may be wolves on the lake, to-night, and they might like to eat up little boys who stay out of bed so late."

"But I am not afraid of them, father. I have my whip and my hatchet, and I'll whip them and cut them."

Thor here made some threatening flourishes with his weapons in the air, indicating how he would give it to the wolves in case they should venture to molest him.

"Well, come along, you little rascal," said his father, laughing, and feeling rather proud of his boy's dauntless spirit. "You and I are not to be trifled with when we get mad, are we, Thor?"

"No, indeed, father," said Thor, and clenched his little mittened fist.

Tollef then lifted him up, wrapped him warmly in his sheepskin jacket, and put him between his knees, while he himself seized the reins and urged the horse on.

It was a glorious winter night. The snow sparkled and shone as if sprinkled with starry diamonds, the aurora borealis flashed in pale, shifting colors along the horizon, and the moon sailed calmly through a vast, dark-blue sea of air. Little Thor shouted with delight as he saw the broad expanse of glittering ice, which they were about to cross, stretching out before them like a polished shield of steel.

"Oh, father, I wish we had taken our skates along, and pulled your barrel across on a sled," cried the boy, ecstatically.

"That I might have done, if I had had a sled large enough for the barrel," replied the father. "But then we should have been obliged to pull it up the hills on the other side."

The sleigh now struck the ice and shot forward, swinging from side to side, as the horse pulled a little unevenly. Whew! how the cold air cut in their faces. How it

whizzed and howled in the tree-tops! Hark! What was that? Tollef instinctively pressed his boy more closely to him. Hush!—his heart stood still, while that of the boy, who merely felt the reflex shock of his father's agitation, hammered away the more rapidly. A terrible, long-drawn howl, as from a chorus of wild, far-away voices, came floating away over the crowns of the pine-trees.

"What was that, father," asked Thor, a little tremulously.

"It was wolves, my child," said Tollef, calmly.

"Are you afraid, father?" asked the boy again.

"No, child, I am not afraid of one wolf, nor of ten wolves; but if they are in a flock of twenty or thirty, they are dangerous. And if they scent our track, as probably they will, they will be on us in five minutes."

"How will they scent our track, father?"

"They smell us in the wind; and the wind is from us and to them, and then they howl to notify their comrades, so that they may attack us in sufficient force."

"Why don't we return home, then?" inquired the boy, still with a tolerably steady voice, but with sinking courage.

"They are behind us. Our only chance is to reach the shore before they overtake us."

The horse, sniffing the presence of wild beasts, snorted wildly as it ran, but, electrified as it were, with the sense of danger, strained every nerve in its efforts to reach the farther shore. The howls now came nearer and nearer, and they rose with a frightful distinctness in the clear,

wintry air, and resounded again from the border of the forest.

"Why don't you throw away the barrel, father?" said Thor, who, for his father's sake, strove hard to keep brave. "Then the sleigh will run so much the faster."

"If we are overtaken, our safety is in the barrel. Fortunately, it is large enough for two, and it has no ears and will fit close to the ice."

Tollef was still calm; but, with his one disengaged arm, hugged his little son convulsively.

"Now, keep brave, my boy," he whispered in his ear. "They will soon be upon us. Give me your whip."

It just occurred to Tollef that he had heard that wolves were very suspicious, and that men had often escaped them by dragging some small object on the ground behind them. He, therefore, broke a chip from one of the hoops of the barrel, and tied it to the lash of the whip; just then he heard a short, hungry bark behind him, and, turning his head, saw a pack of wolves, numbering more than a dozen, the foremost of which was within a few yards of the sleigh. He saw the red, frothy tongue hanging out of its mouth, and he smelt that penetrating, wild smell with which everyone is familiar who has met a wild beast in its native haunts. While encouraging the reeking, foam-flecked horse, Tollef, who had only half faith in the experiment with the whip, watched anxiously the leader of the wolves, and observed to his astonishment that it seemed to be getting no nearer. One moment it seemed to be gaining upon them, but invariably, as soon as it reached the little chip which was dragging along the

ice, this suddenly arrested its attention and immediately its speed slackened. The cooper's hope began to revive, and he thought that perhaps there was yet a possibility that they might see the morrow's sun. But his courage again began to ebb when he discovered in the distance a second pack of wolves, larger than the first, and which, with terrific speed, came running, leaping, and whirling toward them from another direction. And while this terrible discovery was breaking through his almost callous sense, he forgot, for an instant, the whip, the lash of which swung under the runners of the sleigh and snapped. The horse, too, was showing signs of exhaustion, and Tollef, seeing that only one chance was left, rose up with his boy in his arms, and upsetting the barrel on the ice, concealed himself and the child under it. Hardly had he had time to brace himself against its sides, pressing his feet against one side and his back against the other, when he heard the horse giving a wild scream, while the short, whining bark of the wolves told him that the poor beast was selling its life dearly. Then there was a desperate scratching and scraping of horseshoes, and all of a sudden the sound of galloping hoofbeats on the ice, growing fainter and fainter. The horse had evidently succeeded in breaking away from the sleigh, and was testing his speed in a race for life. Some of the wolves were apparently pursuing him, while the greater number remained to investigate the contents of the barrel. The howling and barking of these furious creatures without was now incessant. Within the barrel it was dark as pitch.

"Now, keep steady!" said Tollef, feeling a sudden shock, as if a wolf had leaped against their improvised house with a view to upsetting it. He felt himself and the boy gliding a foot or two over the smooth ice, but there was no further result from the attack. A minute passed: again there came a shock, and a stronger one than the first. A long, terrible howl followed this second failure. The little boy, clutching his small cooper's hatchet in one hand, sat pale but determined in the dark, while with the other he clung to his father's arm.

"Oh, father!" he cried, in terror, "I feel something on my back."

The father quickly struck a light, for he fortunately had a supply of matches in his pocket, and saw a wolf's paw wedged in between the ice and the rim of the barrel; and in the same instant he tore the hatchet from his son's hand and buried its edge in the ice. Then he handed the amputated paw to Thor, and said:

"Put that into your wallet, and the sheriff will pay you a reward for it.* For a wolf without paws couldn't do much harm."

While he was yet speaking, a third assault upon the barrel lifted one side of it from the ice, and almost overturned it. Instead of pushing against the part nearest the ice, a wolf, more cunning than the rest, had leaped against the upturned bottom.

You can imagine what a terrible night father and son

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* The sheriffs in Norway are by law required to pay, in behalf of the State, certain premiums for the killing of bears, wolves, foxes, and eagles.

spent together in this constant struggle with the voracious beasts, that never grew weary of attacking their hiding-place. The father was less warmly clad than the son, and, moreover, was obliged to sit on the ice, while Thor could stand erect without knocking against the bottom of the barrel; and if it had not been for the excitement of the situation, which made Tollef's blood course with unwonted rapidity, it is more than probable that the intense cold would have made him drowsy, and thus lessened his power of resistance. The warmth of his body had made a slight cavity where he was sitting, and whenever he remained a moment still, his trousers froze fast to the ice. It was only the presence of his boy that inspired him with fresh courage, whenever hope seemed about to desert him.

About an hour after the flight of the horse, when five or six wolves' paws had been cut off in the same manner as the first, there was a lull in the attack, but a sudden increase of the howling, whining, yelping, and barking noise without. Tollef concluded that the wolves, maddened by the smell of blood, were attacking their wounded fellows; and as their howls seemed to come from a short distance, he cautiously lifted one side of the barrel and peered forth; but in the same instant a snarling bark rang right in his ear, and two paws were thrust into the opening. Then came a howl of pain, and another paw was put into Thor's wallet.

But hark! What is that? It sounds like a song, or rather like a hymn. The strain comes nearer and nearer,

THE WOLVES IMMEDIATELY STARTED IN PURSUIT.

resounding from mountain to mountain, floating peacefully through the pure and still air:

> "Who knows how near I am mine ending;
> So quickly time doth pass away."

Tollef, in whose breast hope again was reviving, put his ear to the ice, and heard distinctly the tread of horses and of many human feet. He listened for a minute or more, but could not discover whether the sound was coming any nearer. It occurred to him that in all probability the people, being unarmed, would have no desire to cope with a large pack of wolves, especially as to them there could be no object in it. If they saw the barrel, how could they know that there was anybody under it? He comprehended instantly that his only chance of life was in joining those people before they were too far away. And, quickly resolved, he lifted the boy on his left arm, and grasped the hatchet in his disengaged hand. Then, with a violent thrust, he flung the barrel from over him, and ran in the direction of the sound. The wolves, as he had inferred, were lacerating their bleeding comrades; but the moment they saw him, a pack of about a dozen immediately started in pursuit. They leaped up against him on all sides, while he struck furiously about him with his small weapon. Fortunately, he had sharp steel pegs on his boots, and kept his footing well; otherwise the combat would have been a short one. His voice, too, was powerful, and his shouts rose high above the howling of the beasts. He soon perceived that he had been observed, and he saw in the

bright moonlight six or eight men running toward him. Just then, as perhaps in his joy his vigilance was for a fraction of a second relaxed, he felt a pull in the fleshy part of his right arm. He was not conscious of any sharp pain, and was astonished to see the blood flowing from an ugly wound. But he only held his boy the more tightly, while he fought and ran with the strength of despair.

Now the men were near. He could hear their voices. But his brain was dizzy, and he saw but dimly.

"Hello, friend; don't crack my skull for my pains!" someone was shouting close to his ear, and he let his hatchet fall, and he fell himself, too, prostrate on the ice.

The wolves, at the sight of the men, had retired to a safe distance, from which they watched the proceedings, as if uncertain whether to return.

As soon as Tollef had recovered somewhat from his exhaustion and his loss of blood, he and his boy were placed upon a sleigh, and his wound was carefully bandaged. He now learned that his rescuers were on their way to a funeral, which was to take place on the next day, but, on account of the distance to the church, they had been obliged to start during the night. Hence their solemn mood, and their singing of funeral hymns.

After an hour's ride they reached the cooper's cottage, and were invited to rest and to share such hospitality as the house could afford. But when they were gone, Tollef clasped his sleeping boy in his arms and said to his wife: "If it had not been for him, you might have

had no husband to-day. It was his little whip and toy hatchet that saved our lives."

Eleven wolves' paws were found in Thor's wallet, and, on Christmas eve, he went to the sheriff with them and received a reward which nearly burst his old savings-bank, and compelled his mother to buy a new one.

MAGNIE'S DANGEROUS RIDE.

I.

MAGNIE was consumed with the hunting fever. He had been away to school since he was ten years old, and had never had the chance of doing anything remarkable. While his brother, Olaf, who was a midshipman in the navy, roamed about the world, and had delightful adventures with Turks and Arabs, and all sorts of outlandish people, Magnie had to scan Virgil and Horace and torment his soul with algebraic problems. It was not at all the kind of life he had sketched out for himself, and if it had not been his father who had imposed it upon him, he would have broken away from all restraints and gone to Turkey or China, or some place where exciting things happened. In the meanwhile, as he lacked money for such an enterprise, he would content himself with whatever excitement there was in hunting, and as his brothers, Olaf and little Edwin (who was fourteen years old), were also at home for the vacation, there was a prospect of many delightful expeditions by sea and by land. Moreover, their old friend Grim Hering-Luck, who was their father's right-hand man, had promised to be at their

disposal and put them on the track of exciting experiences. They had got each a gun, and had practised shooting at a target daily since their return from the city. Magnie, or Magnus Birk, as his real name was, had once (though Olaf stoutly maintained that it was mere chance) hit the bull's-eye at a hundred yards, and he was now eager to show his skill on something more valuable than a painted target. It was, therefore, decided that Grim and the boys should go reindeer-hunting. They were to be accompanied by the professional hunter, Bjarne Sheepskin.

It was a glorious morning. The rays of the sun shot from the glacier peaks in long radiant shafts down into the valley. The calm mirror of the fiord glittered in the light and fairly dazzled the eye, and the sea-birds drifted in noisy companies about the jutting crags, plunged headlong into the sea, and scattered the spray high into the air. The blue smoke rose perpendicularly from the chimneys of the fishermen's cottages along the beach, and the housewives, still drowsy with sleep, came out, rubbed their eyes and looked toward the sun to judge of the hour. One boat after another was pushed out upon the water, and the ripples in their wakes spread in long diverging lines toward either shore. The fish leaped in the sun, heedless of the gulls which sailed in wide circles under the sky, keeping a sharp lookout for the movements of the finny tribe. The three boys could only stand and gaze in dumb astonishment upon the splendid sights which the combined heavens, earth, and sea afforded. Their father, who was much pleased with their

determination and enterprise, had readily given his consent to the reindeer hunt, on condition that Grim should take command and be responsible for their safety. They were now mounted upon three sturdy ponies, while their provisions, guns, and other commodities were packed upon a fourth beast—a shaggy little monster named Bruno, who looked more like a hornless goat than a horse. Bjarne Sheepskin, a long, round-shouldered fellow, with a pair of small, lively eyes, was leading this heavily laden Bruno by the bridle, and the little caravan, being once set in motion, climbed the steep slopes toward the mountains with much persistence and dexterity. The ponies, which had been especially trained for mountain climbing, planted their hoofs upon the slippery rocks with a precision which was wonderful to behold, jumped from stone to stone, slipped, scrambled up and down, but never fell. As they entered the pine forest, where the huge trunks grew in long, dark colonnades, letting in here and there stray patches of sunshine, partridges and ptarmigan often started under the very noses of the horses, and Magnie clamored loudly for his gun, and grew quite angry with Bjarne, who would allow "no fooling with tomtits and chipmunks, when they were in search of big game." Even hares were permitted to go unmolested; and it was not until a fine capercailzie* cock tumbled out of the underbrush close to the path, that Bjarne flung his gun to his cheek and fired. The capercailzie made a somersault in the air, and the feathers flew

* A species of grouse.

about it as it fell. Bjarne picked it up quietly, tied its legs together, and hung it on the pommel of Edwin's saddle. "That will make a dinner for gentlefolks," he said, "if the dairy-maids up on the *saeters* should happen to have nothing in the larder."

Gradually, as they mounted higher, the trees became more stunted in their growth, and the whole character of the vegetation changed. The low dwarf-birch stretched its long, twisted branches along the earth, the silvery-white reindeer-moss clothed in patches the barren ground, and a few shivering alpine plants lifted their pale, pink flowers out of the general desolation. As they reached the ridge of the lower mountain range the boys saw before them a scene the magnificence of which nearly took their breath away. Before them lay a wide mountain plain, in the bottom of which two connected lakes lay coldly glittering. Round about, the plain was settled with rude little log-houses, the so-called *saeters*, or mountain dairies, where the Norse peasants spend their brief summers, pasturing their cattle.

They started at a lively trot down the slope toward this highland plain, intending to reach the Hasselrud *saeter*, where they expected to spend the night; for it was already several hours past noon, and there could be no thought of hunting reindeer so late in the day. Judging by appearances, the boys concluded that fifteen or twenty minutes would bring them to the *saeter;* but they rode on for nearly two hours, and always the cottages seemed to recede, and the distance showed no signs of diminishing. They did not know how deceptive all

distances are in this wondrously clear mountain air, whose bright transparency is undimmed by the dust and exha lations of the lower regions of the earth. They would scarcely have believed that those huge glacier peaks, which seemed to be looming up above their very heads, were some eight to twelve miles away, and that the eagle which soared above them was far beyond the range of their rifles.

It was about five o'clock when they rode in upon the *saeter* green, where the dairy-maids were alternately blowing their horns and yodelling. Their long flaxen braids hung down their backs, and their tight-fitting scarlet bodices and white sleeves gave them a picturesque appearance. The cattle were lowing against the sky, answering the call of the horn. The bells of cows, goats, and sheep were jangled in harmonious confusion; and the noise of the bellowing bulls, the bleating sheep, and the neighing horses was heard from all sides over the wide plain.

The three brothers were received with great cordiality by the maids, and they spent the evening, after the supper was finished, in listening to marvellous stories about the ogres who inhabited the mountains, and the hunting adventures with which Bjarne Sheepskin's life had been crowded, and which he related with a sportsman's usual exaggerations. The beds in one of the *saeter* cottages were given up to the boys, and they slept peacefully until about four o'clock in the morning, when Grim aroused them and told them that everything was ready for their departure. They swallowed their breakfast hastily, and

started in excited silence across the plateau. Edwin and the horses they left behind in charge of the dairy-maids, but took with them an old staghound who had some good blood in him, and a finer scent than his sedate behavior and the shape of his nose would have led one to suppose.

Light clouds hovered under the sky; the mist lay like a white sheet over the mountain, and drifted in patches across the plain. Bjarne and Grim were carrying the guns, while Olaf led the hound, and Magnus trotted briskly along, stopping every now and then to examine every unfamiliar object that came in his way. The wind blew toward them, so that there was no chance that their scent could betray them, in case there were herds of deer toward the north at the base of the glaciers. They had not walked very far, when Bjarne put his hand to his lips and stooped down to examine the ground. The dog lifted his nose and began to snuff the air, wag his tail, and whine impatiently.

"Hush, Yutul," whispered Bjarne; "down! down, and keep still!"

The dog crouched down obediently and held his peace.

"Here is a fresh track," the hunter went on, pointing to a hardly perceptible depression in the moss. "There has been a large herd here—one buck and at least a dozen cows. Look, here is a stalk that has just been bitten off, and the juice is not dry yet."

"How long do you think it will be before we shall meet them?" asked Magnus, breathlessly. The hunting-

fever was throbbing in his veins, and he crawled cautiously among the bowlders with his rifle cocked.

"Couldn't tell; may be an hour, may be three. Hand me your field-glass, Lieutenant, and I will see if I can catch sight of 'em. A gray beast ain't easily seen agin the gray stone. It was fer the same reason I wanted ye to wear gray clothes; we don't want to give the game any advantage, fer the sentinels be allers on the lookout fer the herd, and at the least bit of unfamiliar color, they give their warnin' snort, and off starts the flock, scudding away like a drift of mist before the wind."

Crouching down among the lichen-clad rocks, all listened in eager expectation.

"Down!" whispered Bjarne, "and cock rifles! A pair of antlers agin the snow! Hallo! it is as I thought —a big herd. One, two, three—five—seven—ten—fourteen! One stunnin' buck, worth his forty dollars at least. Now follow me slowly. Look out for your guns! You, Grim, keep the dog muzzled."

The boys strained their eyes above the edge of the stones, but could see nothing. Their hearts hammered against their sides, and the blood throbbed in their temples. As far as their eyes could reach they saw only the gray waste of bowlders, interrupted here and there by patches of snow or a white glacier-stream, which plunged wildly over a precipice, while a hovering moke indicated its further progress through the plain. Nevertheless, trusting the experience of their leader, they made no remark, but crept after him, choosing like him every available

stone for cover. After half an hour of this laborious exercise, Bjarne suddenly stretched himself flat upon the ground, and the others, though seeing no occasion for such a manœuvre, promptly followed his example. But the next moment enlightened them. Looming up against the white snow, some sixty or a hundred feet from them, they saw a magnificent pair of antlers, and presently the whole body of a proud animal was distinctly visible against the glacier. In the ravine below a dozen or more cows with their calves were nibbling the moss between the stones, but with great deliberateness, lifting their heads every minute and snuffing the air suspiciously; they presently climbed up on the hard snow and began a frolic, the like of which the boys had never seen before. The great buck raised himself on his hind-legs, shook his head, and made a leap, kicking the snow about him with great vehemence. Several of the cows took this as an invitation for a general jollification, and they began to frisk about, kicking their heels against the sky and shaking their heads, not with the wanton grace of their chief, but with half-pathetic attempts at imitation. This, Magnus thought, was evidently a reindeer ball; and very sensible they were to have it early in the morning, when they felt gay and frisky, rather than in the night, when they ought to be asleep. What troubled him, however, was that Bjarne did not shoot; he himself did not venture to send a bullet into the big buck, although it seemed to him he had an excellent aim. The slightest turn in the wind would inevitably betray them, and then they would have had all their toil for nothing. He

would have liked to suggest this to Bjarne; but in order to do this, he would have to overtake him, and Bjarne was still wriggling himself cautiously forward among the stones, pushing himself on with his elbows, as a seal does with his flippers. In his eagerness to impart his counsel to Bjarne, Magnus began to move more rapidly; raising himself on his knees he quite inadvertently showed his curly head above a bowlder. The buck lifted his superb head with a snort, and with incredible speed the whole herd galloped away; but in the same moment two bullets whistled after them, and the buck fell flat upon the snow. The cow which had stood nearest to him reared on her hind-legs, made a great leap, and plunged headlong down among the stones. With a wild war-whoop, the boys jumped up, and Magnus, who had come near ruining the whole sport, seized, in order to make up for his mishap, a long hunting-knife and rushed forward to give the buck the *coup-de-grace*,* in accordance with the rules of the chase. Bounding forward with reckless disregard of all obstacles, he was the first down on the snow. In one instant he was astride of the animal, and had just raised his knife, when up leaped the buck and tore away along the edge of the snow like a gust of wind. The long-range shot, hitting him in the head, had only stunned him, but had not penetrated the skull. And, what was worse, in his bewilderment at the unexpected manœuvre, Magnus dropped his knife, seizing instinctively the horns of the reindeer to keep from falling. Away they went with

* The finishing-stroke.

MAGNIE INSTINCTIVELY SEIZED ONE OF THE REINDEER'S HORNS TO KEEP FROM FALLING.

a terrific dizzying speed. The frightened boy clung convulsively to the great antlers; if he should fall off, his head would be crushed against the bowlders. The cold glacier-wind whistled in his ears, and stung his face like a multitude of tiny needles. He had to turn his head in order to catch his breath; and he strained his eyes to see if anything was being done by his companions for his rescue. But he could see nothing except a great expanse of gray and white lines, which ran into each other and climbed and undulated toward him and sloped away, but seemed associated with no tangible object. He thought, for a moment, that he saw Grim Hering-Luck aiming his gun, but he seemed to be up in the sky, and to be growing huger and huger until he looked more like a fantastic cloud than a man. The thought suddenly struck him that he might be fainting, and it sent a thrill of horror through him. With a vehement effort he mastered his fear and resolved that, whatever happened, he would not give way to weakness. If he was to lose his life, he would, at all events, make a hard fight for it; it was, on the whole, quite a valuable life, he concluded, and he did not mean to sell it cheaply.

Troubling himself little about the direction his steed was taking, he shut his eyes, and began to meditate upon his chances of escape; and after some minutes, he was forced to admit that they seemed very slim. When the buck should have exhausted his strength, as in the course of time he must, he would leave his rider somewhere in this vast trackless wilderness, where the biting wind swept down from the eternal peaks of ice, where

wolves roamed about in great hungry companies, and where, beside them, the reindeer and the ptarmigan were the only living things amid the universal desolation. When he opened his eyes again, Magnus discovered that the buck had overtaken the fleeing herd, which, however, were tearing away madly at his approach, being evidently frightened at the sight and the scent of the unfamiliar rider. The animal was still galloping on, though with a less dizzying rapidity, and Magnus could distinguish the general outline of the objects which seemed to be rushing against him, as if running a race in the opposite direction. The herd were evidently betaking themselves into the upper glacier region, where no foot less light and swift than theirs could find safety among the terrible ravines and crevasses.

Fully an hour had passed, possibly two, and it seemed vain to attempt to measure the distance which he had passed over in this time. At all events, the region did not present one familiar object, and of Olaf and his companions Magnie saw no trace. The only question was, what chance had they of finding him, if they undertook to search for him, as, of course, they would. If he could only leave some sign or mark by which they might know the direction he had taken, their search might perhaps be rewarded with success. He put one hand in his pocket, but could find nothing that he could spare except a red silk handkerchief. That had the advantage of being bright, and would be sure to attract attention. The dog would be likely to detect it or to catch the scent of it. But he must have something heavy to tie

up in the handkerchief, or it might blow "all over creation." The only thing he could find was a silver match-box which he had obtained by a trade with Olaf, and which bore the latter's initials. He carefully emptied it, and put the matches (which he foresaw might prove useful) in his vest-pocket; then tied up the box securely and dropped it, with the handkerchief, upon a conspicuous rock, where its bright color might appear striking and unnatural. He was just on the ridge of what proved to be a second and higher mountain plateau, the wild grandeur of which far transcended that of the first. Before him lay a large sheet of water of a cool green tint, and so clear that the bottom was visible as far as the eye could reach. A river had made its way from the end of this lake and plunged, in a series of short cataracts, down the slope to the lower plain.

It made Magnus shiver with dread to look at this coldly glittering surface, and what was his horror when suddenly his reindeer, in his pursuit of the herd, which were already in the water, rushed in, and began, with loud snorts, to swim across to the farther shore! This was an unforeseen stratagem which extinguished his last hope of rescue; for how could Bjarne track him through the water, and what means would he find of crossing, in case he should guess that the herd had played this dangerous trick on him? He began to dread also that the endurance of the buck would be exhausted before he reached dry land again, and that they might both perish miserably in the lake. In this horrible distress nothing occurred to him except to whisper the Lord's Praver; but

as his terror increased, his voice grew louder and louder, until he fairly shouted the words, "And deliver us from evil," and the echoes from the vast solitudes repeated, first clearly and loudly, then with fainter and fainter accents: "And deliver us from evil—and deliver us from evil." His despairing voice rang strangely under the great empty sky, and rumbled among the glaciers, which flung it back and forth until it died away in the blue distance. It was as if the vast silent wilderness, startled at the sound of a human voice, were wonderingly repeating the strange and solemn words.

A vague sense of security stole over him when he had finished his prayer. But the chill of the icy water had nearly benumbed his limbs, and he feared that the loss of heat would conquer his will, and make him unconscious before the buck should reach the shore. He felt distinctly his strength ebbing away, and he knew of nothing that he could do to save himself. Then suddenly a daring thought flashed through his brain. With slow and cautious movements he drew his legs out of the water, and, standing for a moment erect on the buck's back, he crawled along his neck and climbed up on the great antlers, steadying himself carefully and clinging with all his might. His only fear was that the animal would shake him off and send him headlong into the icy bath from which he was endeavoring to escape. But, after two futile efforts, during which the boy had held on only by desperate exertion, the buck would probably have resigned himself to his fate, if he had not been in imminent danger of drowning. Magnus was,

therefore, much against his will, forced to dip his limbs into the chilly water, and resume his former position. It was a strange spectacle, to see all the horned heads round about sticking out of the water, and Magnus, though he had always had a thirst for adventures, had never expected to find himself himself in such an incredible situation. Fortunately, they were now approaching the shore, and whatever comfort there was in having *terra firma* under his feet would not be wanting to him. The last minutes were indeed terribly long, and again and again the buck, overcome with fatigue, dipped his nose under the water, only to raise it again with a snort, and shake his head as if impatient to rid himself of his burden. But the boy, with a spark of reviving hope, clung only the more tenaciously to the antlers, and remained unmoved.

At last—and it seemed a small eternity since he had left his brother and companions—Magnus saw the herd scramble up on the stony beach. The buck he rode was soon among the foremost, and, having reached the land, shook his great body and snorted violently.

"Now's my chance," thought Magnus; "now I can slide off into the snow before he takes to his heels again."

But, odd as it may seem, he had a reluctance to part company with the only living creature (except the wolves) that inhabited this awful desert. There was a vague chance of keeping from freezing to death as long as he clung to the large, warm animal; while, seated alone upon this bleak shore, with his clothes wringing

wet, and the cold breath of the glacier sweeping down upon him, he would die slowly and miserably with hunger and cold. He was just contemplating this prospect, seeing himself in spirit lying dead upon the shore of the lake, and picturing to himself the grief of his brother and father, when suddenly his glance was arrested by what seemed a faint column of smoke rising from among the bowlders. The herd of reindeer had evidently made the same discovery, for they paused, in a startled manner, and wheeled about toward the easterly shore, past which a branch of the glacier was pushing downward into the lower fiord-valley.

Magnie, who had by this time made up his mind not to give up his present place except for a better one, strained his eye in the opposite direction, to make sure that he was not deceived; and having satisfied himself that what he saw was really smoke, he determined to leap from his seat at the very first opportunity. But as yet the speed of the buck made such a venture unsafe. With every step, however, the territory was becoming more irregular, and made the progress even of a reindeer difficult.

Magnus drew up his feet, and was about to slide off, having planned to drop with as slight a shock as possible upon a flat moss-grown rock, when, to his utter amazement, he saw a human figure standing at the edge of the glacier, and aiming a rifle, as it appeared, straight at his head. He tried to scream, but terror choked his voice. He could not bring forth a sound. And before even the thought had taken shape in his bewildered brain he saw

a flash, and heard the report of a shot which rumbled away with tremendous reverberations among the glaciers. There was a surging sound in his ears, and strange lights danced before his eyes. He thought he must be dead.

II.

MAGNIE never knew how long he was unconscious. The first thing he remembered was a delicious sense of warmth and comfort stealing through him, and strange, unintelligible sounds buzzing in the air about him. Somebody was talking kindly to him, and a large, warm hand was gliding over his forehead and cheeks. The peace and warmth were grateful to him after the intense strain of his dangerous ride. He was even loth to open his eyes when his reviving memory began to make the situation clear to him.

"It was a reckless shot, Harry," he heard someone say in a foreign tongue, which he soon recognized as English, "even if it did turn out well. Suppose you had sent your bullet crashing through the young fellow instead of the buck. How would you have felt then?"

"I should have felt very badly, I am sure," answered a younger voice, which obviously belonged to Magnie's rescuer; "but I followed my usual way of doing things. If I didn't act that way, I shouldn't act at all. And you will admit, Uncle, it is a queer sort of thing to see a fellow come riding on a reindeer buck, in the midst of a wild herd, and in a trackless wilderness like this, where nobody but wolves or geologists would be apt to dis-

cover any attractions. Now, I saw by the young man's respectable appearance that he couldn't be a geologist; and if he was a wolf, I didn't mind much if I did shoot him."

At this point Magnie opened his eyes and stared wonderingly about him. He found himself in a small, cramped room, the walls of which were draped with canvas, and scarcely high enough under the ceiling to allow a man to stand erect. Against the walls a number of shining brass instruments were leaning, and in a corner there was a hearth, the smoke of which escaped through a hole in the roof. Two bunks filled with moss, with a sheet and a blanket thrown over each, completed the outfit of the primitive dwelling. But Magnie was more interested in the people than in the looks of the room. A large, blond, middle-aged man, inclined to stoutness, was holding Magnie's hand as if counting his pulse-beat, and a very good-looking young fellow, of about his own age, was standing at the hearth, turning a spit upon which was a venison steak.

"Hallo! Our young friend is returning from the land of Nod," said the youth who had been addressed as Harry. "I am glad you didn't start on a longer journey, young chap, when I fired at you; for if you had you would have interfered seriously with my comfort."

Magnie, who was a fair English scholar, understood perfectly what was said to him, but several minutes elapsed before he could collect himself sufficiently to answer. In order to gain time, he made an effort to raise himself and take a closer look at his surroundings, but was forced by the older man to abandon the attempt.

"Not so fast, my dear, not so fast;" he said, stooping over him, and gently pushing him back into a reclining position. "You must remember that you have a big lump on your head from your fall, and it won't do to be frisky just yet. But before conversing further, it might be well to ascertain whether we understand each other."

"Yes, I think—I think—I do," stammered Magnie. "I know some English."

"Ah, then we shall get along charmingly," the man remarked, with an encouraging smile. "And I think Harry's venison steak is done by this time; and dinner, as you know, affords the most delightful opportunity for getting acquainted. Gunnar, our guide, who is outside skinning your reindeer buck, will soon present himself and serve the dinner. Here he is, and he is our cook, butler, chambermaid, laundress, beast of burden, and interpreter, all in one."

The man to whom the professor alluded was at this moment seen crawling on his hands and knees through the low door-way, which his bulky figure completely filled. He was a Norwegian peasant of the ordinary sort, with a square, rudely cut face, dull blue eyes, and a tuft of towy hair hanging down over his forehead. With one hand he was dragging the skin of the buck, and between his teeth he held an ugly-looking knife.

"Ve haf got to bury him," he said.

"Bury him!" cried Harry. "Why, you blood-thirsty wretch, don't you see he is sitting there, looking as bright as a sixpence?"

"I mean de buck," replied Gunnar, imperturbably.

"And why do you wish to bury the buck? I would much rather eat him. This steak here has a most tempting flavor, and I am quite tired of canned abominations by this time."

"De volves vill be sure to scent de meat, now dat it is flayed, and before an hour ve might haf a whole congregation of dem here."

"Well, then, we will shoot them down," insisted the cheerful Harry. "Come, now, Uncle, and let us have a civilized dinner. I don't pretend to be an expert in the noble art of cookery; but if this tastes as good as it smells, I wouldn't exchange it for a Delmonico banquet. And if the wolves, as Gunnar says, can smell a dead reindeer miles away, they would be likely to smell a venison steak from the ends of creation. Perhaps, if we don't hurry, all the wolves of the earth may invite themselves to our dinner."

Gunnar, upon whom this fanciful raillery was lost, was still standing on all-fours in the door, with his front half in the warm room and his rearward portion in the arctic regions without. He was gazing helplessly from one to another, as if asking for an explanation of all this superfluous talk. "Vill you cawme and help me, Mester Harry?" he asked at last, stolidly.

"Yes, when I have had my dinner I will, Mester Gunnar," answered Harry, gayly.

"Vell, I haf notting more to say, den," grumbled the guide; "but it vould vonder me much if, before you are troo, you von't have some unbidden guests."

"All right, Gunnar—the more the merrier," retorted

Harry as, with exaggerated imitation of a waiter's manner, he distributed plates, knives, and napkins to Magnie and his uncle.

They now fell to chatting, and Magnie learned, after having given a brief account of himself, that his entertainers were Professor Winchester, an American geologist, and his nephew, Harry Winchester, who was accompanying his uncle, chiefly for the fun of the thing, and also for the purpose of seeing the world and picking up some crumbs of scientific knowledge. The professor was especially interested in glaciers and their action in ages past upon the surface of the earth, and, as the Norwegian glaciers had never been thoroughly studied, he had determined to devote a couple of months to observations and measurements, with a view to settling some mooted geological questions upon which he had almost staked his reputation.

They had just finished the steak, which would perhaps have been tenderer if it had not been so fresh, and were helping themselves to the contents of a jar of raspberry preserves, when Harry suddenly dropped his spoon and turned, with a serious face, to his uncle.

"Did you hear that?" he said.

"No; what was it?"

Harry waited for a minute; then, as a wild, doleful howl was heard, he laid his hand on the professor's arm, and remarked: "The old fellow was right. We shall have unbidden guests."

"But they are hardly dangerous in these regions, so far as I can learn," said the professor, reassuringly.

"That depends upon their number. We could tackle a dozen; but two dozen we might find troublesome. At any rate, they have spoiled my appetite for raspberry jam, and that is something I sha'n't soon forgive them."

Three or four howls sounding nearer, and echoing with terrible distinctness from the glaciers, seemed to depress Harry's spirits still further, and he put the jar away and began to examine the lock of his rifle.

"They are evidently summoning a mass-meeting," remarked the professor, as another chorus of howls reechoed from the glacier. "I wish we had more guns."

"And I wish mine were a Remington or a Springfield breech-loader, with a dozen cartridges in it!" Harry exclaimed. "These double-barrelled Norwegian machines, with two shots in them, are really good for nothing in an emergency. They are antediluvian both in shape and construction."

He had scarcely finished this lament, when Gunnar's huge form reappeared in the door, quadruped fashion, and made an attempt to enter. But his great bulk nearly filled the narrow room, and made it impossible for the others to move. He examined silently first Harry's rifle, then his own, cut off a slice of steak with his pocket-knife, and was about to crawl out again, when the professor, who could not quite conceal his anxiety, asked him what he had done with the reindeer.

"Oh!" he answered, triumphantly, "I haf buried him among de stones, vhere he vill be safe from all de volves in de vorld."

"But, my dear fellow," ejaculated the professor, hotly,

"why didn't you rather let the wolves have it? Then, at least, they would spare us."

"You surely vouldn't gif a goot fresh reindeer, legs and all, to a pack of skountrelly volves, vould you?"

"I would much rather give them that than give them myself."

"But it is vort tventy dollars, if you can get it down fresh and sell it to de English yachts," protested Gunnar, stolidly.

"Yes, yes; but you great stupid," cried the professor in despair, "what do you think my life is worth? and Master Harry's? and this young fellow's?" (pointing to Magnie). "Now go as quick as you can and dig the deer out again."

Gunnar, scarcely able to comprehend such criminal wastefulness, was backing out cautiously with his feet foremost, when suddenly he gave a scream and a jump which nearly raised the roof from the hut. It was evident that he had been bitten. In the same moment a fresh chorus of howls resounded without, mingled with sharp, whining barks, expressive of hunger and ferocity. There was something shudderingly wild and mournful in these long-drawn discords, as they rose toward the sky in this lonely desert; and brave as he was, Magnie could not restrain the terror which he felt stealing upon him. Weakened by his icy bath, moreover, and by the nervous strain of his first adventure, he had no great desire to encounter a pack of ravenous wolves. Still, he manned himself for the occasion and, in as steady a voice as he could command, begged the professor to hand him some

weapon. Harry, who had instinctively taken the lead, had just time to reach him a long hunting-knife, and arm his uncle with an ax, when, through the door which Gunnar had left open, two wolves came leaping in and paused in bewilderment at the sight of the fire on the hearth. They seemed dazed by the light, and stood panting and blinking, with their trembling red tongues lolling out of their mouths. Harry, whose gun was useless at such close range, snatched the ax away from the professor, and at one blow split the skull of one of the intruders, while Magnie ran his knife up to the very hilt in the neck of the other. The beast was, however, by no means dead after that, but leaped up on his assailant's chest, and would have given him an ugly wound in the neck had not the professor torn it away and flung it down upon the fire, where, with a howling whine, it expired. The professor had also found time to bolt the door before more visitors could enter; and two successive shots without seemed to indicate that Gunnar was holding his own against the pack. But the question was, how long would he succeed in keeping them at bay? He had fired both his shots, and he would scarcely have a chance to load again, with the hungry beasts leaping about him. This they read in one another's faces, but no one was anxious to anticipate the other in uttering his dread.

"Help, help!" cried Gunnar, in dire need.

"Take your hand away, Uncle!" demanded Harry. "I am going out to help him."

"For your life's sake, Harry," implored the professor,

"don't go! Let me go! What would your mother say to me if I should return without you?"

"I'll come back again, Uncle, don't you fear," said the youth, with feigned cheerfulness; "but I won't let this poor fellow perish before my very eyes, even though he is a fool."

"It was his foolishness which brought this danger upon us," remonstrated the professor.

"He knew no better," cried Harry, tearing the door open, and with ax uplifted rushing out into the the twilight. What he saw seemed merely a dark mass, huddled together and swaying sideways, from which now and then a black figure detached itself with a howl, jumped wildly about, and again joined the dark, struggling mass. He could distinguish Gunnar's head, and his arms fighting desperately, and, from the yelps and howls of the wolves, he concluded that he had thrown away the rifle and was using his knife with good effect.

"Help!" he yelled, "help!"

"You shall have it, old fellow," cried Harry, plunging forward and swinging his ax about him; and the professor, who had followed close at his heels, shouting at the top of his voice, pressed in Harry's wake right into the centre of the furious pack. But, at that very instant, there came a long "Hallo-o!" from the lake below, and a rifle-bullet flew whistling above their heads and struck a rock scarcely a yard above the professor's hat. Several wolves lay gasping and yelping on the ground, and the rest slunk aside. Another shot followed, and a large beast made a leap and fell dead

among the stones. Gunnar, who was lying bleeding upon the ground, was helped to his feet, and supported by Harry and the professor to the door of the cottage.

"Hallo, there!" shouted Harry, in response to the call from below.

"Hallo!" someone shouted back.

The figures of three men were now seen looming up in the dusk, and Magnie, who instinctively knew who they were, sprang to meet them, and in another moment lay sobbing in his brother's arms. The poor lad was so completely unnerved by the prolonged suspense and excitement, that he had to be carried back into the hut, and his brother, after having hurriedly introduced himself to the professor, came very near giving way to his feelings, too. Gunnar's wounds, which were numerous, though not serious, were washed and bandaged by Grim Hering-Luck; and having been wrapped in a horse-blanket, to keep out the cold, he was stowed away in a bunk and was soon asleep. As the hut was too small to admit all the company at once, Grim and Bjarne remained outside, and busied themselves in skinning the seven wolves which had fallen on the field of battle. Harry, who had got a bad bite in his arm, which he refused to regard as serious, consented with reluctance to his uncle's surgery, and insisted upon sitting up and conversing with Olaf Birk, to whom he had taken a great liking. But after a while the conversation began to lag, and tired heads began to droop; and when, about midnight, Grim crept in to see how his invalid was doing, he found the professor reclining on some loose moss

upon the floor, while Harry was snoring peacefully in a bunk, using Olaf's back for a pillow. And Olaf, in spite of his uncomfortable attitude, seemed also to have found his way to the land of Nod. Grim, knowing the danger of exposure in this cold glacier air, covered them all up with skins and horse-blankets, threw a few dry sticks upon the fire, and resumed his post as sentinel at the door.

The next morning Professor Winchester and his nephew accepted Olaf's invitation to spend a few days at Hasselrud, and without further adventures the whole caravan descended into the valley, calling on their way at the *saeter* where Edwin had been left. It appeared, when they came to discuss the strange incidents of the preceding day, that it was Magnie's silk handkerchief which had enabled them to track him to the edge of the lake, and, by means of a raft, which Bjarne kept hidden among the stones in a little bay, they had been enabled to cross, leaving their horses in charge of a shepherd boy whom they had found tending goats close by.

The reindeer cow which Olaf had killed was safely carried down to the valley, and two wolf-skins were presented to Magnie by Harry Winchester. The other wolf-skins, as well as the skin of the reindeer buck, Bjarne prepared in a special manner, and Harry looked forward with much pleasure to seeing them as rugs upon the floor of his room at college; and he positively swelled with pride when he imagined himself relating to his admiring fellow-students the adventures which had brought him these precious possessions.

THORWALD AND THE STAR-CHILDREN.

I.

THORWALD'S mother was very ill. The fever burned and throbbed in her veins; she lay, all day long and all night long, with her eyes wide open, and could not sleep. The doctor sat at her bedside and looked at her through his spectacles; but she grew worse instead of better.

"Unless she can sleep a sound, natural sleep," he said, "there is no hope for her, I fear."

It was to Thorwald's father that he said this, but Thorwald heard what he said. The little boy, with his dog Hector, was sitting mournfully upon the great wolf-skin outside his mother's door.

"Is my mamma very ill?" he asked the doctor, but the tears choked his voice, and he hid his face in the hair of Hector's shaggy neck.

"Yes, child," answered the doctor; "very ill."

"And will God take my mamma away from me?" he faltered, extricating himself from Hector's embrace, and trying hard to steady his voice and look brave.

"I am afraid He will, my child," said the doctor, gravely.

"But could I not do something for her, doctor?"

The long suppressed tears now broke forth, and trickled down over the boy's cheeks.

"*You*, a child, what can you do?" said the doctor, kindly, and shook his head.

Just then there was a great noise in the air. The chimes in the steeple of the village church pealed forth a joyous Christmas carol, and the sound soared, rushing as with invisible wing-beats through the clear, frosty air. For it was Christmas-eve, and the bells were, according to Norse custom, "ringing-in the festival." Thorwald stood long listening, with folded hands, until the bells seemed to take up the doctor's last words, and chime: "What can you do, what can you do, what can you do?" Surely, there could be no doubt that that was what the bells were saying. The clear little silvery bells that rang out the high notes were every moment growing more impatient, and now the great heavy bell joined them, too, and tolled out slowly, in a deep bass voice, "Thor—wald!" and then all the little ones chimed in with the chorus, as rapidly as the stiff iron tongues could wag: "What can you do, what can you do, what can you do? Thorwald, what can you do, what can you do, what can you do?"

"A child—ah, what can a child do?" thought Thorwald. "Christ was himself a child once, and He saved the whole world. And on a night like this, when all the world is glad because it is His birthday, He perhaps will remember how a little boy feels who loves his mamma, and cannot bear to lose her. If I only knew where He is now, I would go to Him, even if it were ever so far, and tell Him how much we all love mamma, and I

would promise Him to be the best boy in all the world, if He would allow her to stay with us."

Now the church-bells suddenly stopped, though the air still kept quivering for some minutes with faint reverberations of sound. It was very quiet in the large, old-fashioned house. The servants stole about on tiptoe, and spoke to each other in hurried whispers when they met in the halls. A dim lamp, with a bluish globe, hung under the ceiling and sent a faint, moon-like light over the broad oaken staircase, upon the first landing of which a large Dutch clock stood in a sort of niche, and ticked and ticked patiently in the twilight. It was only five o'clock in the afternoon, and yet the moon had been up for more than an hour, and the stars were twinkling in the sky, and the aurora borealis swept with broad sheets of light through the air, like a huge fan, the handle of which was hidden beneath the North Pole; you almost imagined you heard it whizzing past your ears as it flashed upward to the zenith and flared along the horizon. For at that season of the year the sun sets at about two o'clock in the northern part of Norway, and the day is then but four hours long, while the night is twenty. To Thorwald that was a perfectly proper and natural arrangement; for he had always known it so in winter, and he would have found it very singular if the sun had neglected to hide behind the mountains at about two o'clock on Christmas-eve.

But poor Thorwald heeded little the wonders of the sky that day. He heard the clock going, "Tick—tack, tick—tack," and he knew that the precious moments were flying, and he had not yet decided what he could

do which might please God so well that he would consent to let his dear mamma remain upon earth. He thought of making a vow to be very good all his life long; but it occurred to him that before he would have time to prove the sincerity of his promise, God might already have taken his mamma away. He must find some shorter and surer method. Down on the knoll, near the river, he knew there lived a woman whom all the peasants held in great repute, and who was known in the parish as "Wise Marthie." He had always been half afraid of her, because she was very old and wrinkled, and looked so much like the fairy godmother in his story-book, who was not invited to the christening feast, and who revenged herself by stinging the princess with a spindle, so that she had to go to sleep for a hundred years. But if she were so wise, as all the people said, perhaps she might tell him what he should do to save the life of his mamma. Hardly had this thought struck him before he seized his cap and overcoat (for it was a bitter cold night), and ran to the stable to fetch his skees.*

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* Skees (Norwegian *skier*) are a peculiar kind of snow-shoes, generally from five to nine feet long, but only a few inches broad. They are made of tough pine-wood, and are smoothly polished on the under side, so as to make them glide the more easily over the surface of the snow. In the middle there are bands to put the feet into, and the front end of each skee is pointed and strongly bent upward. This enables the runner to slide easily over logs, hillocks, and other obstacles, instead of thrusting against them. The skee only goes in straight lines; still the runner can, even when moving with great speed, change his course at pleasure by means of a long pole which he carries for this purpose, and uses as a sort of rudder. Skees are especially convenient for sliding downhill, but are also, for walking in deep snow, much superior to the common American snow-shoes.

Then down he slid over the steep hill-side. The wind whistled in his ears, and the loose snow whirled about him and settled in his hair, and all over his trousers and his coat. When he reached Wise Marthie's cottage, down on the knoll, he looked like a wandering snow image. He paused for a moment at the door; then took heart and gave three bold raps with his skee-staff. He heard someone groping about within, and at length a square hole in the door was opened, and the head of the revengeful fairy godmother was thrust out through the opening.

"Who is there?" asked Wise Marthie, harshly (for, of course, it was none other than she). Then as she saw the small boy, covered all over with snow, she added, in a friendlier voice: "Ah! gentlefolk out walking in this rough weather?"

"O Marthie!" cried Thorwald, anxiously, "my mamma is very ill——"

He wished to say more, but Marthie here opened the lower panel of the door, while the upper one remained closed, and invited him to enter.

"Bend your head," she said, "or you will knock against the door. I am a poor woman, and can't afford to waste precious heat by opening both panels."

Thorwald shook the snow from his coat, set his skees against the wall outside, and entered the cottage.

"Take a seat here at the fire," said the old woman, pointing to a wooden block which stood close to the hearth. "You must be very cold, and you can warm your hands while you tell me your errand."

"Thank you, Marthie," answered the boy, "but I have no time to sit down. I only wanted to ask you something, and if you can tell me that, I shall—I shall —love you as long as I live."

Old Marthie smiled, and Thorwald thought for a moment that she looked almost handsome. And then she took his hand in hers and drew him gently to her side.

"You are not a witch, are you, Marthie?" he said, a little tremblingly. For Marthie's association with the wicked fairy godmother was yet very suggestive. Then, again, her cottage seemed to be a very queer place; and it did not look like any other cottage that he had ever seen before. Up under the ceiling, which was black and sooty, hung bunches of dried herbs, and on shelves along the wall stood flower-pots, some of which had blooming flowers in them. The floor was freshly scrubbed, and strewn with juniper-needles, and the whole room smelt very clean. In a corner, between the stone hearth and the wall, a bed, made of plain deal boards, was to be seen; a shaggy Maltese cat, with sleepy, yellow eyes, was for the present occupying it, and he raised his head and gazed knowingly at the visitor, as if to say: "I know what you have come for."

Old Marthie chuckled when Thorwald asked if she was a witch; and somehow her chuckle had a pleasant and good-natured sound, the boy thought, as he eyed her wistfully.

"Now I am sure you are not a witch," cried he, "for witches never laugh like that. I know, now, that you are a good woman, and that you will want to help me,

if you can. I told you my mamma was very ill" (the tears here again broke through his voice)—"so very ill that the doctor says God will take her away from us. I sat at her door all yesterday and cried, and when papa took me in to her, she did not know me. Then I cried more. I asked papa why God makes people so ill, and he said it was something I didn't understand, but I should understand some day. But, Marthie, I haven't time to wait, for by that time mamma may be gone, and I shall never know where to find her; I must know now. And you, who are so very wise, you will tell me what I can do to save my mamma. Couldn't I do something for God, Marthie—something that he would like? And then, perhaps, he would allow mamma to stay with us always."

The tears now came hot and fast, but the boy still stood erect, and gazed with anxious questioning into the old woman's face.

"You are a brave little lad," she said, stroking his soft, curly hair with her stiff, crooked fingers, "and happy is the mother of such a boy. And old Marthie knows a thing or two, she also, and you shall not have come to her in vain. Once, child, more than eighteen hundred years ago, just on this very night, a strange thing happened in this world, and I dare say you have heard of it. Christ, the White, was born of Mary in the land of the Jews. The angels came down from heaven, as we read in the Good Book, and they sang strange and wonderful songs of praise. And they scattered flowers, too—flowers which only blossomed until then in

heaven, in the sight of God. And one of these flowers, —sweet and pure, like the tone of an angel's voice expressed in color—one of these wondrous flowers, I say, struck root in the soil, and has multiplied, and remains in the world until this day. It blossoms only on Christmas-eve—on the eve when Christ was born. Even in the midst of the snow, and when it is so cold that the wolf shivers in his den, this frail, pure flower peeps up for a few brief moments above the shining white surface, and then is not seen again. It is of a white or faintly bluish color; and he who touches it and inhales its heavenly odor is immediately healed of every earthly disease. But there is one singular thing about it—no one can see it unless he be pure and innocent and good; to all others the heavenly flower is invisible."

"Oh, then I shall never find it, Marthie!" cried Thorwald, in great suspense. "For I have often been very naughty."

"I am very sorry to hear that," said Marthie, and shook her head.

"And do you think it is of any use for me, then, to try to find the flower?" exclaimed the boy, wildly. "O Marthie, help me! Help me!"

"Well, I think I should try," said Marthie, calmly. "I don't believe you can have been such a dreadfully naughty boy; and you probably were very sorry whenever you happened to do something wrong."

"Yes, yes, always, and I always begged papa's and mamma's pardon."

"Then, listen to me! I will show you the Star of

Bethlehem in the sky—the same one that led the shepherds and the kings of the East to the manger where Christ lay. Follow that straight on, through the forest, across the frozen river, wherever it may lead you, until you find the heavenly flower. And when you have found it, hasten home to your mother, and put it up to her lips so that she may inhale its breath ; then she will be healed, and will bless her little boy, who shunned no sacrifice for her sake."

"But I didn't tell you, Marthie, that I made Grim Hering-Luck tattoo a ship on my right arm, although papa had told me that I mustn't do it. Do you still think I shall find the heavenly flower ?"

"I shouldn't wonder if you did, child," responded Marthie, with a reassuring nod of her head. "It is high time for you to start, now, and you mustn't loiter by the way."

"No, no; you need not tell me that!" cried the boy, seizing his cap eagerly, and slipping out through the lower panel of the door. He jumped into the bands of his skees, and cast his glance up to the vast nocturnal sky, which glittered with myriads of twinkling stars. Which of all these was the Star of Bethlehem ? He was just about to rush back into the cottage, when he felt a hand upon his shoulder, and saw Wise Marthie's kindly but withered face close to his.

"Look toward the east, child," she said, almost solemnly.

"I don't know where the east is, Marthie," said Thorwald, dolefully. "I always get mixed up about the

points of the compass. If they would only fix four big poles, one in each corner of the earth, that everybody could see, then I should always know where to turn."

"There is the east," said Marthie, pointing with a long, crooked finger toward the distant mountain-tops, which, with their hoods of ice, flashed and glistened in the moonlight. "Do you see that bright, silvery star which is just rising between those two snowy peaks?"

"Yes, yes, Marthie. I see it! I see it!"

"That is the Star of Bethlehem. You will know it by its white, radiant light. Follow that, and its rays will lead you to the flower which can conquer Death, as it led the shepherds and the kings of old to Him over whom Death had no power."

"Thank you, Marthie. Thank you!"

The second "thank you" hardly reached the ears of the old woman, for the boy had shot like an arrow down over the steep bank, and was now half-way out upon the ice. The snow surged and danced in eddies behind him, and the cold stung his face like sharp, tiny needles. But he hardly minded it, for he saw the star of Bethlehem beaming large and radiant upon the blue horizon, and he thought of his dear mother, whom he was to rescue from the hands of Death. But the flower—the flower—where was that? He searched carefully all about him in the snow, but he saw no trace of it. "I wonder," he thought, "if it can blossom in the snow? I should rather think that Christ allows the angels to fling down a few of them every year on his birthday, to help those that are sick and suffering; they say he is

very kind and good, and I shouldn't wonder if he sees me now, and will tell the angels to throw down the precious flower right in my path."

II.

The world was cold and white round about him. The tall pines stood wrapped in cloaks of snow, which looked like great white ulsters, and they were buttoned straight up to the chin—only a green finger-tip and a few tufts of dark-green hair showed faintly, at the end of the sleeves and above the collar. The alders and the birches, who had no such comfortable coats to keep out the cold, stood naked in the keen light of the stars and the aurora, and they shivered to the very marrow. To Thorwald it seemed as if they were stretching their bare, lean hands against the heavens, praying for warmer weather. A family of cedar-birds, who had lovely red caps on their heads and gray uniforms of the most fashionable tint, had snugged close together on a sheltered pine-branch, and they were carrying on a subdued twittering conversation just as Thorwald passed the river-bank, pushing himself rapidly over the snow by means of his skee-staff. But it was strictly a family matter they were discussing, which it would be indiscreet in me to divulge. They did, however, shake down a handful of loose snow on Thorwald's head, just to let him know that he was very impolite to take so little notice of them. They did not know, of course, that his mother was ill; otherwise, I am sure, they would have forgiven him.

Hush! What was that? Thorwald thought he heard distant voices behind him in the snow. He looked all about him, but saw nothing. Then, following the guidance of the star, he still pressed onward. He quitted the river-bed and traversed a wide sloping meadow; he had to take a zigzag course, like a ship that is tacking, because the slope was too steep to ascend in a straight line. He was beginning to feel tired. The muscles in his legs ached, and he often shifted the staff from hand to hand, in order to rest the one or the other of his arms. He gazed now fixedly upon the snow, taking only an occasional glance at the sky, to see that he was going in the right direction; the strange hum of voices in the air yet haunted his ears, and he sometimes imagined he heard words moving to a wonderful melody. Was it the angels that were singing, inspiring him with courage for his quest? He dared hardly believe it, and yet his heart beat joyously at the thought. Ah! what is that which glitters so strangely in the snow? A starry gleam, a twinkling, like a spark gathering its light into a little glittering point, just as it is about to be quenched. Thorwald leaps from his skees and plunges his hand into the snow. The frozen crust cuts his wrist cruelly; and he feels that he is bleeding. With a wrench he pulls his hand up; his heart throbs in his throat; he gazes with wild expectation, but sees—nothing. His wrist is bleeding, and his hand is full of blood. Poor Thorwald could hardly trust his eyes. He certainly had seen something glittering on the snow. He felt a great lump in his throat, and it would have been a great relief to him, at

that moment, to sit down and give vent to the tears that were crowding to his eyelids. But just then a clear, sweet strain of music broke through the air, and Thorwald heard distinctly these words, sung by voices of children:

"Lead, O Star of Bethlehem,
Me through death and danger,
Unto Christ, who on this night
Lay cradled in a manger."

Thorwald gathered all his strength and again leaped into his skees; he was now on the border of a dense pine-forest, and as he looked into it, he could not help shuddering. It was so dark under the thick, snow-burdened branches, and the moon only broke through here and there, and scattered patches of light over the tree-tops and on the white carpet of the snow. Yet, perhaps it was within this very wood that the heavenly blossom had fallen. He must not lose heart now, when he was perhaps so near his goal. Thrusting his staff vigorously into the snow-crust, he pushed himself forward and glided in between the tall, silent trunks; at the same moment the air again quivered lightly, as with the breath of invisible beings, and he heard words which, as far as he could afterward recollect them, sounded as follows:

"Make my soul as white and pure
As the heavenly blossom—
As the flower of grace and truth
That blooms upon Thy bosom."

Thorwald hardly felt the touch of the snow beneath his feet; he seemed rather to be soaring through the air, and the trunks of the huge dark trees marched in close columns, like an army in rapid retreat, before his enraptured vision. Christ did see him! Christ would send him the heavenly flower! All over the snow sparkling stars were scattered, and they gleamed and twinkled and beckoned to him, but whenever he stretched out his hand for them they suddenly vanished. The trees began to assume strange, wild shapes, and to resemble old men and women, with long beards and large hooked noses. They nodded knowingly to one another, and raised up their gnarled toes from the ground in which they were rooted, and tried to trip up the little boy who had dared to interrupt their solemn conversation. One old fir shook the snow from her shoulders, and stretched out a long, strangely twisted arm, and was on the point of seizing Thorwald by the hair, when fortunately he saw the coming danger, and darted away down the hill-side at quickened speed. A long, bright streak of light suddenly illuminated the eastern sky, something fell through the air, and left a golden trail of fire behind it; surely it was the heavenly flower that was thrown down by an angel in response to his prayer! Forward and ever forward—over roots and stumps and stones—stumbling, rising again, sinking from weariness and exhaustion, kneeling to pray on the frozen snow, crawling painfully back and tottering into the skee-bands; but only forward, ever forward! The earth rolls with a surging motion under his feet, the old trees join their

rugged hands and dance, in wild, senile glee, around him, lifting their twisted limbs, and sometimes, with their talons, trying to sweep the stars from the sky. Thorwald struggled with all his force to break through the ring they had made around him. He saw plainly the flower, beaming with a pale radiance upon the snow, and he strove with all his might to reach it, but something held him back, and though he was once or twice within an inch of it, he could never quite grasp it with his fingers. Then, all of a sudden, the strange song again vibrated through the air, and he saw a huge star glittering among the underbrush ; a flock of children clad in white robes were dancing about it, and they were singing Christmas carols in praise of the new-born Saviour. As they approached nearer and nearer, the hope revived in Thorwald's heart. Ah, there the flower of healing was, lying close at his feet. He made a desperate leap and clutched it in his grasp—then saw and felt no more.

III.

The white children were children of earth, not, as Thorwald had imagined, angels from heaven. It is a custom in Norway for the children of the poor to go about on Christmas eve, from house to house, carrying a large canvas star, with one or more lanterns within it, and sing Christmas carols. They are always dressed in white robes, and people call them star-children. Whenever they station themselves in the snow before the front door, and lift up their tiny, shrill voices, old and young

crowd to the windows, and the little boys and girls who are born to comfort and plenty, and never have known want, throw pennies to them, and wish them a merry Christmas. When they have finished singing, they are invited in to share in the mirth of the children of the house, and are made to sit down with them to the Christmas table, and perhaps to dance with them around the Christmas tree.

It was a company of these star-children who now found Thorwald lying senseless in the forest, and whose sweet voices he had heard in the distance. The oldest of them, a boy of twelve, hung up his star on the branch of a fir-tree, and stooped down over the pale little face, which, from the force of the fall, was half buried in the snow. He lifted Thorwald's head and gazed anxiously into his features, while the others stood in a ring about him, staring with wide-open eyes and frightened faces.

"This is Thorwald, the judge's son," he said. "Come, boys, we must carry him home. He must have been taken ill while he was running on skees. But let us first make a litter of branches to carry him on."

The boys all fell to work with a will, cutting flexible twigs with their pocket-knives, and the little girls sat down on the snow and twined them firmly together, for they were used to work, and, indeed, some of them made their living by weaving baskets. In a few minutes the litter was ready, and Thorwald, who was still unconscious, was laid upon it. Then six boys took hold, one at each corner and two in the middle, and as the crust of the snow was very thick, and strong enough to bear

them, it was only once or twice that any of them broke through. When they reached the river, however, they were very tired, and were obliged for a while to halt. Some one proposed that they should sing as they walked, as that would make the time pass more quickly, and make their burden seem lighter, and immediately some one began a beautiful Christmas carol, and all the others joined in with one accord. It was a pretty sight to see them as they went marching across the river, one small boy of six walking at the head of the procession, carrying the great star, then the six larger boys carrying the litter, and at last twelve little white-robed girls, tripping two abreast over the shining surface of the ice. But, in spite of their singing, they were very tired by the time they had gained the highway on the other side of the river. They did not like to confess it; but when they saw the light from Wise Marthie's windows, the oldest boy proposed that they should stop there for a few minutes to rest, and the other five said, in a careless sort of way, that they had no objection. Only the girls were a wee bit frightened, because they had heard that Wise Marthie was a witch. The boys, however, laughed at that, and the little fellow with the star ran forward and knocked at the door, with Thorwald's skee-staff.

"Lord ha' mercy on us!" cried Marthie, as she opened the peeping-hole in her door, and saw the insensible form which the boys bore between them; then flinging open both portions of the door, she rushed out, snatched Thorwald up in her arms, and carried him into the cottage.

"Come in, children," she said, "come in and warm

yourselves for a moment. Then hurry up to the judge's, and tell the folk there that the little lad is here at my cottage. You will not go away empty-handed; for the judge is a man who pays for more than he gets. And this boy, you know, is the apple of his eye. Lord! Lord! I sent his dog, Hector, after him, and I knew the beast would let me know if the boy came to harm; but, likely as not, the wind was the wrong way, and the poor beast could not trace the skee-track on the frozen snow. Mercy! mercy! and he is in a dead swoon."

IV.

When Thorwald waked up, he lay in his bed, in his own room, and in his hand he held a pale-blue flower. He saw the doctor standing at his bedside.

"Mamma—my mamma," he whispered.

"Yes, it is time that we should go to your mamma," said the doctor, and his voice shook.

And he took the boy by the hand and led him to his mother's bed-chamber. Thorwald began to tremble—a terrible dread had come over him; but he clutched the flower convulsively, and prayed that he might not come too late. A dim, shaded lamp burned in a corner of the room, his father was sitting on a chair, resting his head in his palms, and weeping. To his astonishment, he saw an old woman stooping over the pillow where his mother's head lay; it was Wise Marthie. Unable to contain himself any longer, he rushed, breathless with excitement, up to the bedside.

"Mamma! Mamma!" he cried, flourishing his prize in the air. "I am going to make you well. Look here!"

He thrust the flower eagerly into her face, gazing all the while exultantly into her beloved features.

"My sweet, my darling child," whispered she, while her eyes kindled with a heavenly joy. "How can a mother die who has such a noble son?"

And she clasped her little boy in her arms, and drew him close to her bosom. Thus they lay long, weeping for joy—mother and son. An hour later the doctor stole on tiptoe toward the bed, and found them both sleeping.

When the morrow's sun peeped in through the white curtains, the mother awoke from her long, health-giving slumber; but Thorwald lay yet peacefully sleeping at her side. And as the mother's glance fell upon the flower, now limp and withered, yet clutched tightly in the little grimy, scratched and frost-bitten fist, the tears—happy tears—again blinded her eyes. She stretched out her hand, took the withered flower, pressed it to her lips, and then hid it next to her heart. And there she wears it in a locket of gold until this day.

BIG HANS AND LITTLE HANS.

I.

On the northwestern coast of Norway the mountains hide their heads in the clouds and dip their feet in the sea. In fact, the cliffs are in some places so tall and steep that streams, flowing from the inland glaciers and plunging over their sides, vanish in the air, being blown in a misty spray out over the ocean. In other places there may be a narrow slope, where a few potatoes, some garden vegetables, and perhaps even a patch of wheat, may be induced to grow by dint of much coaxing; for the summer, though short, is mild and genial in those high latitudes, and has none of that fierce intensity which, with us, forces the vegetation into sudden maturity, and sends our people flying toward all the points of the compass during the first weeks in June.

It was on such a sunny little slope, right under the black mountain-wall, that Halvor Myrbraaten had built his cottage. Halvor was a merry fellow, who went about humming snatches of hymns and old songs and dance-melodies all day long, and sometimes mixed up both words and tune wofully; and when his memory failed

him, sang anything that popped into his head. Some people said they had heard him humming the multiplication table to the tune of "Old Norway's Lion," and whole pages out of Luther's Catechism to jolly dance-tunes. Not that he ever meant to be irreverent; it was just his way of amusing himself. He was an odd stick, people thought, and not of much use to his family. Whatever he did, "luck" went against him. But it affected his temper very little. Halvor was still light-hearted and good-natured, and went about humming as usual. If he went out hunting, and came home with an empty pouch, it did not interfere in the least with his gayety; but knowing well the reception which was in store for him, it did occasionally happen that he paused with a quizzical look before opening the door, and perhaps, after a minute's reflection, concluded to spend the night in the barn; for Turid, his wife, had a mind of her own, and knew how to express herself with emphasis. She was, as everyone admitted, a very worthy and competent woman, and accomplished more in a day than her husband did in a fortnight. But worthy and competent people are not invariably the pleasantest people to associate with, and the gay and genial good-for-nothing Halvor, with his bright irresponsible smile and his pleasant ways, was a far more popular person in the parish than his austere, estimable, over-worked wife. For one thing, with all her poverty, she had a great deal of pride; and people who had never suspected that one so poor could have any objection to receiving alms had been much offended by her curt way of refusing their proffered gifts.

Halvor, they said, showed a more realizing sense of his position: he had the humble and contrite heart which was becoming in an unsuccessful man, and accepted with equal cheerfulness and gratitude whatever was offered him, from a dollar bill to a pair of worn-out mittens. It was, in fact, this extreme readiness to accept things which first made difficulty between Halvor and his wife. It seemed to him a pure waste of labor to work for a thing which he could get for nothing; and it seemed to her a waste of something still more precious to accept as a gift what one might have honestly earned by work. But as she could never hope to have Halvor agree with her on this point, she comforted herself by impressing her own horror of alms-taking upon her children; and the children, in their turn, impressed the same sound principles upon their pet kid and the pussy cat.

There were five children at Myrbraaten. Hans, the eldest, was ten years old, and Dolly, the youngest, was one, and the rest were scattered between. It was a pretty sight to see them of a summer afternoon on the grass plot before the house, rolling over one another and gambolling like a sportive family of kittens; only you could hardly help feeling vaguely uneasy about the mountain, the steep, black wall of which, sparsely clad with pines, rose so threateningly above them. It seemed as if it must, some day, swoop down upon them and crush them. The mother, it must be admitted, was occasionally oppressed by some such fear; but when she reflected that the mountain had stood there from time immemorial, and had never yet moved, or harmed anyone, she felt

ashamed of her apprehension, and blamed herself for her distrust of God's providence.

Besides the children there was another young inhabitant of the Myrbraaten cottage, and surely a very important one. He too, was named Hans, but, in order to distinguish him from the son of the house, the word "Little' was prefixed, and the latter, although he was really the smaller of the two, was called, by way of distinction, Big Hans. The most remarkable thing about Little Hans was that he had, in spite of his youth, a very well-developed beard. Big Hans, who had not a hair on his chin, rather envied him this manly ornament. Then, again, Little Hans was a capital fighter, and could knock you down in one round with great coolness and sweet-tempered seriousness, as if he were acting entirely from a sense of duty. He never used any hard words; but the moment his adversary attempted to rise, Little Hans quietly gave him another knock, and winked wickedly at him, as if warning him to lie still. He never bragged of his victories, but showed a modest self-appreciation to which very few of his age ever attain. Big Hans, who valued his friend and namesake above others, and had a hearty admiration for his many fine qualities, declared himself utterly unable to rival him in combativeness, modesty, and coolness of temper. For Big Hans, I am sorry to say, was sometimes given to bragging of his muscle and of his skill in turning hand-springs and standing on his head, and he could easily be teased into a furious temper. Now, Little Hans could not turn hand-springs, nor could he stand on his head; but, though he

promptly resented any trifling with his dignity, I never once knew him to lose his temper. He never laughed when anything struck him as being funny; in fact, he seemed to regard every boisterous exhibition of feeling as undignified. He only turned his head away and stood chewing a piece of paper or a straw, with his usual look of comical gravity in his eye.

Many people wondered at the fast friendship which bound Big Hans and Little Hans together. Their tastes, people said, were dissimilar; in temperament, too, they had few points of resemblance. And yet they were absolutely inseparable. Wherever Big Hans went, Little Hans was sure to follow. Often they were seen racing along the beach or climbing up the mountain-side; and, as Little Hans was a capital hand (or ought I to say foot?) at climbing, Big Hans often had hard work to keep up with him. Sometimes Little Hans would leap up a rock which was so steep that it was impossible for his friend to climb it, and then he would grin comically down at Big Hans, who would stand below calling tearfully to his companion until he descended, which usually was very soon. For Little Hans was very fond of Big Hans, and could never bear to see him cry. And that is not in the least to be wondered at, as Big Hans had saved him from starvation and death when Little Hans was really in the sorest need. Their acquaintance began in the following manner: one day when Big Hans was up in the mountains trapping hares, he heard a feeble voice in a cleft of the rocks near by, and hurrying to the spot, he found Little Hans wedged in between two great

stones, and his leg caught in so distressing a manner that it cost Big Hans nearly an hour's work to set it free. Then he dressed the bruised foot with a rag torn from the lining of his coat, and carried Little Hans home in his arms. And as Little Hans' parents had never claimed him, and he himself could give no satisfactory account of them, he had thenceforth remained at Myrbraaten, where all the children were very fond of him. Turid, their mother, on the other hand, had no great liking for him, especially after he had devoured her hymn-book (which was her most precious property) and eaten with much appetite a piece of Dolly's dress. For, as I intimated, Little Hans' tastes were very curious, and nothing came amiss when he was hungry. He had a trick of pulling off Dolly's stockings when she was sitting out on the green, and if he were not discovered in time, he was sure to make his breakfast off of them. With these tastes, you will readily understand, Big Hans could have no sympathy, and the only thing which could induce him to forgive Little Hans' eccentricities was the fact that Little Hans was a goat.

II.

In the winter of 187–, a great deal of snow fell on the northwestern coast of Norway. The old pines about the Myrbraaten cottage were laden down with it; the children had to be put to work with snow-shovels early in the morning, in order to hollow out a tunnel to the cow-stable where the cow stood bellowing with hunger. The

mother, too, worked bravely, and sometimes when the thin roof of snow caved in and fell down upon them, they laughed heartily, and their mother too, could not help laughing because they were so happy. Little Hans also made a pretence of working, but only succeeded in being in everybody's way, and when the cold snow drizzled down upon his nose he grinned and made faces so queer that the children shouted with merriment.

Day after day, and week after week, the snow continued to descend. Big Hans and his friend sat at the window watching the large feathery flakes, as they whirled slowly and silently through the air and covered the earth far and near with a white pall. Soon there was a scarcity of wood at the Myrbraaten cottage, and Halvor was obliged to get into his skees and go to the forest. Humming the multiplication table (so far as he knew it) to the tune of a hymn, he pulled on his warmest jacket, took his axe from its hiding-place under the eaves, and went in a slanting line up the mountain-side; but before he had gone many rods it struck him that it was useless to go so far for wood, when the whole mountain-slope was covered with pines. Fresh pine would be a little hard to burn, to be sure, but then pine was full of pitch and would burn anyhow. He therefore took off his skees, dug a hole in the snow, and felled three or four trees only a few hundred rods above the cottage. When his wife heard the sound of his axe so near the house, she rushed out and cried to him:

"Halvor, Halvor, don't cut down the trees on the

slope! They are all that keep the snow from coming down upon us in an avalanche, and sweeping us into the ocean!"

"Oh, the Lord will look out for his own," sang Halvor, cheerily.

"The Lord put the pine-trees there to protect us," replied his wife.

But the end was that, in spite of his wife's protests, Halvor continued to fell the trees.

The heavy fall of snow was followed in the course of a week by a sudden thaw.

Strange creaking and groaning sounds stole through the forest. Sometimes when a large load of snow fell, it rolled and grew as it rolled, until it dashed against a huge trunk and nearly broke it with its weight.

Then, one night, there came down a great load which fell with a dull thud and rolled down and down, pushing a growing wall of snow before it, until it reached the clearing where Halvor had cut his wood; there, meeting with no obstructions, it gained a tremendous headway, sweeping all the snow and the felled trunks with it, and rushed down in a great mass, carrying along stones, shrubs, huge trees, and the very soil itself, leaving nothing but the bare rock behind it. How terrible was the sight! A smoke-like cloud rose in the darkness, and a sound as of a thousand thundering cataracts filled the night. On it swept, onward, with a wild, resistless speed! At the jutting rock, where the juniper stood, the avalanche divided, tearing up the old spruces and the birches by the roots and hurling them down, but leaving the juniper

standing alone on its barren peak. It was but a moment's work. The avalanche shot downward with increased speed—hark!—a sharp shriek, a smothered groan, then a fierce hissing sound of waves that rose toward the sky and returned with a long thundering cannonade to the strand! The night was darker and the silence deeper than before.

III.

Where the Myrbraaten cottage had stood, the bare rock now stares black and dismal against the sun. The rumor of the calamity spread like wild-fire through the valley, and the folk of the whole parish came to gaze upon the ruin which the avalanche had wrought. All that was left of Myrbraaten was the cow-stable, where the cow and Little Hans and Big Hans had slept. Little Hans had been very ill-behaved the night before, so Turid had sent him to sleep with the cow; and Big Hans, who thought it would be cruel to ask his companion to spend the night in that dark stable, with only a cow for company, had gone with him and slept with him in the hay. Thus it happened that Little Hans and Big Hans both were saved. It was pitiful to see them shivering in the wet snow. Big Hans was crying as if his heart would break; and the women who crowded about him were unable to comfort him. What should he, a small boy of ten, do alone in this wide world? His father and his mother and his little brothers and sisters were all gone, and there was no one left who cared for him. Just then Little Hans, who was anxious to express

his sympathy, put his nose close to Big Hans' face and rubbed it against his cheek.

"Yes, you are right, Little Hans," sobbed the boy, embracing his faithful friend; "you do care for me. You are the only one I have left now, in all the world. You and I will stand by each other always."

Little Hans then said, "Ma-a-a," which in his language meant, "Yes."

The question soon arose in the parish—what was to be done with Big Hans? He had no relatives except a brother of his mother, who had emigrated many years before to Minnesota; and there was no one else who seemed disposed to assume the burden of his support. It was finally decided that he should be hired out as a pauper to the lowest bidder, and that the parish should pay for his board. But when the people who bid for him refused to take Little Hans too, the boy determined, after some altercation with the authorities, to seek his uncle in America. One thing he was sure of, and that was that he would not part from Little Hans. But there was no one in the parish who would board Little Hans without extra pay. Accordingly, the cow and the barn were sold for the boy's benefit, and he and his comrade went on foot to the city, where they bought a ticket for New York.

Thus it happened that Big Hans and Little Hans became Americans. But before they reached the United States some rather curious things happened to them. The captain of the steamship, Big Hans found, was not willing to take a goat as a passenger, and Big Hans was

THEY ATTRACTED CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION AS THEY WALKED UP BROADWAY TOGETHER.

forced to return with his friend to the pier, while the other emigrants thronged on board. He was nearly at his wits' end, when it suddenly occurred to him to put Little Hans in a bag and smuggle him on board as baggage. This was a lucky thought. Little Hans was quite heavy, to be sure, but he seemed to comprehend the situation perfectly, and kept as still as a mouse in his bag while Big Hans, with the assistance of a benevolent fellow-passenger, lugged him up the gang-plank. And when he emerged from his retirement some time after the steamer was well under way, none of the officers even thought of throwing the poor goat overboard; for Little Hans became a great favorite with both crew and passengers, although he played various mischievous pranks, in his quiet, unostentatious way, and ate some shirts which had been hung out to dry.

It was early in April when the two friends arrived in New York. They attracted considerable attention as they walked up Broadway together; and many people turned around to laugh at the little emigrant boy, in his queer Norwegian costume, who led a full-grown goat after him by a halter. The bootblacks and the newsboys pointed their fingers at them, and, when that had no effect, made faces at them, and pulled Big Hans by his short jacket and Little Hans by his short tail. Big Hans was quite frightened when he saw how many of them there were, but, perceiving that Little Hans was not in the least ruffled, he felt ashamed of himself, and took heart again. Thus they marched on for several blocks, while the crowd behind them grew more and more bois-

terous and importunate. Suddenly, one big boy, who seemed to be the leader of the gang, sprang forward with a yell and knocked off Big Hans' hat, while all the rest cheered loudly; but just as he was turning around to enjoy his triumph, Little Hans turned around too, and gave him a bump from behind which sent him headlong into the gutter. Then, rising on his hind legs, Little Hans leaped forward again and again, and despatched the second and third boy in the same manner, whereupon all the rest ran away, helter-skelter, scattering through the side streets. It was all done in so quiet and gentlemanly a manner that not one of the grown-up spectators who had gathered on the sidewalk thought of interfering. Big Hans, however, who had intended to see something of the city before starting for the West, was so discouraged at the inhospitable reception the United States had given him, that he gave up his purpose, and returned disconsolately to Castle Garden. There he spent the rest of the day, and when the night came, he went to sleep on the floor, with his little bundle under his head; while Little Hans, who did not seem to be sleepy, lay down at his side, quietly munching a piece of pie which he had stolen from somebody's luncheon-basket.

Early the next morning Big Hans was awakened by a gentle pulling at his coat-collar; and, looking up, he saw that it was Little Hans. He jumped up as quickly as he could, and he found that it was high time, for all the emigrants had formed into a sort of a procession and were filing through the gate on their way to the railway station. There were some seven or eight hundred of

them—toil-worn, sad-faced men and women, and queer-looking children in all sorts of outlandish costumes. Big Hans and his friend ran to take their places at the very end of the procession, and just managed to slip through the gate before it was closed. At the railway station the boy exhibited his ticket which he had bought at the steamship office in Norway, and was just about to board the train, when the conductor cried out:

"Hold on, there! This is not a cattle-train! You can't take your goat into the passenger-car!"

Big Hans did not quite comprehend what was said, but from the expression of the conductor's voice and face, he surmised that there was some objection to his comrade.

"I think I have money enough to buy a ticket for Little Hans, too," he said, in his innocent Norwegian way, as he pulled a five-dollar bill from his pocket.

"I don't want your money," cried the conductor, who knew as little of Norwegian as Big Hans did of English.

"Get out of the way there with your billy-goat!"

And he hustled the boy roughly out of the way to make room for the other emigrants, who were thronging up to the platform.

"Well, then," said Big Hans, "since they don't want us on the train, Little Hans, we shall have to walk to Minnesota. And as this railroad is going that way, I suppose we shall get there if we follow the track."

Little Hans seemed to think that this was a good plan; for, as soon as the train had steamed off, he started at a brisk rate along the track, so that his master had great difficulty in keeping up with him. For several

hours they trudged along cheerfully, and both were in excellent spirits. Minnesota, Big Hans supposed, might, perhaps, be a day's journey off, and if he walked fast he thought he would probably be there at nightfall. When once he was there, he did not doubt but that everybody would know his Uncle Peter. He was somewhat puzzled, however, when he came to a place where no less than three railroad tracks branched off in different directions; and, as there was no one to ask, he sat down patiently in the shade of a tree and determined to wait. Presently a man came along with a red flag.

"Perhaps you would kindly tell me if this is the way to Minnesota," said Big Hans, taking off his cap and bowing politely to the man.

The man shook his head sullenly, but did not answer; he did not understand the boy's language.

"And you don't happen to know my uncle, Peter Volden?" essayed the boy, less confidently, making another respectful bow to the flagman.

"You are a queer loon of a chap," grumbled the man; "but if you don't jump off the track with your goat, the train will run over both of you."

He had hardly spoken, when the train was seen rounding the curve, and the boy had just time to pull Little Hans over into the ditch when the locomotive came thundering along, sending out volumes of black smoke, which scattered slowly in the warm air, making the sunlight for awhile seem gray and dingy. Big Hans was almost stunned, but picked himself up, with a little fainter heart than before, perhaps; but whispering a snatch of a

prayer which his mother had taught him, he seized Little Hans by the halter, and started once more upon his weary way after the train.

"Minnesota must be a great way off, I am afraid," he said, addressing himself, as was his wont, to his companion; "but if we keep on walking, it seems to me we must, in the end, get there; or, what do you think, Little Hans?"

Little Hans did not choose to say what he thought, just then, for his attention had been called to some tender grass at the roadside which he knew tasted very sweet. Big Hans was then reminded that he, too, was hungry, and he sat down on a stone and ate a piece of bread which he had brought with him from Castle Garden. The sun rose higher in the sky and the heat grew more and more oppressive. Still the emigrant boy trudged on patiently. Whenever he came to a station he stopped, and read the sign, and shook his head sadly when he saw some unfamiliar name.

"Not Minnesota yet, Little Hans," he sighed; "I am afraid we shall have to take lodgings somewhere for the night. I am so footsore and tired."

It was then about six o'clock in the evening, and the two friends had walked about twenty miles. At the next station they met a hand-organ man, who was sitting on a truck, feeding his monkey.

Big Hans, who had never seen so funny an animal before, was greatly delighted. He went close up to the man, and put out his hand cautiously to touch the monkey.

"Are you going to Minnesota, too?" he asked, in a tone of great friendliness; "if so, we might bear each other company. I like that hairy little fellow of yours very much."

The hand-organ man, who, like most men of his calling, was an Italian, shook his head, and the monkey shook his head, too, as if to say, "All that may be very fine, but I don't understand it."

The boy, however, was too full of delight to notice whether he was understood or not; and when the monkey took off his little red hat and offered to shake hands with him, he laughed until the tears rolled down his cheeks. He seemed to have entirely forgotten Little Hans, who was standing by, glowering at the monkey with a look which was by no means friendly. The fact was, Little Hans had never been accustomed to any rival in his master's affection, and he didn't enjoy in the least the latter's interest in the monkey. He kept his jealousy to himself, however, as long as he could; but when Big Hans, after having giving ten cents to the organ-man, took the monkey on his lap and patted and stroked it, Little Hans' heart was ready to burst. He could not endure seeing his affections so cruelly trifled with. Bending his head and rising on his hind legs, he darted forward and gave his rival a knock on the head that sent him tumbling in a heap at Big Hans' feet. The Italian jumped up with a terrible shout and seized his treasure in his arms. The monkey made an effort to open its eyes, gave a little shiver, and—was dead. The boy stood staring in mute despair at the tiny stiffened body;

he felt like a murderer. Hardly knowing what he did, he seized Little Hans' halter; but in the same moment the enraged owner of the monkey rushed at the goat with the butt end of his whip uplifted. Little Hans, who was dauntless as ever, dexterously dodged the blow, but the instant his antagonist had turned to vent his wrath upon his master, he gave him an impetus from behind which sent him headlong out upon the railroad track. A crowd of men and boys (of the class who always lounge about railroad stations) had now collected to see the fight, and goaded both combatants on with their jeering cries. The Italian, who was maddened with anger, had just picked himself up, and was plunging forward for a second attack upon Little Hans, when Big Hans, seeing the danger, flung himself over his friend's back, clasping his arms about his neck. The loaded end of the whip struck Big Hans in the back of the head; without a sound, the boy fell senseless upon the track.

Then a policeman arrived, and Little Hans, the Italian, and the insensible boy were taken to the police-station. A doctor was summoned, and he declared that Big Hans' wound was very dangerous, and that he must be taken to the hospital. And there the emigrant boy lay for six weeks, hovering between life and death; but when, at the end of that time, he was permitted to go out, he heard with dread that he was to testify at the Italian's trial. A Norwegian interpreter was easily found, and when Hans told his simple story to the judge, there were many wet eyes in the court-room. And he himself cried, too, for he thought that Little Hans was

lost. But just as he had finished his story, he heard a loud "Ba-a-a" in his ear; he jumped down from the witness-stand and flung his arms about Little Hans' neck and laughed and cried as if he had lost his wits.

It is safe to say that such a scene had never before been witnessed in an American court-room.

The next day Big Hans and Little Hans were both sent by rail, at the expense of some kind-hearted citizens, to their uncle in Minnesota. And it was there I made their acquaintance.

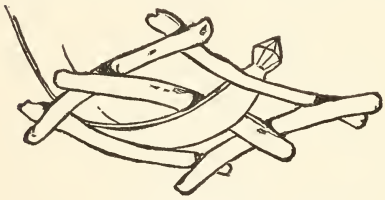
A NEW WINTER SPORT.

It is a curious fact that so useful an article as the Norwegian *skees* has not been more generally introduced in the United States. In some of the Western States, notably in Wisconsin and Minnesota, where the Scandinavian population is large, the immigrants of Norse blood are beginning to teach Americans the use of their national snow-shoes, and in Canada there has been an attempt made (with what success I do not know) to make skee-running popular. But the subject has by no means received the consideration which it deserves, and I am confident that I shall earn the gratitude of the great army of boys if I can teach them how to enjoy this fascinating sport.

Let me first, then, describe a *skee* and tell you how to have it made. You take a piece of tough, straight-grained pine, from five to ten feet long, and cut it down until it is about the breadth of your foot, or, at most, an inch broader. There must be no knots in the wood, and the grain must run with tolerable regularity lengthwise from end to end.

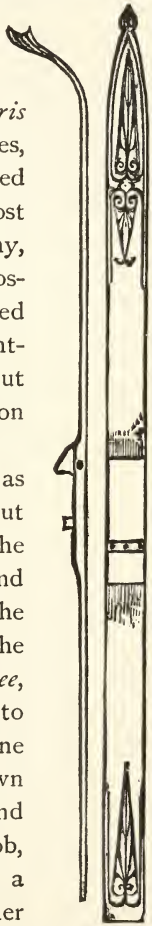
If you cannot find a piece without a knot, then let the knot be as near the hind end as possible; but such a *skee*

is not perfect, as it is apt to break if subjected to the strain of a "jump" or a "hollow" in a swift run. The thickness of the *skee* should be about an inch or an inch and one-half in the middle, and it should gradually grow thinner toward each end. Cut the forward end into a point—not abruptly, but with a gradual curve, as shown in the drawings. Pierce the middle latitudinally with a hole, about half an inch in height and an inch or (if required) more in width; then bend the forward pointed end by means of five sticks, placed as the drawing indicates, and let the *skee* remain in this position for four or five days, until its bend has become permanent, and it will no longer, on the removal of the sticks, resume the straight line. Before doing this, however, it would be well to plane the under side of the *skee* carefully and then polish and sand-paper it, until it is as smooth as a mirror. It is, of course, of prime importance to diminish as much as possible the friction in running and to make the *skee* glide easily over the surface of the snow, and the Norwegians use for this purpose soft-soap, which they rub upon the under side of the *skee*, and which, I am told, has also a tendency to make the wood tougher. In fact, too much care cannot be exercised in this respect, as the excellence of the *skees*, when finished, depends primarily upon the combined toughness and light-



Bending the Skee.

ness of the wood. Common pine will not do; for although, when well seasoned, it is light enough, it is rarely strong enough to bear the required strain. The tree known to Norwegians as the fir (*Sylvestris pinus*), which has long, flexible needles, hanging in tassels (not evenly distributed along the branch, as in the spruce), is most commonly used, as it is tough and pitchy, but becomes light in weight, without losing its strength, when it is well seasoned and dried. Any other strong and straight-grained wood might, perhaps, be used, but would, I think, be liable to the objection of being too heavy.



Side and Face View of Skees, showing Cap and Knob.

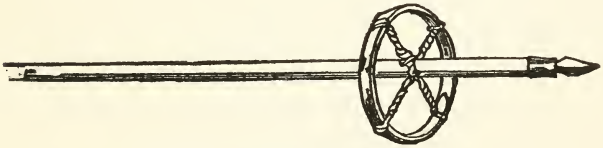
When the *skee* has been prepared as above described, there only remains to put a double band through the middle; the Norwegians make it of twisted withes, and fit its size to the toe of the boot. If the band is too wide, so as to reach up on the instep, it is impossible to steer the *skee*, while if it is too narrow the foot is apt to slip out. Of these two withe-bands, one should stand up and the other lie down horizontally, so as to steady the foot and prevent it from sliding. A little knob, just in front of the heel, might serve a similar purpose. Leather, or any other substance which is apt to stretch when getting wet, will

not do for bands, although undoubtedly something might be contrived which might be even preferable to withes. I am only describing the *skees* as they are used in Norway—not as they might be improved in America. In the West, I am told, a good substitute for the withe-band has been found in a kind of leather cap resembling the toe of a boot. As I have never myself tried this, I dare not express an opinion about its practicability; but as it is of the utmost importance that the runner should be able to free his foot easily, I would advise every boy who tries this cap to make perfectly sure that it does not prevent him from ridding himself of the *skee* at a moment's notice. The chief difficulty that the beginner has to encounter is the tendency of the *skees* to "spread," and the only thing for him to do in such a case, provided he is running too fast to trust to his ability to get them parallel again, is to jump out of the bands and let the *skees* go. Let him take care to throw himself backward, breaking his fall by means of the staff, and in the soft snow he will sustain no injury. Whenever an accident occurs in skee-running, it can usually be traced to undue tightness of the band, which may make it difficult to withdraw the feet instantly. A pair of *skees* kept at the rooms of the American Geographical Society, New York, are provided with a safeguard against "spreading" in the shape of a slight groove running longitudinally along the under side of each *skee*. I have seen *skees* provided with two such grooves, each about an inch from the edge and meeting near the forward point.

There has, of course, to be one *skee* for each foot, and

the second is an exact duplicate of the first. The upper sides of both are usually decorated, either in colors or with rude carvings; the forward ends are usually painted for about a foot, either in black or red.

Now, the reader will ask: "What advantage does this kind of snow-shoes offer over the ordinary Indian ones, which are in common use in the Western and Northern States?" Having tried both, I think I may confidently answer that the *skees* are superior, both in speed and convenience; and, moreover, they effect a great saving of strength. The force which, with the American snow-

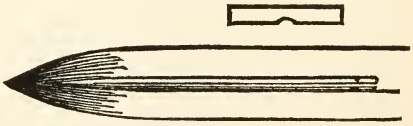


Staff with a Wheel that Acts as a Brake.

shoes, is expended in lifting the feet, is with the *skees* applied only as a propeller, for the *skee* glides, and is never lifted; and on level ground the resistance of the body in motion impels the skee-runner with each forward stride several feet beyond the length of his step. If he is going down-hill, his effort will naturally be to diminish rather than to increase his speed, and he carries for this purpose a strong but light staff about six feet long, upon which he may lean more or less heavily, and thereby retard the rapidity of his progress. The best skee-runners, however, take great pride in dispensing with the staff, and one often sees them in Norway rush-

ing down the steepest hill-sides with incredible speed, with a whirling cloud of snow following in their track. Although this may be a very fine and inspiriting sight, I should not recommend beginners to be too hasty in throwing away the staff, as it is only by means of it that they are able to guide their course down over the snowy slope, just as a ship is steered by its rudder. If you wish to steer toward the right, you press your staff down into the snow on your right side, while a similar manœuvre on your left side will bend your course in that direction. If you wish to test your *skees* when they are finished, put your feet into the bands, and let someone take hold of the two front ends and slowly raise them while you are standing in the bands. If they bear your weight, they are regarded as safe, and will not be likely to break in critical moments. In conclusion, let me add that the length and thickness of the *skees*, as here described, are not invariable, but must vary in accordance with the size of the boy who wishes to use them. Five feet is regarded as the minimum length, and would suit a boy from twelve to fourteen years old, while a grown-up man might safely make them twice that length.

Side View, showing Foot in Position.



Under Side and Cross Section of Skee, showing Groove.

In Norway, where the woods are pathless in winter, and where heavy snows continually fall from the middle of October until the middle of April, it is easily seen how essential, nay indispensable, the *skees* must be to hunters, trappers, and lumber-men, who have to depend upon the forests for their livelihood. Therefore, one of the first accomplishments which the Norwegian boy learns, as soon as he is old enough to find his way through the parish alone, is the use of these national snow-shoes. If he wakes up one fine winter morning and sees the huge snow-banks blockading doors and windows, and a white, glittering surface extending for miles as far as his eye can reach, he gives a shout of delight, buttons his thick woollen jacket up to his chin, pulls the fur borders of his cap down over his ears, and then, having cleared a narrow path between the dwelling-house and the cow-stables, makes haste to jump into his *skees*. If it is cold (as it usually is) and the snow accordingly dry and crisp, he knows that it will be a splendid day for skee-running. If, on the contrary, the snow is wet and heavy, it is apt to stick in clots to the *skees*, and then the sport is attended with difficulties which are apt to spoil the amusement. We will take it for granted, however, that there are no indications of a thaw, and we will accompany the Norse boy on his excursions over the snowy fields and through the dense pine-woods, in which he and his father spend their days in toil, not untempered with pleasure.

"Now, quick, Ola, my lad!" cries his father to him; "fetch the axe from the wood-shed and bring me my gun

from the corner behind the clock, and we will see what luck we have had with the fox-traps and the snares up in the birch-glen."

And Ola has no need of being asked twice to attend to such duties. His mother, in the meanwhile, has put up a luncheon, consisting of cold smoked ham and bread and butter, in a gayly painted wooden box, which Ola slings across his shoulder, while Nils, his father, sticks the axe into his girdle, and with his gun in one hand and his skee-staff in the other, emerges into the bright winter morning. They then climb up the steep snow-banks, place their *skees* upon the level surface, and put their feet into the bands. Nils gives a tremendous push with his staff and away he flies down the steep hill-side, while his little son, following close behind him, gives an Indian war-whoop, and swings his staff about his head to show how little he needs it. Whew, how fast he goes! How the cold wind sings in his ears; how the snow whirls about him, filling his eyes and ears and silvering the loose locks about his temples, until he looks like a hoary little gnome who has just stepped out from the mountain-side! But he is well used to snow and cold, and he does not mind it a bit.

In a few seconds father and son have reached the bottom of the valley, and before them is a steep incline, overgrown with leafless birch and elder forests. It is there where they have their snares, made of braided horse-hair; and as bait they use the red berries of the mountain ash, of which ptarmigan and thrushes are very fond. Now comes the test of their strength; but the

snow is too deep and loose to wade through, and to climb a declivity on *skees* is by no means as easy as it is to slide down a smooth hill-side. They now have to plod along slowly, ascending in long zig-zag lines, pausing often to rest on their staves, and to wipe the perspiration from their foreheads. Half an hour's climb brings them to the trapping-grounds. But there, indeed, their efforts are well rewarded.

"Oh, look, look, father!" cries the boy, ecstatically. "Oh, what a lot we have caught! Why, there are three dozen birds, as sure as there is one."

His father smiles contentedly, but says nothing. He is too old a trapper to give way to his delight.

"There is enough to buy you a new coat for Christmas, lad," he says, chuckling; "and if we make many more such hauls, we may get enough to buy mother a silver brooch, too, to wear at church on Sundays."

"No, buy mother's brooch first, father," protests the lad, a little hesitatingly (for it costs many boys an effort to be generous); "my coat will come along soon enough. Although, to be sure, my old one is pretty shabby," he adds, with a regretful glance at his patched sleeves.

"Well, we will see, we will see," responds Nils, pulling off his bear-skin mittens and gliding in among the trees in which the traps are set. "The good Lord, who looks after the poor man as well as the rich, may send us enough to attend to the wants of us all."

He had opened his hunting-bag, and was loosening the snare from the neck of a poor strangled ptarmigan, when all of a sudden he heard a great flapping of wings, and,

glancing down through the long colonnade of frost-silvered trees, saw a bird which had been caught by the leg, and was struggling desperately to escape from the snare.

"Poor silly thing!" he said, half-pityingly; "it is not worth a shot. Run down and dispatch it, Ola."

"Oh, I don't like to kill things, father," cried the lad, who with a fascinated gaze was regarding the struggling ptarmigan. "When they hang themselves I don't mind it so much; but it seems too wicked to wring the neck of that white, harmless bird. No, let me cut the snare with my knife and let it go."

"All right; do as you like, lad," answered the father, with gruff kindliness.

And with a delight which did his heart more honor than his head, Ola slid away on his *skees* toward the struggling bird, which, the moment he touched it, hung perfectly still, with its tongue stuck out, as if waiting for its death-blow.

"Kill me," it seemed to say. "I am quite ready."

But, instead of killing it, Ola took it gently in his hand, and stroked it caressingly while cutting the snare and disentangling its feet. How wildly its little heart beat with fright! And the moment his hold was relaxed, down it tumbled into the snow, ran a few steps, then took to its wings, dashed against a tree in sheer bewilderment, and shook down a shower of fine snow on its deliverer's head. Ola felt quite heroic when he saw the bird's delight, and thought how, perhaps, next summer (when it had changed its coat to brown) it would tell its little ones, nestling under its wings, of its hair-

breadth escape from death, and of the kind-hearted youngster who had set it free instead of killing it.

While Ola was absorbed in these pleasant reflections, Nils, his father, had filled his hunting-bag with game and was counting his spoils.

"Now, quick, laddie," he called out, cheerily. "Stir your stumps and bring me your bag of bait. Get the snares to rights and fix the berries, as you have seen me doing."

Ola was very fond of this kind of work, and he pushed himself with his staff from tree to tree, and hung the tempting red berries in the little hoops and arches which were attached to the bark of the trees. He was in the midst of this labor, when suddenly he heard the report of his father's gun, and, looking up, saw a fox making a great leap, then plunging headlong into the snow.

"Hello, Mr. Reynard," remarked Nils, as he slid over toward the dead animal. "You overslept yourself this morning. You have stolen my game so long, now, that it was time I should get even with you. And yet, if the wind had been the other way, you would have caught the scent of me sooner than I should have caught yours. Now, sir, we are quits."

"What a great, big, sleek fellow!" ejaculated Ola, stroking the fox's fur and opening his mouth to examine his sharp, needle-pointed teeth.

"Yes," replied Nils; "I have saved the rascal the trouble of hunting until he has grown fat and secure, and fond of his ease. I had a long score to settle with that old miscreant, who has been robbing my snares ever

since last season. His skin is worth about three dollars."

When the task of setting the snares in order had been completed, father and son glided lightly away under the huge, snow-laden trees to visit their traps, which were set further up the mountain. The sun was just peeping above the mountain-ridge, and the trees and the great snow-fields flashed and shone, as if oversown with numberless diamonds. Round about were the tracks of birds and beasts; the record of their little lives was traced there in the soft, downy snow, and could be read by everyone who had the eyes to read. Here were the tracks telling of the quiet pottering of the leman and the field-mouse, going in search of their stored provisions for breakfast, but rising to take a peep at the sun on the way. You could trace their long, translucent tunnels under the snow-crust, crossing each other in labyrinthine entanglements. Here Mr. Reynard's graceful tail had lightly brushed over the snow, as he leaped to catch young Mrs. Partridge, who had just come out to scratch up her breakfast of frozen huckleberries, and here Mr. and Mrs. Squirrel (a very estimable couple) had partaken of their frugal repast of pine-cone seeds, the remains of which were still scattered on the snow. But far prettier were the imprints of their tiny feet, showing how they sat on their haunches, chattering amicably about the high cost of living, and of that grasping monopolist, Mr. Reynard, who had it all his own way in the woods, and had no more regard for life than a railroad president. This and much more, which I have not the time to tell you,

did Ola and his father observe on their skee-excursion through the woods. And when, late in the afternoon, they turned their faces homeward, they had, besides the ptarmigan and the fox, a big capercailzie (or grouse) cock, and two hares. The twilight was already falling, for in the Norway winter it grows dark early in the afternoon.

"Now, let us see, lad," said Ola's father, regarding his son with a strange, dubious glance, "if you have got Norse blood in your veins. We don't want to go home the way we came, or we should scarcely reach the house before midnight. But if you dare risk your neck with your father, we will take the western track down the bare mountain-side. It takes brisk and stout legs to stand in that track, my lad, and I won't urge you, if you are afraid."

"I guess I can go where you can, father," retorted the boy, proudly. "Anyway, my neck isn't half so valuable as yours."

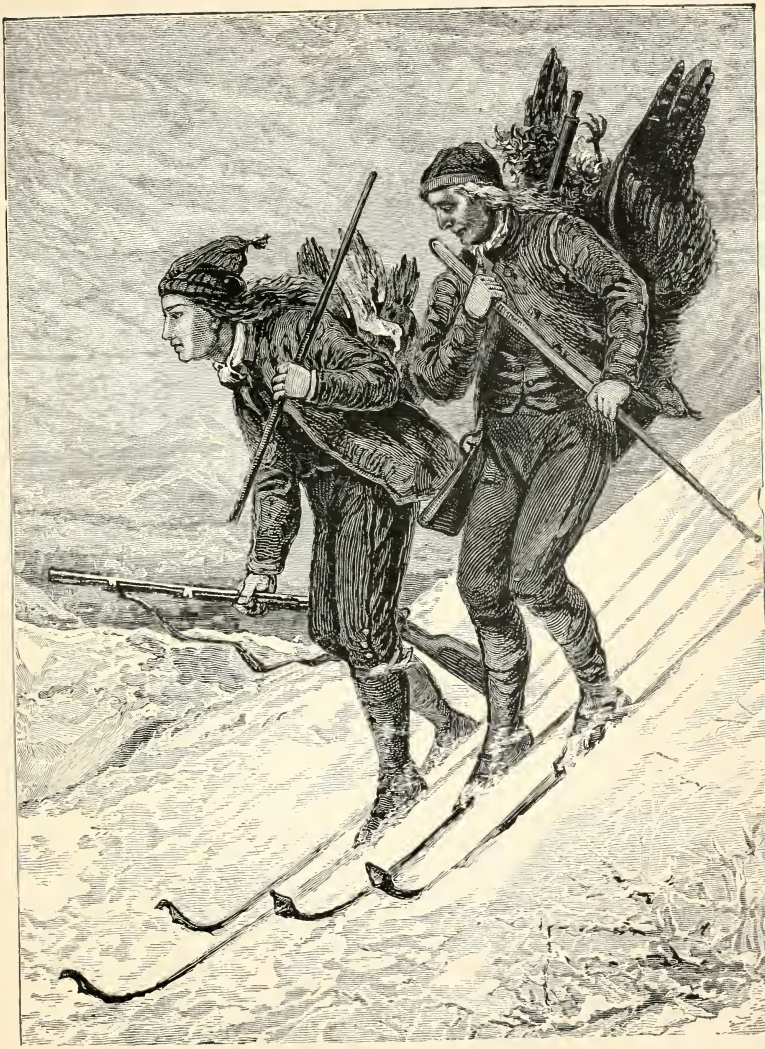
"Spoken like a man!" said the father, in a voice of deep satisfaction. "Now for it, lad! Make yourself ready. Strap the hunting-bag close under your girdle, or you will lose it. Test your staff to make sure that it will hold, for if it breaks you are gone. Be sure you don't take my track. You are a fine chap and a brave one."

Ola followed his father's directions closely, and stood with loudly palpitating heart ready for the start. Before him lay the long, smooth slope of the mountain, showing only here and there soft undulations of surface, where a log or a fence lay deeply buried under the snow. On both sides the black pine-forest stood, tall and grave. If

he should miss his footing, or his *skees* be crossed or run apart, very likely he might just as well order his epitaph. If it had not been his father who had challenged him, he would have much preferred to take the circuitous route down into the valley. But now he was in for it, and there was no time for retreating.

"Ready!" shouted Nils, advancing toward the edge of the slope: "One, two, three!"

And like an arrow he shot down over the steep track, guiding his course steadily with his staff; but it was scarcely five seconds before he was lost to sight, looking more like a whirling snow-drift than a man. With strained eyes and bated breath, Ola stood looking after him. Then, nerving himself for the feat, he glanced at his *skees* to see that they were parallel, and glided out over the terrible declivity. His first feeling was that he had slid right out into the air—that he was rushing with seven-league boots over forests and mountain-tops. For all that, he did not lose hold of his staff, which he pressed with all his might into the snow behind him, thus slightly retarding his furious speed. Now the pine-trees seemed to be running past him in a mad race up the mountain-side, and the snowy slope seemed to be rising to meet him, or moving in billowy lines under his feet. Gradually he gathered confidence in himself, a sort of fierce courage awoke within him, and a wild exultation surged through his veins and swept him on. The wind whistled about him and stung his face like whip-lashes. Now he darted away over a snowed-up fence or wood-pile, shooting out into the air, but always coming down firm-



NORWEGIAN SKEE-RUNNERS.

ly on his feet, and keeping his mind on his *skees*, so as to prevent them from diverging or crossing. He had a feeling of grandeur and triumphant achievement which he had never experienced before. The world lay at his feet, and he seemed to be striding over it in a march of conquest. It was glorious! But all such sensations are unhappily brief. Ola soon knew by his slackening speed that he had reached the level ground; yet so great was the impetus he had received that he flew up the opposite slope toward his father's farm, and only stopped some fifty feet below the barn. He then rubbed his face and pinched his nose, just to see whether it was frozen. The muscles in his limbs ached, and the arm which had held the staff was so stiff and cramped that the slightest movement gave him pain. Nevertheless, he could not make up his mind to rest; he saw the light put in the north window to guide him, and he caught a glimpse of a pale, anxious face behind the window-pane, and knew that it was his mother who was waiting for him. And yet those last fifty feet seemed miles to his tired and aching legs. When he reached the front door, his dog Yutul jumped up on him in his joy and knocked him flat down in the snow; and oh, what an effort it took to rise! But no sooner had he regained his feet, than he felt a pair of arms flung about his neck and he sank, half laughing, half crying, into his mother's embrace.

"Cheer up, laddie," he heard someone saying. "Ye are a fine chap and a brave one!"

He knew his father's voice; but he did not look up; he was yet child enough to feel happiest in his mother's arms.

One of the most popular winter sports in Norway is skee-racing. A steep hill is selected by the committee which is to have charge of the race, and all the best skee-runners in the district enter their names, eager to engage in the contest. The track is cleared of all accidental obstructions, but if there happens to be a stone or wooden fence crossing it, the snow is dug away on the lower side of it and piled up above it. The object is to obtain what is called a "jump." The skee-runner, of course, coming at full speed down the slope will slide out over this "jump," shooting right out into the air and coming down either on his feet or any other convenient portion of his anatomy, as the case may be. To keep one's footing, and particularly to prevent the *skees* from becoming crossed while in the air, are the most difficult feats connected with skee-racing; and it is no unusual thing to see even an excellent skee-runner plunging headlong into the snow, while his *skees* pursue an independent race down the track and tell the spectators of his failure. Properly speaking, a skee-race is not a race—not a test of speed, but a test of skill; for two runners rarely start simultaneously, as, in case one of them should fall, the other could not possibly stop, and might not even have the time to change his course. He would thus be in danger of running into his competitor, and could hardly avoid maiming him seriously. If there were several parallel tracks, at a distance of twenty to thirty feet from each other, there would, of course, be less risk in having the runners start together. Usually, a number fall in the first run, and those who have not fallen then continue

the contest until one gains the palm. If, as occasionally happens, the competition is narrowed down to two, who are about evenly matched, a proposal to run without staves is apt to result in a decisive victory for one or the other.

It can hardly be conceived how exciting these contests are, not only to the skee-runners themselves, but also to the spectators, male and female, who gather in groups along the track and cheer their friends as they pass, waving their handkerchiefs, and greeting with derisive cries the mishaps which are inseparable from the sport. Prizes are offered, such as rifles, watches, fine shooting equipments, etc., and in almost every valley in the interior of Norway there are skee-runners who, in consequence of this constant competition, have attained a skill which would seem almost incredible. As there are but two things essential to a skee-race, viz.: a hill and snow, I can see no reason why the sport should not in time become as popular in the United States as it is in Norway. We have snow enough, certainly, in the New England and Western States; neither are hills rare phenomena. If I should succeed in interesting any large number of boys in these States in skee-running, I should feel that I had conferred a benefit upon them, and added much to their enjoyment of winter. But before taking leave of them, let me give them two pieces of parting advice: 1. Be sure your staff is strong, and do not be hasty in throwing it away. 2. Never slide down a hill on a highway, or any hard, icy surface. It is only in the open fields and woods and in dry snow that *skees* are useful.

THE SKERRY OF SHRIEKS.

I.

PEOPLE live even within the Polar Circle, although grown-up folks are apt to think it a poor sort of life. But to boys the "land of the midnight sun" is a veritable paradise. Every season of the year has its own kind of sport; and as schoolmasters are rare birds so far north, the boys are to a great extent left to follow their own devices until they are old enough to be sent away to school in the cities. From morning till night the air is filled with a screaming host of birds, which whirl in through the fiords like an approaching snow-storm. The eider-ducks lie gently bobbing upon the water, the black surf-scoters dive in the surf and make short work of the young whiting, and the puffins sit in long soldier-like rows on the rocks, and plunge headlong into the sea at the first signal of danger. In this glorious region the fish and fowl from all quarters of the globe seem to have appointed an annual meeting about New Year's; and the Norwegian peasants, who are dependent upon the inhabitants of the sea and the air for their living, are on the lookout for them, and hasten to the coast to give them a fitting reception.

Harry Winchester's motive, however, for visiting the Arctic wonderland was quite a different one. He had made the acquaintance of the Birk boys during the previous summer, and he had struck up a warm friendship with one of them, named Magnus. His parents, who lived in New York, had permitted him to accept the invitation of Mr. Birk to spend the winter with his sons, and Harry was so completely fascinated with the sports and adventures which every day offered in abundance that he would have liked to prolong his stay indefinitely.

Hasselrud, the estate of the Birks, was a fine, old-fashioned mansion, which peeped out from the dense foliage of chestnut and maple trees. Mr. Birk conducted a large business in fish and lumber, and manned every year several boats and sent them to the Lofoten fisheries. His three sons, Olaf, Magnus, and Edwin, were brisk and courageous lads, who had been accustomed to danger from their earliest years, and could handle a gun and manage a sail as well as any man in that region. Olaf was nineteen years old, and wore the uniform of a midshipman in the navy, and by courtesy was styled lieutenant; Magnus, who was sixteen, was a fair-faced, curly-headed lad, with frank blue eyes, a straight, handsome nose, and a singular talent for getting into mischief. Edwin was but twelve years old; but, as he does not figure conspicuously in this narrative, there is no need of describing him. But altogether the most important person at Hasselrud, next to Mr. Birk, was Grim Hering-Luck, a hoary, bow-legged fisherman, who was Mr. Birk's

right-hand man and captain of his boat-guild. Grim had a stern, deep-wrinkled face, framed in a wreath of grayish whiskers. He had small, piercing eyes, and bushy, gray-sprinkled hair. On his head he wore a sou'wester. The seat and knees of his trousers and the elbows of his coat were adorned with great shiny patches of leather. The leathern girdle about his waist did not quite fulfil its duties as suspenders, but allowed the trousers to slip down on his hips, leaving some four inches of shirt visible under the border of the waistcoat. Grim was a gruff old customer, but it was commonly believed that his bark was worse than his bite. He liked the bright American boy better than he cared to confess, and therefore neglected no opportunity for quarrelling with him. In fact, everybody admired Harry's enterprising spirit and was entertained by his lively talk. Olaf was fairly dazzled by his knowledge and experience of the world, and little Edwin copied his walk and his picturesque recklessness to the extent of his small ability; but among all the family there was no one who was more ardently attached to Harry than Magnus. The two were inseparable; from morning till night they roamed about together, setting traps for hares and ptarmigan, spearing trout in the shallows of the river, trawling for mackerel in the salt water, and sometimes tacking in and out of the fiord in a furious gale. At such times, however, they were sure to have Grim in the boat, and Grim was a capital man to have in a boat in case of an emergency. Thus they spent the beautiful autumn months until the November storms began to blow, the snow began to fall, and

the air, when they looked out the fiord, was thick and the sky threatening. The great trees bent in agony and howled in the blast with voices of despair. Then Grim would begin to investigate and to mend the nets which hung in long festoons along the walls of the boat-houses, and, with his friendly grunt, he would say in reply to Magnus' queries:

"Wal, Mester Yallertop, the Lord he looks out fer them as they look out fer themselves. He puts the cod in the sea, but I never heared of his puttin' it in yer mouth fer ye. He made the land poor up here, but he made the sea rich, jest fer to make the average right in the end. He lets ye starve like a toothless rat if ye have a taste fer starvin'. But thar ain't no call for anybody to starve here north, ef he can bait a hook and ain't afeared of bein' late to his funeral."

"Being late to your own funeral, Grim!" Magnus would exclaim, in amazement; "how can a man be late to his funeral?"

"Wal, now, Mester Yallertop, that I'll tell ye. Fur that ain't no uncommon case here north. Suppose ye go out in the mornin' with the fishin' fleet, and it blows up right lively, and ye don't never come back again. Then after a week or so the parson reads the sarvice over yer name and prays fer ye, and the next mornin', likely as not, yer legs drift ashore, quite independent-like, jest because the cod found yer tarred top-boots indergestible."

"And do such things ever happen, Grim?" the boy would ask, shuddering at the ghastly picture which his friend's words suggested.

"Do they ever happen? Wal, I reckon they do. I might jest mention to ye that I ain't in the habit of tellin' no lies. My father—God ha'e mercy on his soul—he sent only his legs fur to represent him at his funeral; and my grandfather—wal, the cod turned the tables on him; he had meant to eat them, but—it ain't no use bein' squeamish about it—they ate him. It war in the great storm of the 11th of February, 1848, when five hundred fisherman cheated the parson out of his funeral fees."

"How terrible, Grim! How can you go to the fisheries every winter, when both your father and your grandfather lost their lives there?"

"Wal, now ye are puzzlin' me, Mester Magnus," Grim replied, taking his clay pipe from the corner of his mouth, and looking up seriously from his labor; "but I'll tell ye a yarn I heared when I was young. I reckon it is true, because I have never heared nobody say it warn't. Some city chap axed a fisherman purty much what ye have axed me, and the fisherman says, says he: 'Whar did yer father die?' 'Why, he expired peacefully in his bed,' said the city chap. 'And yer grandfather?' axed the fisherman. 'Wal, he had jest the same luck,' says the city chap. 'And yer great-grandfather?' 'He, too, turned up his toes in the same style.' 'Wal, now,' says the fisherman, 'if I were you I wouldn't never go to bed again, sence all yer forbears come to their death in it.' Now, I reckon that is the way with all of us. Ef the Lord wants us he will know whar to find us, wharsoever we be."

When the Christmas holidays, with all their old-fashioned hospitality and sports, were over the question was seriously debated whether the boys should be permitted to accompany Grim and the housemen (tenants) to the Lofoten fisheries. It was decided that three boats should be manned, and Grim was as usual elected captain of the whole guild. The "tokens" had been uncommonly good this year, and a profitable fishery was expected. Mr. Birk, who well knew the dangers connected with this enterprise, was very unwilling to let the boys start out in the open boats, and suffer the discomforts which were inseparable from the life on these barren islands, where thousands of people were huddled together in booths and shanties, and quarrels and fights were the order of the day. Harry, however, argued that such an experience would scarcely offer itself to him a second time in his life, and that it was easy to avoid danger while still observing all that was interesting and instructive in the lives of the people. Olaf and Magnus, too, added their powers of persuasion to those of Harry, and in the end Mr. Birk (after enjoining a hundred precautions) had to yield, stipulating only that Edwin should remain at home. Grim promised to keep a careful look-out over the movements of the boys, but he refused to be responsible for their safety, because, as he remarked, "they were too lively a lot to be controlled by a stiff-legged old crab like himself."

It was a gray morning in January that the long eight oared boats were made ready, the chests containing provisions and clothes were placed in the stern, and the sails

with a rattling noise flew up and bulged before the wind. The sky had a peculiar whitish-gray color, which has always an ominous look and promises squalls. Yet it was a glorious sensation to feel the boats shooting away over the crests of the waves, dashing the spray like smoke about them and yielding like living things to the slightest prompting of the rudder. Grim himself sat in the stern of the first boat, which the boys had named "The Cormorant," holding the tiller in his left hand and the sheet in his right. Magnus had found a rather elevated seat in the prow, from whence he could observe the captain's manœuvres and take lessons in seamanship. Harry and Olaf sat on the middle bench, watching the horizon and seeing the squalls dash down from the mountains and sweep their trails of smoke across the fiord.

"It must be dangerous sailing here, Grim," Harry observed, uneasily.

"It ain't no joke—fer goslings," answered Grim.

"I should think, on the whole, it would be more comfortable for goslings than for men," retorted Harry, carelessly. "They wouldn't mind a ducking half as much as I should."

"If ye are afeard just say so, and I'll put ye ashore," said Grim, sternly.

"Afraid!" said Harry, indignantly; "not much, old man; guess I can give you odds any day if you want to try my courage."

"I want to try ef ye can hold your tongue," was the captain's ungracious reply. "I ain't much for gassin' on the water."

Harry, thinking that perhaps the situation was graver than he supposed, failed to resent the snub, and fell again to watching the horizon. They shot away at a tearing speed over the waves, and sometimes "The Cormorant" careened heavily to leeward and shipped a sea, but Grim still made no motion to reef the sail. The other Hasselrud boats, which had kept bravely in the wake of their leader, were now falling behind, and the blinding spray often hid them completely from sight. The fiord was growing wider, and the long "ground swell" showed that they were nearing the ocean. The stormy petrel was seen skimming lightly, half flying, half running, over the tops of the billows, and her shrill scream pierced like a sharp instrument through the deep bass of the wind. The boats round about them multiplied, and a whole fleet of reddish-brown sails was seen steering toward the Lofoten Islands. The day passed without any incident, and when about three o'clock in the afternoon the darkness came rolling in like a gray curtain from the west, Grim put into port and the boys devoured between them a five-pound cod, whereupon they all crawled into the same bunk in a fisherman's lodging-house and slept the sleep of the just.

The next morning they were aroused before daybreak, and after a frugal repast of coffee and sandwiches were hurried into the boat. The wide ocean now stretched out before them, rolling with a mighty thundering rhythm against the rock-bound coast. A light mist was hovering over the water, but the wind was fair, and hundreds of boats were already scudding northward toward

the rich fishing-banks. As soon as the fog rose and was scattered, the invisible sun sent a faint semblance of light up among the low clouds, and immediately thousands of gulls and auks and cormorants were on the wing, and whirled with a wild confusion of screams in the wake of the fishing-fleet. When toward noon the wind slackened a little, Magnus swung out a trawling-line and had almost in the same moment a bite which sent the line whizzing over the gunwale.

"Gracious! I am afraid I have caught a whale," he shouted, standing up in the boat, and holding on to the line with all his might; but being unable to keep his footing, he flung himself prone across the row-bench and would inevitably have been pulled overboard if Harry and Olaf had not caught hold of him by the legs and told him to let the line go.

"You remind me of the Englishman at the siege of Quebec who had caught three Frenchmen," said Harry. "I should say it was the whale who had caught you, in the present case, if a whale it is. Now *I* am going to try my luck," he added, seizing the wooden frame to which the line was attached just as it was about to fly overboard. He braced himself against the mast and flung his body backward, but the line cut into his hands so terribly that he had to cry for help. Then Olaf was promptly at his side, and by their united efforts they succeeded in hauling in a couple of fathoms; but it was not until one of the boatmen added his strength to theirs that they made any sensible headway. Great was their delight when, at the end of five minutes, they caught

sight of an enormous halibut, weighing some forty or fifty pounds, but, as well might be imagined, it was no easy job to get such a monster into the boat without upsetting it. The only way was evidently to tire him out until he lost all power of resistance, and as he had swallowed the metal bait with tremendous vim there was no danger of his escaping.

It was well on toward evening when they put into harbor on the northern coast of Lofoten, where they were to remain while the fisheries lasted. An endless double row of boats stretched along the shore, and behind these the so-called "Hjælder," or drying-houses, rose in gaunt perspective against the dark sky. Thousands of boats were drawn up along the whole beach, and the smell of fish pervaded the air and seemed even to be borne in on the ocean breeze. Grim, followed by all the men from the three boats, marched up to the Hasselrud booth, which he unlocked, and ordered the temporary cook to make a fire on the hearth and to prepare supper. It was a large empty room, one wall of which was occupied by the hearth and two by rows of bunks, one above the other, resembling the berths in the steerage of an immigrant steamer. It looked cheerless, and the boys, whose expectations had pictured to them something quite different, shivered at the sight of the bare and sooty walls. Nevertheless when the fire had been lighted, and a couple of burning pine knots stuck into the wall, they took heart again and determined to make the best of the situation.

The next morning at daybreak they jumped into

their clothes, pulling complete oil-cloth suits on the outside of their ordinary garments. Then fastening their yellow sou'westers under their chins, they surveyed each other with undisguised looks of admiration and began to feel like real fishermen. The breakfast was swallowed in haste, and they scarcely noticed how the hot coffee scalded their mouths, so eager were they to be off. Nevertheless, as they had no nets to draw as yet, they delayed their departure for several hours. It was a raw, cold morning, but the signals at the government station indicated fair but blustery weather. The whole fleet had already started, and the Hasselrud boats were among the last to set sail for the fishing-banks. It was glorious to see the wide ocean studded, as far as the eye could reach, with swelling sails, and the air filled for miles with a screaming host of great, white-winged sea-birds. Round about the whales were spouting, shooting columns of water into the gray light of the morning: and the auks were rocking upon the waves, and vanishing, quick as a flash, as soon as a boat approached them. The fresh sea-breeze blew into the faces of the three boys, and they felt like Norse Vikings of the olden time starting out in search of fame and adventures. It was about twelve o'clock when they arrived at the fishing-banks; the sails were lowered and the nets sunk by means of lead sinkers and stones attached to their lower edge. Wooden floats, similarly attached to their upper edge, held them in position in the water. Grim sat, grave and imperturbable, in the stern, issuing his commands in a voice which rose high above the rushing of the water and the whizzing of

the wind, and every man obeyed with a promptness as if his life depended upon it. The sea was so packed with cod that the nets often stopped, gliding slowly over the backs of the fishes, and being again arrested by the myriads of finny creatures below. Often the same net had to be taken up and disentangled several times before it made its way to the bottom. The water was thick with spawn, which clung in long gelatinous ropes to the blades of the oars, and doubled their weight to the rowers. The boys, leaning out over the gunwale, could see the huge male cods winding themselves onward through the dense throngs of females which stood still with their noses against the current, moving their fins, and shedding their spawn. It seemed a positive mercy to haul up a million or so of them, just to make room for the rest.

"I understand now," exclaimed Harry, "how the Canadians managed to cheat us out of so much money—six millions, more or less, I think—because we had encroached upon their fishing-grounds. I would myself pay a good round sum for sport like this; and the joke of it is that you are making money at it and have all the fun in the bargain."

"And have ye fisheries in America too, lad?" Grim asked, with visible interest, as he let the last float slip from his hand.

"Have we got fisheries in America? Well, I should say we had, old man," said Harry, fired with patriotic ardor. "You just tell me what we haven't got in America. If you'll come over and see I shall be happy to entertain you."

"Ye are safe in invitin' me, lad," Grim retorted, biting a quid from his roll of tobacco. "A purty figger an old sea-dog like me would make in your ma's carpeted parlor."

Harry in his heart admitted the force of this remark, and he laughed to himself at the thought of Grim's ungainly form seated in one of his mother's spindle-legged blue satin chairs; but, for all that, he liked Grim too much to wish to offend him, and therefore stuck bravely to his invitation, insisting that it was sincerely meant. As they were amicably squabbling, the sun suddenly burst forth, and flung its dazzling radiance upon the ocean. The noise of the sea-birds grew louder, making the vast vault of the sky alive with countless varieties of screams. The fishes leaped, the whales spouted lustily, the stormy petrel danced over the crests of the billows; thousands of boats lay bobbing up and down on the waves, while the lines were being baited; a thousand voices shouted to each other from boat to boat; oars and rudders rattled, and the wind sang in the mast-tops. It was a scene which once seen could never be forgotten.

II.

Long before the Hasselrud men had their lines set the whole fleet had rowed back toward land. But Grim's boat-guild, which had just arrived, and had as yet no nets to draw, lingered for a while eating their dinner, which they had brought with them in the boats. They chatted and told stories about Draugen, the sea-bogey,

who rows in a half boat, and whose scream sounds terribly through the tempest. Any man who sees him knows that he will never see land again. Draugen is only out in the worst weather; he has a sou'wester on his head, his face is white and ghastly as death itself, and his empty eye-sockets have no eyes in them. The boys shuddered at the horrible picture which was conjured up before them, and it was a relief to them when the time came for pulling up the lines, and the great codfishes were hauled sprawling into the boat; each one had plenty to do now in cutting out the hooks and in winding the lines upon their frames. A smart gale had sprung up while they were thus engaged, and Grim began to look wistfully at the lurid sunset.

"The sun draws water," he said; "that means lively weather. Hoist the sails, lads, and let us turn our noses shoreward."

He had hardly uttered his command when a thick curtain seemed to be drawn across the face of the sun, and the sea became black as ink.

"Clew up the sail!" he shouted, in a voice of thunder; "we are in for it."

With a roar as of a chorus of cataracts the storm advanced, lashing the water into smoke which whirled heavenward, making the sky dense as night. The masts creaked, the boats tore away with a frantic speed, and the waves rose mountain-high, with steep, black gulfs between them.

"Cap'n," one of the men ventured to remonstrate, "are we not carryin' too much sail?"

Grim deigned him no reply, but, with a sharp turn of the tiller, ran The Cormorant closer to the wind. Forward bounded the boat, cleaving the coming wave with a blow of her bows which made her timbers groan. The spray was dashed fathoms high, and would have drenched every man on board if his oil-skins had not been water-tight. Of the other boats only two were visible, and it was splendid to see how they rose out of one sea, until half the length of their keels were visible, then buried their noses in the next, while great sheets of foam splashed on either side, and were torn into shreds by the gale.

"This is rather lively work, I should say," remarked the midshipman. "I think I should prefer a man-of-war to The Cormorant in this sort of weather."

"I confess to a weakness for Cunarders," said Harry; "yet I dare say I shall enjoy this affair well enough when we get safely ashore."

"You mean *if* we get safely ashore," said Magnus, quietly. "This has rather an ugly look to me. Though I dare say Grim knows what he is about."

He had scarcely spoken when a harsh voice bellowed, "Lay hold of the mast, lads!" and in the same moment they seemed to be flung to a dizzying height; a huge wave towered in front, showing a white whirling top which seemed on the point of breaking right over them. They had just time to clasp the mast when the boat, lying flat on her side, pressed down by her weight of canvas, plunged her nose into this mountain of water, but by some astonishing manœuvre righted herself, slid down

within another black hollow, and again rose high on the crest of another wave.

"All hands bail!" roared the captain.

The command came not a moment too soon; the water was rushing in from the leeward, and the flying wreaths of foam struck the boy's faces with a terrible force and made them smart furiously.

"Grim! Grim!" shouted Olaf, making himself heard with a difficulty above the storm, "you are carrying too much sail."

"Hold your tongue, gosling," Grim thundered back; "we have got nothin' but the sail fer to save us."

"What point are you making for?"

"The Bird Islands."

"I thought there was no harbor there."

"Reckon ye be right."

"Gracious heavens!" cried Olaf, turning a terrified countenance toward his comrades; "he means to wreck the boat; but he knows what he is about. There is no other chance."

He sat for a moment silent, gazing up into the cloud rack which scudded along at a furious rate before the wind. Strips of storm-riven sky, with momentary vistas of blue, were now and then visible, but vanished again, making the dusk more dismal by their memory.

"Breakers ahead!" shouted Olaf, "look out!"

"I see a black ridge against the sky," cried Harry; "now it is gone again!"

He was going to say more, but the wind came with a howling screech and forced his breath down his throat

He gasped, and as the boat gave a tremendous lurch, diving down into a black hollow, he could only cling to the base of the mast, lest the next tumble might toss him overboard. The sound of a steady rhythmic roar rose and fell upon the air, and made them strain their eyes in the direction from which it was coming.

"Why, Grim, you are steering away from the island," Magnus screamed, pointing to the black ridge which was, once more, for a moment revealed.

"He means to land us on the leeward side," Olaf bawled in his brother's ear; "the chances are that the water is there a bit smoother."

To reach the leeward side was, however, a task which required no mean order of seamanship. The distance was too short for tacking, and moreover the water was filled with blind rocks and skerries which made the approach tenfold dangerous. It seemed to the unskilled eyes of the boys that for nearly half an hour The Cormorant was tumbling aimlessly upon the waves, shipping seas which it was a wonder did not swamp her, and righting herself, as by a miracle, when again and again she seemed on the point of capsizing. And yet all these wonderful feats were only the result of the coolest calculation and the most consummate skill.

Just as they were clearing the hidden skerries at the western point of the island the wind veered a point to the north, but did not fall off perceptibly. The spray rose from the shore like a dense and blinding smoke, and in the depths of every black abyss which opened before them death's jaws seemed to be yawning. Harry closed

his eyes; and though he was no coward, his heart failed him.

"What is the use of fighting any longer?" he said to Magnus, who was lying at his side, clinging like him to the mast; "we are going to the bottom, any way. The archangel Gabriel himself couldn't land us on this shore, with all the heavenly hosts to assist him."

"But Grim is a better sailor than Gabriel," Magnus replied, quite unconscious of his joke. "He knows every inch of the bottom here from the time he was a boy and used to row out here and gather eider-down. He has told me about it often. If I were you I wouldn't give up yet."

"All right, old fellow," Harry answered, taking heart once more. "I am ready for anything. But I am an unlucky chap—a sort of a Jonah, who has a talent for getting into scrapes. I shouldn't wonder if, in case you threw me overboard, the storm would fall off and you might sail home in comfortable fashion."

"We mean to go overboard, all of us, in a few minutes," Magnus retorted, hugging Harry tightly with his left arm, which he had freed for that purpose. "Now I am going to propose something to you. Let us tie ourselves together with a rope so that each may help the other; and we may either live or perish together."

"I am afraid you would be the loser by that arrangement," his friend exclaimed. "You are a good deal stronger than I am, and you will need every bit of your strength if you are to plow your way through those awful breakers."

Magnus, instead of answering, slipped the end of a rope about Harry's waist and secured it tightly; the other end he tied about his own waist, although he came near losing his balance, and going headlong over the gunwale. The Cormorant had now slipped around to the leeward side of the island, where, under the shelter of the steep rock, the water was a trifle less tumultuous. And yet a gigantic surf was running and the undertow on the steeply sloping bottom seemed strong enough to take an elephant off his feet. The wind yelled and screeched from the top of the towering rock, and rushed down in thundering eddies on the leeward side. If it had not been for a momentary clearing of the sky, which showed the position of the breakers and the outline of the shore, it would have been madness to risk landing; and even as it was, the chance of being dashed to pieces against the rocks seemed altogether to preponderate. But Grim apparently took a different view of the situation; as long as the sail was whole and the boat true to her rudder he saw no cause for despair.

"Now, lads," he roared, hoarsely, "steady on yer shanks. No chicken-hearted chap among ye! Uncoil the rope! Thar's a bit of sandy beach thar—sixty or a hundred feet wide. If we be in luck we'll be thar in a minute."

The ridge of the island was now half visible against the dark horizon, but the beach below was wrapped in a dense smoke, through which came glimpses of the black jagged rock.

"Almighty Lord! thar's a skerry ahead," screamed one of the boatmen, as the retreating surf broke with a wild

uproar over the hidden rock and rose like a mighty water-spout against the sky. There was a moment of breathless suspense. Each man seemed to hear the beating of the other's heart. As the boat was flung upward again on the next wave, the wind gave a frantic shriek; the mast bent forward under the terrible strain. The incoming surf buried the skerry under a mountain of towering water, and high upon its crest The Cormorant rode triumphant, only to be hurled from its crest, fairly shooting through the air, upon the beach.

"Jump overboard!" bellowed Grim, and seizing Magnus in his arms he leaped from the stern just as the boat struck the sand and broke into fragments. Every man followed his example; but the undertow swept them off their feet. Still Grim stood like a rock, holding with his gigantic strength the rope to the other end of which Harry was attached. Once he tottered, and if he had had sand under his feet he would have been dragged down by his double burden. But by a lucky chance he had planted his heels upon a bowlder which rose slightly out of the surf. When the wildest force of the wave had been exhausted he sprang up on the beach, depositing Magnus and the half-unconscious Harry beyond the reach of the waves. Back he rushed again to his former station, just as one of the boatmen, who had momentarily regained his footing, was scrambling up toward him.

"I am tied to the rope," shouted the man, "someone is tugging at it."

"Hand it to me," commanded Grim.

The man struggled to his feet and planted himself resolutely at his captain's side. All this was the work of a moment. With the next incoming wave, which was happily much smaller than the preceding one, four men were flung up on the sand; but they seemed half dead, and made no effort to save themselves. Grim, who thought he saw a glimmer of brass buttons in the water, dashed forward and seized Olaf by the collar, just as he would have been sucked back by the undertow. He bore him up on the shore, while the boatman came dragging two of his unconscious comrades out of the roaring surf. One was still missing; but as the next wave that broke in tumult at their feet showed no trace of him, they knew that he was beyond the reach of human help.

The work of resuscitating the men was a long and tedious one; but Grim and Magnus both worked with their hearts in their throats, yet with a resolution which scorned fatigue. Harry revived the moment they had poured a glass of brandy down his throat, and he soon recovered his spirits and volunteered his help. But the midshipman was both badly battered and had swallowed a quantity of water; and it was only after long and persistent efforts on Grim's part that his breath came back to him. Their next thought was of fire; for the wind was raw and chill, and the last glimmer of daylight was vanishing. The problem, however, was a serious one, for there was not a tree growing on the island, except perhaps a few stunted juniper shrubs up in the crevices of the rocks. And to get at these in the dark was no easy undertaking. Nor was their situation in other re-

spects an enviable one. Above them loomed the black cliff, and the surf was thundering at their feet. And there they were sitting, huddled together in a heap to keep each other warm, and yet shivering in their wet clothes, and thinking with horror of the long hours of the night which must pass before they could be rescued.

"Lads," cried Magnus, suddenly extricating himself from Harry and Olaf's embrace, "I am the only one of you who is not wet to the skin, and I am going to explore this island and see if we can't scare up some fuel. To sit here hugging each other in the dark is a dismal sort of business, and I am not so affectionately disposed as the rest of you."

"A mighty peart chap ye be, lad," Grim said, raising his tall figure out of the group; "but ye had better let me crawl ahead, and ye keep astern o' me. I know summat o' the island and ye don't know nothin'."

"I'll keep abreast of you, Grim," Magnus replied, "but your stern would obscure my view; so take your bearings and let's be off."

"Ye be a mighty lively customer," Grim grumbled, admiringly, giving the boy a caressing pat in the dark.

They had scarcely crawled fifty yards up the beach when their fumbling hands touched something cold and clammy, which felt like the nose of some aquatic animal. There came immediately a little chorus of whining barks, which was followed by a great flapping, as if something broad and wet struck against the stones.

"Thunder and lightning, Grim," cried Magnus, "what sort of beasts are these?"

"A herd of seals," answered Grim, quietly; "it was funny I didn't think o' them. Here we have got our fuel."

In the same moment a cold nose was stuck right into Magnus' face and he tumbled backward, scarcely knowing how to return the unexpected caress.

"Draw yer knives, lads," shouted Grim to the men, "a herd of seals is a comin' right upon ye."

The seals were now in full flight, rolling, tumbling, and pushing themselves on over the smooth sand. They instinctively knew, even in the dark, the way to the water, and they thus came plump down upon the shipwrecked men, who had arisen in response to Grim's call and were ready to give them a warm reception. In the storm and the fright of the sudden attack the keen scent of the animals scarcely served them at all. They rushed right down upon their enemies, and within a few minutes fully a dozen of them lay gasping and bleeding upon the beach. The rest plunged into the surf, where their plaintive bark was heard as they battled with the raging sea.

Grim and Magnus in the meanwhile pushed on, groping their way over the slippery bowlders, and keeping close together so as to help each other in case of accident. But the farther they climbed the steeper grew the rock, and as far as they could ascertain by their sense of touch there was no sign of vegetation.

"Now look sharp, lad," cried Grim, warningly.

"Look sharp!" repeated Magnus, "how am I to look sharp when it is as dark as pitch about me?"

"Right ye be, lad, right ye be," the other retorted; "ye be a smart chap and a peart one. But don't ye lay hold o' nothin' here before ye know it is rock. Thar be thousands o' birds here on the lee'ard side when thar be a storm from the north; and ef ye mistook a gull or a cormorant fer somethin' solid ye might tumble down and break yer precious neck. Mark ye my word, chap, thar will be a mighty lively hubbub here in a couple o' minutes."

Grim had hardly uttered this prophecy when Magnus felt something feathery under his touch, and in the same instant there came a piercing scream and a powerful wing dealt him a blow across the bridge of his nose. Immediately there commenced a wild chorus of screams and chattering protest, as if the more sober-minded birds were deprecating this senseless uproar. Magnus thought, too, that he heard his name called from below, but the deafening thunder of the surf and the noise of the birds drowned all other sounds, and he concluded that he had been deceived. It was a terrible sensation, all these invisible wings flapping about him in the dark; unseen bodies precipitated against him and tumbling blindly about him with a murderous tumult from a thousand discordant voices. He raised his elbows above his head to protect himself from the blind assaults and the perpetual beating of wings. It hardly occurred to him to assume the offensive until he heard Grim's voice shouting to him:

"Draw yer knife, lad, and make it lively fer them screamin' rascals. Their down is worth money, and

they've got blubber as thick as a seal's. Give 'em no odds, I tell ye, my laddie."

Magnus followed this advice promptly. He drew his knife, and fought with a will, thrusting and striking right and left, and hearing the great birds tumbling about him down the steep sides of the rock. He had been thus occupied for a few minutes when suddenly, to his unutterable amazement, a great blaze rose from the strand below, lighting up the barren wall of the cliff, and showing him how narrow the ledge was upon which he was sitting. It was a superb spectacle, too, to see the whirling host of gulls, auks, and cormorants eddying wildly about his head, the great black cliff looming up above him, and the spray of the surf spouting, with angry brawl, high up into the nocturnal air.

"Hurrah! lad," yelled Grim, through the ear-splitting noise and confusion, "I war a blasted fool not to think on it. They be a-burnin' the wreck."

The descent was a much easier affair than the ascent; for the light of the fire below blazed up every now and then and enabled them to see where they were treading. They picked up between them several dozen birds, of nearly half as many varieties, and flung them down before the fire, where the company were now seated in comparative comfort, warming their stiffened limbs. Two of the boatmen were engaged in skinning the seals and cutting off the blubber, which, after squeezing out the blood, they flung into the fire. Soon the oil began to ooze out, and, flowing over the wood, burned with a clear and strong flame.

"I am going to make myself comfortable, fellows," said Harry, who was looking very pale and chilly after his involuntary bath; "and if you don't mind it, I'll make a scarf of this big duck. She fits very nicely about my throat, though she won't accommodate herself to the bow-knot. This little one I am going to stuff down my bosom. She feels so deliciously warm and downy! I tell you," he went on, with emphasis, suiting his actions to his words, "I mean to patent this invention, when I get back home, as an infallible cure for rheumatism, toothache, consumption, chillblains, corns, and kidney disease. I am going to call it Winchester's In-*w*incible *W*ivifier. That will sound well and catch the public eye. I was about ready to give up the ghost awhile ago, and now I feel quite jolly."

He stretched himself luxuriously on the windward side of the fire, arranged half a dozen ducks and auks under his head as a pillow, and closed his eyes. Magnus and Olaf soon followed his example, each tying a big gull about his throat, and feeling a grateful warmth creeping through their half-frozen bodies. The men had the good luck to find a bunch of drift-wood large enough to keep the fire going until morning, and to satisfy their hunger they roasted a piece of seal-flesh, which, in spite of its oily flavor, tasted better than they had expected. When Grim saw that the boys were asleep he covered them carefully with his own oil-skin clothes, while he himself kept marching up and down on the beach to keep his blood in motion. After midnight the wind shifted suddenly to the west and fell off gradually, the clouds were

scattered, and the moon sailed calmly through the dark-blue sky.

The three boys slept soundly after their terrible hardships, and the eastern sky was already bright with the dawn when they opened their eyes. The whole screaming colony of birds were again on the wing, and whirled about the projecting crags of the cliff with wild clamor. Several sails were already visible on the horizon and, as soon as signals of distress were hoisted, steered toward the island. Harry, who was ravenously hungry, made a courageous assault upon the roasted seal-flesh, but after two futile attempts declared that he was not sufficiently acclimated to relish such diet. If necessity compelled him, he preferred to roast his boots, and to use the seal-oil as gravy.

"What do you say you call this island?" he asked Grim, who was trotting at his side up and down on the sand.

"The Bird Island," answered Grim.

"I should rather call it the 'Skerry of Shrieks,'" said Harry; "for in all my living days I have never heard a finer assortment of varied yells than I heard here last night. It must be a jolly place in summer, when the nights are light and the weather comfortable."

"It ain't bad fer such as like it," was Grim's non-committal reply.

"And do you know," Magnus put in eagerly, "during the early fall the island is quite covered with eider-ducks' nests, so that you can hardly move your feet without stepping into them. All those little round depressions

up on the slope there are such nests; and thousands of dollars have been made here in times past by gathering the down with which the eider-duck lines her nest; and it is even possible during the brooding season to catch the bird alive and pull the down from her breast; though I think that would be cruel, as she probably needs all she has left after having picked herself for the benefit of her young."

"The eider-duck must be very tame," Harry observed.

"Yes, it is very tame, indeed, because people rarely molest it," said Magnus; "the peasants have a kind of superstitious respect for it, and they won't allow anyone to kill it. It is very much the same kind of feeling as they have for the swallow. They think a misfortune will befall him who robs or pulls down a swallow's nest."

Several boats were by this time within hailing distance, and they were easily persuaded to run up and take the shipwrecked company on board. They insisted, however, upon drawing their nets before returning, and thus it happened that it was nearly noon before the party set foot on shore. They now learned that a great many boats besides their own had been wrecked during yesterday's storm, and that some fifty or sixty men had been drowned. Many dead bodies were washed ashore during the day, and some were even drawn up in the nets and sent home to their sorrowing widows. Sad, indeed, was the sight of the little fleet of boats which sailed southward that afternoon, each with a tarred pine box show-

ing above its gunwales. The three boys, although they would scarcely have admitted that the disaster had discouraged them, concluded, after a short consultation, that the experience they had already had of the fisheries was an instructive one and would probably last them for the remainder of their lives. They therefore, without much regret, induced Grim to hoist the sails and pilot them safely home.

FIDDLE-JOHN'S FAMILY.

I.

"QUEER sort of chap that Fiddle-John is," said the men, when Fiddle-John went by.

"Quaint sort o' cr'atur' is Fiddle-John," echoed the women; "not much in the providin' line."

"A singular individual is that Violin-John," said the parson; "I can never make up my mind whether he is a worthless scamp or a man of genius." "Possibly both," suggested the parson's wife. "Apartments to let," remarked the daughter, tapping her forehead significantly.

"Hurrah! There is Fiddle-John," cried the children, flocking delightedly about him, clinging to his arms, his legs, and his coat-tails. "Sing us a song, Fiddle-John! Tell us a story!"

Then Fiddle-John would seat himself on a stone at the road-side, while the children nestled about him; and he would tell them stories about knights and ladies, and ogres, and princesses, and all sorts of marvellous things.

"Worthless fellow, that Fiddle-John," said the passers-by; "there he sits in the middle of the day talking non-

sense to the children, when he ought to be working for the support of his family."

It was perfectly true; Fiddle-John ought to have been working. He would readily have admitted that himself. He was well aware that his wife, Ingeborg, was at home, working like a trooper to keep the family from starving. But then, somehow, Fiddle-John had no taste for work, while Ingeborg had. He much preferred singing songs and telling stories. And a very pretty picture he made, as he sat there at the roadside, with his handsome, gentle face, his large blue eyes, and his wavy blond hair, and the children nestling about him, listening in wide-eyed wonder. There was something very attractive about his face, with its mild, melancholy smile, and a sort of diffident, questioning look in the eyes. He had an odd habit of opening his mouth several times before he spoke, and then, possibly, if his questioner's face did not please him, he would go away, having said nothing. And, after all, it was diffidence and not insolence which prompted this action. It would never have occurred to Fiddle-John to take a critical view of anybody; he approved of all humanity in general, only he had an intuitive suspicion when anyone was making fun of him, and in such cases he found safety only in flight and silence.

By profession Fiddle-John was a ballad-singer; a queer profession, you will say, but nevertheless one which in Norway enjoys a certain recognition. He had a voice which the angels might have envied him—a clear and sweet tenor which rang through the depths of the listener's soul. Hearing that voice, it was impossible

not to stay and listen. The deputy sheriff, who once came to arrest Fiddle-John for vagrancy, when Fiddle-John began to sing, sat and cried. It came over him so "sorter queer," he said. The parson, who had made up his mind to give Fiddle-John a thundering reproof for neglect of his family, the first time he should catch him, quite forgot his sinister purpose when, one day, he saw the ballad-singer seated under a large tree, with a dozen children climbing over him, and, with rollicking laughter, tumbling and rolling about him. And when Fiddle-John, having quieted his audience, took two little girls on his lap, while the boys scrambled and fought for the places nearest to him, the parson could not for the life of him recall the harsh things he had meant to say to Fiddle-John. The fact was—though, of course, it is scarcely fair to tell—the ballad which Fiddle-John sang to the children reminded the parson of the time (now long ago) when he was paying court to Mrs. Parson, and sometimes, on slight provocation, dropped into poetry.

> "Thy cheeks are like the red, red rose,
> Thy hands are like the lily."

These were the very extraordinary sentiments which the parson had, at that remote period, professed toward Mrs. Parson, and these were the very words which Fiddle-John was now singing. No wonder the parson forgot that he had come to scold Fiddle-John. "I suppose that such good-for-nothings may be good for something, after all," he said to his wife as he related the incident at the dinner-table.

Fiddle-John and his family lived in a little cottage close up under the mountain-side, where the sun did not reach until late in the afternoon. In the winter they were sometimes snowed down so completely that they had to work until noon before they could get a glimpse of the sky. The two boys, Alf and Truls, would go early in the morning with their snow-shovels and dig a tunnel to the cow-stable, where a lonely cow, a pig, and three sheep were penned up. Their father would then sit at the window, holding a lantern, the light of which vaguely penetrated the darkness and showed them in what direction they were digging; but, after awhile, this monotonous occupation wearied him, and he would take his fiddle and play the most mournful tunes he could think of. It never occurred to him to lend a helping hand; and it never occurred to the boys to ask him.

They accepted their fate without much reasoning; it seemed part of the right order of things that they and their mother should work, while their father played and sang. Ingeborg, their mother, had nursed a kind of tender reverence for him in their hearts, since they were babes. He seemed scarcely part of the coarse and common work-a-day world to which they belonged; with his gentle, handsome face, and his clear blue eyes, he seemed like some superior being who conferred a favor upon them by merely consenting to grant them his company. His songs travelled from one end of the valley to the other, and everybody learned them by heart and sang them at weddings, dances, and funerals. Even though the parishioners might themselves find fault with Fiddle-

John, and call him quaint and queer, they stood up for him bravely if a stranger ventured to attack him.

They knew there was not another such singer in the whole land, and it was even said that people had come from foreign lands and had made him enormous offers if he would go with them and sing at concerts in the great foreign cities. Thousands of dollars he might have earned if he had gone, but Fiddle-John knew better than to abandon the valley of his birth, where he had been known since his babyhood, and trust himself to the faithless foreign world. Thousands of dollars! Only think of it! The very thought made Fiddle-John dizzy; ten or twenty dollars would have presented something definite to his imagination, which he would have comprehended, but thousands of dollars was a blank enormity which diffused itself like mist through his dazed brain. And yet Fiddle-John could never stop thinking of the thousands of dollars which he might have earned, if he had gone with the foreigner. If the truth must be told, he himself would have liked well enough to go; and it was only the persuasions of Ingeborg, his wife, which had restrained him. "What could you do in the great foreign world, John," she had said to him; "you, with your want of book-learning and your simple peasant ways? They would laugh at you, John, dear, and that would make me cry, and we should both be miserable. And all the little children here in the valley, what would they do without you, and who would sing to them and tell them stories when you were gone?"

The last argument was what decided Fiddle-John.

He did not believe that people would laugh at him in the great foreign world, but he did believe that the children would miss him when he was gone, and he could not bear to think of someone else sitting under the great maple-tree at the roadside and telling them stories. For all that, he regretted many a time that he had been soft-hearted, and had allowed the gate of glory to be slammed in his face, as he expressed it. He had never suspected it before; but now the thought began to grow upon him, that he was a great man, who might have gained honor and renown if his wife had not deprived him of the opportunity.

Every day the valley seemed to be growing darker and narrower; the sight of the mountains became oppressive; it was as if they weighed upon Fiddle-John's breast and impeded his breath. With feverish restlessness he roamed about from farm to farm and played, until every string on his fiddle seemed on the point of snapping.

"I am a great man," he reflected indignantly, "and might have earned thousands of dollars. And yet here I go and fiddle for half-drunken boors at twenty-five cents a night."

And to drown the voices that rose clamorously out of the depths of his soul, he strummed the strings wildly; and the peasants whirled madly around him, shouted, and kicked the rafters in the ceiling. The gentleness and the mild radiance which had made the children love him passed out of his countenance; his eyes grew restless, his motions aimless and unsteady. Sometimes he

flung back his head defiantly and mumbled threats between his teeth; at other times he shuffled along dejectedly, or lay under a tree, dreaming of the great world which had forever been closed to him.

"If I had only dared!" he whispered to himself; "oh, if I had only dared!"

At that moment someone stepped up to him and shook him by the shoulder. "Hallo, old chap," said the man, "you are just the fellow I want! You are the party they call Fiddle-John?"

There was something brisk and aggressive about the stranger which almost frightened Fiddle-John. It was easy to see that he came from afar; for he had smartly-cut city-clothes, a tall shiny hat, and a huge watch-chain from which half a dozen seals and trinkets depended. Fiddle-John had never seen anything so magnificent; he was completely dazzled. He sat half-raised upon his elbow and stared at the stranger in mute wonder. "Well, Fiddle-John," the latter went on glibly; "you don't seem very cordial to an old friend. Or perhaps you don't know me. Reckon I've changed some since you used to tell me stories about the Ashiepattle and the ogre who stowed his heart away for safe keeping inside of a duck in a goose-pond, some thousands of miles off. I have often thought of that story since. Fact is, that is just the kind of arrangement I am after. I've too much heart, Fiddle-John, too much heart. My heart is always getting me into trouble, and if I could make an arrangement to leave it behind here in Norway, while I myself return to America, I should like it first

rate. You don't happen to know of any party who would be willing to keep it for me during my absence, hey, Fiddle-John ?"

The man here laughed uproariously and slapped Fiddle-John on the shoulder.

"You are the same rum old customer you used to be, Fiddle-John," he said in a tone of cordial good-fellowship; "but you don't seem as talkative as you used to be—don't even tell me you are glad to see me. Now, that's what I call hard, Fiddle-John. Don't even know the name of your little friend James Forrest—or—beg your pardon—Jens Skoug, I mean to say, who used to climb on your back and listened in rapture to your wonderful voice and your marvellous fairy tales."

A gleam of intelligence flitted across Fiddle-John's features, as he heard the name Jens Skoug, and he arose with bashful hesitancy and extended his hand to the talkative stranger. He remembered well that Jens' family had emigrated, some ten years ago, to the United States, and he remembered also vividly the uncouth little creature in skin-patched trousers and ragged jacket who had embarked, at that time, in the great steamer that came to take the emigrants off to Bergen. And now this little creature was a tall, dazzling man with a silk hat and showy jewellery, and an address which a prince might have envied. Thus reasoned Fiddle-John in his simplicity. Such a marvellous transformation he had never in all his life witnessed. The name James Forrest which Jens had dropped by a deliberate accident also impressed him strangely. It seemed to add greatly to

Jens' magnificence. A man who could afford to have such a foreign-sounding name must indeed be a person of enterprise and prominence. It surrounded Jens with a delightful foreign flavor which captivated his friend even more than his brilliant talk. "Jens," he said, making an effort to conquer his diffidence, "you have grown to be a great man, indeed. How could you expect me to recognize you?"

"A great man!" exclaimed Jens, expanding agreeably under his friend's sincere flattery; "no, Fiddle-John, I am not a great man—that is, not yet, Fiddle-John. But I mean to become a great man before I die. In America, where I live, every man can become great if he only chooses to. But I thought, being young yet, that I could afford to spend a couple of months in opening to my countrymen the same road to fortune which is open to myself, before I settled down to tackle life in earnest. Fact is, Fiddle-John, as I said before, I have too much heart. My conscience would leave me no peace, whenever I thought of my poor countrymen who were toiling here at home for twenty-five or forty cents a day, and scarcely could keep body and soul together, while I could earn five and ten dollars a day as readily as I could blow my nose. I positively cried, Fiddle-John, cried like a girl, when I thought of you and your small chaps and of all the other poor fellows here in the valley who had such a hard time of it, tearing off their caps and bowing and scraping before the parson and the judge and all the big guns, while in America we step up to the President himself, wring his hand and say, 'How are you, old chap?

I'll drop in and take pot-luck with you to-morrow, if you don't happen to have company.' And he, likely as not, will say to me, 'Right welcome shall you be, Jim; bring a couple of good fellows along with you. We don't stand on ceremony around the White House. Perhaps I may be able to hunt up a consulship or a foreign mission for you, if you should happen to be out of office and pressed for cash.' Now, that's what I call good manners, Fiddle-John, and the chances are ten to one that, if you call upon him with a note from me, he may set you up in a right fat office, where you may cock your head at parsons and judges and feel yourself as big as the very biggest."

Fiddle-John listened with eager ears and open mouth to this alluring narrative. It did not occur to him to question the truth of what Jens said, for did not his appearance and his independent and dazzling demeanor plainly show that he was a great and prosperous man? And, moreover, how could he have undergone such a startling transformation in a few years, if it had not been true, as he said, that the President of the United States or some other mighty personage took an interest in him. Fiddle-John had often heard it said that in America all things were possible; and he had himself read letters from persons who here at home had been poor tenants or even day laborers, and who over there had become colonels, and merchants, and legislators. Therefore, he was not in the least surprised at the good luck which had overtaken his former friend. He was only surprised that the thought of going to America had never occurred to him

before, and he made up his mind on the spot to sell his cow, his pig, and his three sheep, and take the first ship for New York. He could scarcely stop to bid Jens Skoug good-by, so eager was he to rush home and communicate his resolution to his wife and children. He foresaw that he would meet with opposition from Ingeborg; but he steeled his heart against all her entreaties and vowed to himself that this time he would have his own way. Was it not enough that she had once nearly ruined his life? Should he permit her again to snatch the chance of greatness away from him?

He was flushed and breathless when he reached his little cottage up under the mountain-wall. It had never looked so mean and miserable to him as it did at this moment. The walls were propped up on the north and west sides with long beams, and dry, brownish grass from last year grew in tufts along the roof-tree and drooped down over the eaves. His two sons, Alf and Truls, were playing bear with their little sister Karen, who was seven years old. But they rose hurriedly when they saw their father, and brushed the sand from the knees of their trousers. There was something in his bearing and in the expression of his face which vaguely alarmed them. He stooped no more in walking, but strode along proudly with uplifted head.

"Boys," he cried, joyously, "run in and tell your mother, to-morrow we are going to America!" Ingeborg, who was just coming across the yard with a new-born lamb in her arms, paused in consternation, and gazed with a frightened expression at her husband.

"What has happened to you, John?" she asked, gently. "I thought that matter about the foreigner was settled long ago."

"I tell you, no!" he shouted, wildly; "it is not settled. It never will be settled as long as there is breath left in my body. This time I mean to have my own way. Jens Skoug has come back from America, and he says that America is the place for me. I knew it all along, and whether you will follow me or not, I am going."

"Follow you, John? Yes, if go you must, then I will follow you. But to America I will not go willingly, unless I know what we are to do there, and how we are to make our living. It is a long, long distance, John, across the great ocean; they speak a language there which neither you nor I understand."

Fiddle-John turned impatiently on his heel, as if to say that he knew all that twaddle from of old; but Ingeborg, giving the lamb to Alf, went up to him, laid her hand on his arm, and said:

"You and I have lived together for so many years, John, and we love each other too well ever to be happy away from each other. Don't let us speak harsh words. They rankle in the bosom and cause pain, long after they are spoken. If you must go to America, I will go with you. But I have a feeling that I shall never get there alive. I beg of you, don't decide rashly and don't believe all that Jens Skoug tells you. He was not a truthful child, and I doubt if he has grown up to be a good man. Let us say no more about it to-night. We will sleep on it, and see how it will look to us to-morrow."

Fiddle-John was not a bad fellow; on the contrary, he was quite soft-hearted and easily moved. This wife of his had toiled in poverty and ill-health all her life long, and he had never offered to lift a finger to help her. Yet she loved him, accepting her lot meekly, and never uttering a word of reproach against him. He had never observed before how thin and worn she looked, how hollow her cheeks were, and how large her eyes. He felt for the first time in his life a pang of remorse. He had not been a good husband, he thought; not as good as he might have been. But then he was a great man, and great men were never the best of husbands. And when he reached America, and his greatness became generally recognized, and fortune began to smile upon him, then he would shower kindness upon her, and she would be rewarded a thousand-fold for all she had suffered. Surely, he would turn over a new leaf—in America.

Thus Fiddle-John consoled himself, when his conscience grew uneasy. When only they got to America, he reasoned, then everything would be right. He would have started without delay if Ingeborg's health had not failed so rapidly that the doctor positively forbade her to think of travelling. The look of suffering and sweet forbearance upon her face seemed a perpetual reproach to Fiddle-John, and he roamed restlessly from one end of the valley to the other, playing, singing, and telling his stories, in order to earn money for the voyage, he said to his sons; but, in reality, to escape from the unspoken reproach of his wife's countenance. But the day soon

came when he needed no longer to flee from her presence. One bright spring day, just as the snow was melting, and the bare spots on the meadows steamed in the sun, Ingeborg closed her weary eyes forever; and a few days later she was laid to rest in the shadow of the old church down on the headland, where the song-thrush warbles through the brief Arctic summer night.

II.

Down in the valley the Easter bells were chiming; the bell-strokes trembled through the clear, sun-steeped air. There was commotion in the valley, too, in spite of the fact that it was Easter Sunday. Out in the middle of the fiord lay a huge black steamer, which panted and shrieked, as if it were in distress, and sent volumes of gray smoke out of its chimneys. Around about little black fragments of coal-dust were drizzling through the air and swimming on the water; and the gulls which kept whirling about the smoke-stacks were quite shocked when they caught the reflections of themselves in the tide; with wild screams they plunged into the fiord. They probably mistook themselves for crows.

The pier, which broke the line of the beach at the point of the headland, was thronged with men, women, and children. The men were talking earnestly together; most of the women were weeping, and the children were gazing impatiently toward the steamboat and tugging at their mother's skirts. Some twenty or thirty boats, heavily laden with chests and boxes, lay at the end of

the pier; and one after another, as it was filled with people, put off and was rowed out to the steamer. Only the old folk remained behind; with heavy hearts and tottering steps they walked up the sloping beach and stood at the roadside, straining their eyes to catch a last glimpse of the son or daughter, whom they were never to see again. Some flung themselves down in the sand and sobbed aloud; others stooped over the weeping ones and tried to console them.

At last there was but one little group left on the pier; and that was composed of Fiddle-John and his three children. Jens Skoug, the emigration agent, was standing in a boat, shouting to them to hurry, and the boys were scrambling down the slippery stairs leading to the water, while the father followed more deliberately, carrying the little girl in his arms.

There was a Babel of voices on board; and poor Fiddle-John and his sons, who had never heard such noise in their lives before, stood dazed and bewildered, and had scarcely presence of mind to get out of the way of the iron chains and pulleys which were hoisting on board enormous boxes of merchandise, horses, cattle, pigs, and a variety of other commodities. It was not until they found themselves stowed away in a dark corner of the steerage, upon a couple of shelves, by courtesy styled berths, which had been assigned to them, that they were able to realize where they were, and that they were about to leave the land of their fathers and plunge blindly into a wild and foreign world which they had scarcely in fancy explored.

The first day on board passed without any incident. The next day, they reached Hamburg, and were transferred to a much larger and more comfortable steamer, named the Ruckert, and before evening the low land of North Germany traced itself only as a misty line on the distant horizon. Night and day followed in their monotony; Russian Mennonites, Altenburg peasants, and all sorts of queer and outlandish-looking people passed in kaleidoscopic review before the eyes of the astonished Norsemen. It was the third day at sea, I think, when they had got somewhat accustomed to their novel surroundings, that a little incident occurred which was fraught with serious consequences to Fiddle-John's family.

The gong had just sounded for dinner, and the emigrants were hurrying down-stairs with tin cups and bowls in their hands. The children were themselves hungry, and needed no persuasion to follow the general example. They unpacked their big tin cups, which looked like wash-basins, and took their seats at an interminably long table, while the stewards went around with buckets full of steaming soup, which they poured into each emigrant's basin, as it was extended to them, by means of great iron dippers. Many of the Russians were either so hungry or so ill-mannered that they could not wait until their turn came, but rushed forward, clamoring for soup in hoarse, guttural tones; and one of the stewards, after having shouted to them in German to take their places at the tables, finally, by way of argument, gave one of them a blow on the head with his iron dipper.

Then there arose a great commotion, and everybody supposed that the angry Mennonites would have attacked the offending steward. But instead of that, the crowd scattered and quietly took their places, as they had been commanded. They were an odd lot, those Mennonites, thought the Norse boys, who did not know that their religion forbade them to fight, and compelled them to pocket injuries without resentment.

Next to Alf, on the same bench, sat a swarthy boy, fourteen or fifteen years old, with yellow cheeks and large black eyes. He had a thin iron chain about his wrist and seemed every now and then to direct his attention to something under the table. Alf concluded that, in all probability, he had his bundle of clothes or his trunk hidden under his feet. But he was not long permitted to remain in this error. Just as the steward approached them and extended the long-handled dipper, filled with soup, a fierce growl was heard under the bench, and a half-grown black bear-cub rushed out and made a plunge for his legs. The frightened steward made a leap, which had the effect of upsetting the soup-pail over his assailant's head.

A wild roar of pain followed, and everybody jumped on tables and benches to see the sport; while the Savoyard boy who owned the bear darted forward, his eyes flashing with anger, and hurled a flood of unintelligible imprecations at the knight of the soup-pail. There was a sudden change of tone, as he stooped down over his scalded and dripping pet, and, showering endearing names upon it, hugged it to his bosom.

The emigrants jeered and shouted, the waiters swore, and the purser, who had been summoned to restore order, elbowed his way ruthlessly through the crowd until he reached the author of the tumult.

"How do you dare, you insolent beggar, to bring a bear into the steerage?" he cried, seizing the boy by the collar, and shaking him. "Who permitted you to bring such a dangerous beast——"

His harangue was here suddenly interrupted by the bear, which calmly rose on its hind legs and, showing its teeth in an unpleasant manner, prepared to resent such disrespectful language. The purser took to his heels, while the steerage rang with jeers and laughter, and the Savoyard had all he could do to prevent his friend from pursuing him. The Norse boys, whose sympathy was entirely with the bear and his master, quite forgot their hunger in their excitement over the stirring incident; and when the Savoyard, feeling that the steerage was scarcely a safe place for him after what had occurred, mounted the stairs, dragging his bear after him, they could not resist the temptation to follow him at a respectful distance. But when they saw him crouching down behind the big smokestack and gazing timidly about him while he wiped the bear's head and face with his sleeve, they could not conquer the impulse to make the acquaintance of so distinguished and interesting a personage. They accordingly sidled up slowly, holding their sister between them, and were soon face to face with the Savoyard.

"What is your name?" asked Truls with a bold-

ness which raised him immensely in his brother's esteem.

The Savoyard shook his head.

"What do people call you when they speak to you?" Truls repeated, raising his voice and drawing a step nearer.

"*Non capisco. Je ne sais pas,*" answered the boy in Italian and French, giving them the choice of the only two languages he knew.

"Capisco," Truls went on confidently in his Norse dialect; "that is a very funny name. I am afraid you don't understand me. It wasn't the bear's name I asked for; it was your own."

The Savoyard shrugged his shoulders expressively, then poured out a torrent of speech which bewildered his Norse friends exceedingly. If the bear had opened its mouth and addressed them in the ursine language, it would not have succeeded in being more unintelligible.

"You are a very funny chap," Truls remarked with a discouraged air. "Why don't you talk like a Christian?"

He was determined to make no more advances to so irrational a creature, and was about to lead the way back to the dinner-table, when the arrival of the purser and the third officer of the ship again arrested his attention. The purser had evidently been hunting for the Savoyard; for, as he caught sight of him, he made an exclamation in German and called out to the third officer:

"There is the vagabond! Make him understand, please, that his bear must be shot and that he must get

out of the way. He has taken out no ticket for his beast, and we don't take that kind of freight gratis!"

The third officer, who spoke French fluently, explained the purport of the purser's remarks to the Savoyard, but in a gentle and kindly manner which almost deprived them of their cruel meaning. The boy, however, made no motion to stir, but remained calmly sitting, with his arm thrown over the bear's neck and one hand playing with his paws.

The officer, seeing that his words had no effect, repeated his remark with greater emphasis. A startled look in the boy's eyes gave evidence that he was beginning to comprehend. But yet he remained immovable.

"Get out of the way, I tell you!" cried the purser, drawing a revolver from his hip-pocket and pointing it at the bear's head. "I have orders to kill this beast, and I mean to do it now. Quick, now, I don't want to hurt you!"

The boy gazed for a moment with a fascinated stare at the muzzle of the terrible weapon, then sprang up and flung himself over the bear, covering it with his own body. The animal, not understanding what all this ado was about, took it to mean a romp, and began to lick his master's face and to claw him with his limp paws.

"Well, I have given you fair warning!" the purser went on, excitedly, as he vainly tried to find an exposed vital spot on the bear at which he could fire. "If you don't look out, you will have to take the consequences."

A large crowd had now gathered about them, and a loud grumble of displeasure made itself heard round

about. The purser began to perceive that the sentiment was against him, and that it would scarcely be safe for him to execute his threat. Yet he found it inconsistent with his dignity to retire from the contest, and he was just pausing to deliberate when, all of a sudden, a small fist struck his wrist and the pistol flew out of his hand and dropped over the gunwale into the sea. A loud cheer broke from the crowd. The purser stood utterly discomfited, scarcely knowing whether he should be angry with his small assailant or laugh at him. He would, perhaps, have done the latter if the cheering of the people and their hostile attitude toward him had not roused his temper.

"Bravo, Tom Thumb!" they cried. "At him again! don't be afraid of the brute because he has got brass buttons on his coat."

"Good for you, Ashiepattle!" the Norwegians shouted; "go it again! We'll stand by you!"

It was Truls, Fiddle-John's son, who had thus suddenly become the hero of the hour; he had acted in the hot indignation of the moment and was now abashed and bewildered at the sensation he was making. He looked anxiously about for his brother and sister, and as soon as he caught sight of them, was about to make his escape when the purser seized him by the collar and bade him remain.

"You are a nice one, to be attacking your betters, who have never given you any provocation," he said in German, which Truls, fortunately, did not understand. "I am going to take you to the captain, and he will have you punished for assault."

He made a motion to drag the struggling boy away, but the crowd closed about him on all sides, and pressed in upon him with angry shouts and gestures. The third officer, who had so far taken no part in the proceedings, now stepped up to the purser and begged him to release the boy.

"Of course," he said, "you are in the right; but if I were you, I would waive my right this time. It's hardly worth while making a row about so small a matter; and it is always bad policy to go to the captain with squabbles and grievances, especially when they might so easily have been avoided. I assure you, you will only injure yourself by doing it."

They talked for a minute together, while the ever-increasing throng surged hither and thither about them. Whether purposely or not, the irate purser, in the zeal of his argument, released his hold on Truls' collar, and the liberated boy dodged away, as quickly as possible, and was soon lost in the crowd. The Savoyard and his bear had long before seized the opportunity to withdraw from the public gaze.

III.

The life on shipboard did not agree with Fiddle-John. Like a spoiled child, he was restless and unhappy when he was unnoticed. All day long he sat on the top of a coil of rope in the forecastle of the ship and sang. The forecastle was often deserted, and there were probably not many among the emigrants who would have been

capable of judging whether his voice was in any way extraordinary. And yet, one there was who found an untold amount of comfort in listening to that clear, sweet tenor of Fiddle-John's, and that one was the Savoyard boy. It had been his constant effort, since his encounter with the purser, to make himself as inconspicuous as possible, and it would have gratified him much if he had possessed some means of making the bear invisible. As the forecastle was the least visited portion of the ship, he had chosen to hide himself there behind the anchor-cable.

He trembled whenever anyone approached, and threw the end of the tarpaulin which covered the deck-freight over his friend, the bear. The only people whose company did not incommode him were Fiddle-John and his children, for whom he testified his devotion by smiles and gestures and all sorts of endearing Italian diminutives, which, on account of his caressing tones, even a dumb brute could not have failed to appreciate. After a long and exciting pantomime, Truls ascertained that his name was Annibale Petrucchio and that his bear gloried in the name of Garibaldi.

Both boys felt that they had made great progress in each other's friendship when these facts had been established, and another hour of dumb show, intersprinkled with exclamations, resulted in a still more astonishing revelation, which was that Annibale and his friend slept every night on deck, because they feared to arouse once more the purser's displeasure by invading the steerage. Sometimes Annibale curled himself up with Garibaldi

within the coil of the anchor-cable—he jumped up, dragging the bear after him, to show the attitude in which they slept—but when it rained, or when the sea was high enough to sprinkle the deck, they both crept under the deck-freight tarpaulin, where they had made themselves a little house between two trunks which they had pushed apart. The only trouble was that the April nights were very cold—Annibale shivered all over to show how cold he was—and anchor-cables and deck-freight were not particularly soft to sleep upon.

As Alf and Truls became duly impressed with the unpleasantness of the Savoyard's situation, they took counsel in order to ascertain how they might relieve his distress. But all the plans that were suggested were found to be risky, and night came before they arrived at a decision. The weather had been raw and blustery all the afternoon, and the officer on the bridge had been looking every minute uneasily at the falling barometer. After sunset the gale increased in violence and the ship pitched and rolled in the heavy sea. In the steerage there was a terrible commotion; women prayed and screamed and moaned, children of all ages joined in the chorus, the lamps swung forward and backward in their brass frames, and bottles, glasses, and loose crockery made a terrible racket, sliding to starboard and back again to port with every motion of the ship. The wind howled in the rigging, and every now and then a big wave swept across the deck and poured out through the scupper-holes.

Alf and Truls, who had been lying awake for hours lis-

tening to the hollow boom of the waves and the shrieking of the wind, conversed in a whisper about the poor Savoyard, who had to be on deck in that terrible weather, and they finally summoned courage to creep toward the ladder and slowly to mount it, tightly clutching each other's hands. It was a risky undertaking, and their hearts stuck in their throats as they clung to the door-knob, hesitating whether they should open the door. Without knowing, however, they must have given the knob a twist; for suddenly the door swung open with a tremendous bang, and Truls was flung across the deck against the bulwarks with such force that for an instant he scarcely knew whether he had lighted on his head or his feet.

He picked himself up, however, without any serious damage, and as there was a momentary lull in the storm, he half rolled, half crept up toward the prow, where a couple of lanterns were swinging in the fore-royal stays. Nevertheless it was so dark that he could not discern an object ahead of him, and only groped his way along the bulwarks, until he stumbled upon a demoralized mass of rope which he knew to be the anchor-cable.

"Annibale!" he shouted at the top of his voice, "are you here?" But before he had time to receive a reply the ship plunged into a monstrous wave, which rose in a storm of spray and drenched the whole forecastle up to the mainmast. Truls, in his effort to keep his footing, tumbled forward and grabbed hold of something wet and hairy, which slid along with him for a couple of yards, and then was hauled back by some unseen force. The

boy crawled along in the same direction and shouted once more, "Annibale! where are you?" And a voice close to his ear answered:

"*Ah, Monsieur Truls, Garibaldi et moi, nous sommes à demi morts.*" *

"Now, don't jabber at me, Annibale," Truls observed, making his voice heard above the wind; "but if you will come along with me, Alf and I will give you half of our berth; and Garibaldi can sleep at our feet."

Whether Annibale understood the words or not, he could not fail to comprehend the friendly gestures which accompanied them. He eagerly seized Truls' hand and they plunged bravely forward, but slipped on the wet deck, and the bear and the boys slid with great speed in the direction of the descent to the steerage. They were drenched to the skin and considerably bruised when, after several unsuccessful efforts, they seized the door-knob. Alf, as it turned out, feeling too ill to keep watch, had already preceded them to bed. Garibaldi, who seemed keenly conscious of his disgrace since the day he molested the purser, slunk along as meekly as possible, and only now and then shook his wet skin and coughed in a dispirited fashion. He was not as grateful, moreover, as might have been expected, when he was assigned his place on the straw at the foot of the berth, but gradually pushed himself upward until his nose nearly touched that of his master; whereupon he curled himself up comfortably and went to sleep. It was a very pretty sight to

* "Ah, Mr. Truls, Garibaldi and I are half dead."

see the blond Norse boys and the swarthy Savoyard peacefully reposing on the same pillow, with the shaggy head of the bear between them, and the Savoyard half unconsciously clutching his pet in his embrace.

Toward morning the storm began to abate, and the dim light peeped in through the port-holes. The steerage was comparatively quiet. Fiddle-John arose and went on deck; a strange oppression had come over him. The dim, gray light, the all-enveloping dampness, and the incessant throbbing and clanking of the machinery wrought upon his sensitive soul, until he seemed in danger of going mad. The world seemed so vast and so empty! The waves heaved and wrestled in their gray monotony, until it made him dizzy to look at them. Merely to rid himself of this terrible oppression, Fiddle-John lifted up his voice and sang wildly against the wind; his beautiful tenor seemed to cut through the fog like a bright sword and to flash and ring under the sky. His soul expanded with his voice; the sun broke forth from the clouds, and he felt once more free and happy. He scarcely knew how long he sang; but when by chance he turned about, he saw to his surprise that a crowd of well-dressed cabin passengers had gathered about him. His three children stood holding one another's hands, looking in astonishment at the fine ladies shivering in fur-trimmed cloaks, and wondered why their father was attracting so much attention.

"Charming!" "Wonderful!" "Magnificent!" exclaimed the fine people, when Fiddle-John had stopped singing; and a portly American gentleman, with gray

side-whiskers, who seemed more enthusiastic than the rest, gave him a slap on his shoulder, and said that if he himself were ten years younger, he would undertake to make a fortune out of Fiddle-John, which, of course, was a very generous offer on his part. Jens Skoug, the emigration agent, translated the remark; and as the American seemed to have more to say to Fiddle-John, offered his services as interpreter.

"What is your trade?" asked the gentleman.

"I sing and play," said Fiddle-John.

"But I mean, how do you make your living?" repeated his questioner.

"By singing and playing," said Fiddle-John.

"You won't make much of a living by that in America; people won't understand you, unless you sing in English," remarked the American.

It had actually never before occurred to Fiddle-John that his songs would be unintelligible in America. He had supposed that music appealed equally to all nations and needed no interpreter. The remark of his new friend, therefore, was a positive shock to him, and it took him fully a minute to recover from its effect.

"I will sing to the President of America," he said, in an injured tone. "Jens Skoug, there, says that the President will make me a great man when he hears my voice."

It did not suit Skoug's convenience to translate this remark correctly; and he observed instead, with a confidential air, that Fiddle-John was a harmless monomaniac who had got it into his head that he wanted to sing to the

President. The American was evidently amused at this, and said, with a laugh, that he feared the President was not so great an authority in music as in affairs of state.

Fiddle-John was extremely puzzled and a little distressed at the jocose manner of the American gentleman; it could scarcely be possible that he was making fun of him. But American ways were probably different from Norwegian ways, and he would therefore not be hasty in taking offence.

"I know a great many songs," he said, with a determination to appear amiable; "and what is more, I can make songs about anything you choose."

"Aha, you are a sort of poet—an *improvisatore*, as the Italians say. Now I begin to understand. Perhaps you can make a song about me," suggested the American.

"Indeed I can!" cried the Norseman.

"Well, let us have it!" urged the other.

Fiddle-John never needed much urging to sing. He straightened himself up, flung back his head and was about to begin, when his son Truls, whose ears had been burning uncomfortably during the whole interview, seized his father's hand and entreated him not to sing.

"Don't sing to that man, father," he said. "He is making sport of you. Please don't! Both Alf and I are distressed to think that the gentleman should dare to speak to you as he does. He thinks——"

"Get out of the way, sonny! No one is talking to you," interrupted Jens Skoug, pushing Truls rudely aside; but the boy, fired with sudden wrath, wheeled quickly around.

"It is you who have brought all this misery upon us," he cried, excitedly. "I know you mean to desert us as soon as we get to New York, and I only wish I were big enough to give you the thrashing you deserve, now, on the spot."

"Why, little chickens can crow like big roosters!" Jens Skoug exclaimed; "but if you don't keep a civil tongue in your head," he added, with a menacing scowl, "I will make you dance a jig to a very lively tune—the hazel tune; perhaps you may have heard of it."

This was more than Truls could stand; and with clinched fists, a flushed face, and eyes blazing with anger, he rushed at the exasperating emigration agent. But the American, who thought that the fun had now gone far enough, seized the angry boy by the collar and restrained him. "Hold on, my little fellow!" he said; "it is time to stop for refreshments. You are a lively little customer for your years. I don't know exactly what you are mad about, but I can assure you it isn't worth fighting for. Now, simmer a little, and then cool down."

During this scene, Fiddle-John had been standing irresolutely shifting his weight from one foot to the other and gazing with a bewildered air at Jens and Truls. He could not understand what had happened to arouse the anger of his son, and his excited words had scarcely furnished him with a clew to the mystery.

"Why—why—why, don't you want me to sing, Truls?" he stammered, helplessly. "I am sure I sing as well as anybody, and need not be ashamed to be heard."

"Oh, it isn't that, father!" the son responded in a tone of tender consideration, which appealed strongly to the American. "You sing beautifully; but these people would not understand you—and—and—wait till we are alone, father; I will tell you what I mean."

It was the manner, rather than the words, of the boy which gave the stranger an insight into the relations which existed between him and his father; and what he saw, and still more what he inferred, interested him greatly. There was a diffidence in Truls' tone, and at the same time an air of protectorship, which, in one of his years, was quite touching. The American could not help admiring his spirited behavior, and he only wished he could have told him how far he was from wishing to humiliate either him or his father. But he had lost confidence in Mr. Skoug as an interpreter, and he saw no one else who, for the moment, could take that gentleman's place. He therefore put his hand caressingly on the boy's head and, trusting to his intuition rather than his knowledge of English, said:

"If you should ever happen to need a friend in the United States, you must remember to come to me. My name is Alexander Tenney, and I live in New York. Here is my card, with my address upon it."

He gave Fiddle-John and his son each a friendly nod and sauntered away toward a group of ladies who were seated in their steamer-chairs, conversing with the captain about the state of the weather.

IV.

It was a beautiful sunny morning in May that the steamer cast anchor in the bay of New York. Fiddle-John and his children and a thousand other poorly clad people from all parts of the world were carried by little steam-tugs to a large building by the water, where there was a babel of noise and confusion. Everybody was shouting at the top of his voice; children were crying, women hunting for their husbands, husbands hunting for their baggage; policemen were pushing back the crowd of screaming hotel-runners who were besieging the doors, and an official, standing on the top of a barrel, was yelling instructions to the emigrants in half a dozen different languages.

Fiddle-John, to whom this spectacle was positively terrifying, could do nothing but stare about him in a hopeless and dazed manner, while he pressed his violin-case tightly in his arms and allowed himself to be pushed hither and thither by the surging motion of the crowd. He was finally pushed up to a gate, where an official sat writing at a desk.

"How old are you?" asked the official, or, rather, the interpreter, who was standing at his elbow.

"Thirty-five years," said Fiddle-John; but a vague alarm took possession of him at the question, and his heart began to beat uneasily.

"What is your occupation?"

"Occupation? Well, I sing. I am a singer."

"A singing-teacher? Is that what you are?"

"No, I don't teach."

"What do you do, then, for a living? Perhaps you are a sort of theatrical chap—a play-actor?"

Fiddle-John looked greatly mystified; he had never heard of such a thing as a theatre in all his life, and the word "actor" was not found in his vocabulary. Nevertheless, he thought it best to keep on good terms with the great official, and he therefore made one more effort to explain the nature of his occupation.

"If you will pardon my boldness," he began, with a quaking voice, "I may say that I am a kind of poet—a minstrel——"

"Aha, that's what you are!" roared the official, with a laugh, as if he had at last found the solution of the problem; "you are a negro-minstrel, an end-man, clog-dancer, and lively kind of a chap generally."

Fiddle-John stood aghast; he was not a combative character, but the recent scene with the American gentleman on shipboard had aroused his suspicion, and the conclusion now suddenly flashed upon him that the official was making fun of him. The blood mounted to his head and his whole frame trembled.

"How dare you mock me?" he cried, passionately; "how dare you call me a negro? Don't you see with your own eyes that I am as white as you are?"

"Keep a civil tongue in your head, now, or I'll have you arrested on the spot," the other replied, coolly. "I can't afford to waste my time on you. So far as I can learn, you are a beggar who walks about in the street,

singing. Now, that kind of thing won't go down over here; and you had better not try it. How much money have you?"

"I haven't any money."

"And what is your destination? Where do you intend to go?"

"I am going to see the American President, and sing to him."

"Sing to the President! Well, I expected as much. Why, my good friend, it seems you are a lunatic as well as a beggar. I shall send you to the Island, and you will be returned by the next steamer to Norway. It is only able-bodied, self-supporting emigrants we receive here, not street-singers and crazy people!"

The poor Norseman stood as if riveted to the spot. A sudden faintness came over him, and he felt as if he were going to sink into the ground. He made desperate attempts to speak, but his words stuck in his throat and he could not utter a sound. A policeman was summoned and he was unceremoniously hustled through the crowd and forced to board a small steam-tug, where, with three other forlorn and miserable-looking individuals, he was locked up in a dirty and ill-smelling cabin. All this had been done so quickly that he scarcely had time to realize what was happening to him. But now the thought of his three children came over him with terrible force, and a sickening sense of his helplessness took possession of him. In one moment the blood throbbed in his face and temples, and he burned with heat and indignation; in the next, the thought of what was to become of his dear

ones, alone and friendless as they were, in a foreign land, suddenly drove the blood away from his cheeks and he shivered with dread. He was in the midst of these tormenting fancies, when the tug gave a couple of shrill whistles and steamed through the harbor toward an island covered with gray, dismal-looking stone buildings, the very sight of which filled Fiddle-John's breast with fear.

The children, in the meanwhile, had an experience hardly less discouraging. They had seen their father led away by a policeman, and had shouted to him with all their might; but their voices had been drowned in the general confusion, and in spite of all their efforts they had not been able to make their way to him through the dense throng. They searched for hours, but could find no trace of him. Being afraid of the man at the desk, who had been so severe with their father, they hit upon the plan of slipping through the gate in the train of a German family which had so many children that it seemed hopeless to count them. This scheme succeeded admirably, and toward evening they found themselves in a broad square planted with trees and budding shrubs. They still had some hope of finding their father, thinking that perhaps his detention would merely be temporary; and they sat upon the benches or roamed along the Battery esplanade with a miserable feeling of loneliness gnawing at their hearts. They were hungry, but they did not know where to turn to obtain bread. The world seemed so vast and strange and bewildering that it gave one a headache only to look at it. To ears accustomed only

to the murmur of the pines in the summer night and the song of birds and the river's monotonous roar, the huge city, with its varied noises and its incessant, deafening rattle of wheels over stone pavements, seemed overwhelming and terrible.

Only Truls, who had a spirit less sensitive and less easily daunted than his brother and sister, could summon courage to think—to devise a way, if possible, out of their perplexities. He carefully investigated first his own pockets, then his brother's, in the hope of finding something that might be exchangeable for a loaf of bread. But he could find nothing except a couple of buttons, some curious snail-shells, and a folding knife, the blades of which had been sharpened until there was scarcely anything left of them. After a few minutes' meditation, he resolved, although with an aching heart, to part with his valuable treasures; and he took Karen by one hand and Alf by the other, and led the way through the Battery Park toward Greenwich Street, where he hoped to find a baker's shop.

They had advanced but a short distance, however, when they caught sight of their friend Annibale, who was sitting on a bench, swinging his legs with an air of deep dejection. His eyes lighted up a little when he recognized Truls; he jumped up and, pointing to something resembling a large muff under the bench, exclaimed, in a tearful voice:

"Garibaldi is very sick. Garibaldi will die. He has been ill a long time; he will not stand up any more. He hangs his head like this."

Annibale here demonstrated, with pathetic absurdity, the pitiful manner in which the little bear hung his head. There could be no doubt; it was a serious case. Truls was especially conscious of this, after having stooped down and noted Garibaldi's symptoms. His eyes were much inflamed, his nose was hot, and he frothed slightly at the corners of his mouth. Yes, it was plain that Garibaldi was going to die.

Alf and Truls nearly forgot their hunger and their distress at the thought of this great calamity. By signs and gestures, they persuaded Annibale to seek lodgings where his pet might receive proper care and perhaps stand some chance of recovering. This seemed sound advice, and Annibale was not slow in following it, when once he understood it. But it was a very sad march; for Garibaldi refused to move, and the three boys had to carry him as best they could.

A lodging-house was finally found where supper and bed could be procured for twenty cents; and though neither was particularly inviting, the boys were too hungry and tired to be fastidious. The Savoyard fortunately had a little money, which he was very willing to share with his Norse friends, as soon as he had gained an inkling of the day's adventures. Moreover, he had relatives in the city, and knew the addresses of many Italian friends. He therefore had no fear of suffering want, and, as he asserted in his own jargon, could well afford to be generous.

The boys and the bear slept in a little square box of a room in which there were two beds, while a kind-hearted

servant carried weary little Karen to her own apartment. Truls, out of gratitude to Annibale, offered to watch over the bear; but, unhappily, his gratitude was not lively enough to keep him awake, though he struggled bravely to keep his eyes open. Toward midnight his head sank slowly down upon Garibaldi's back, and when the daylight peeped in through the dusty window-panes he was yet sleeping peacefully. The sunbeams crept, inch by inch, across the floor, until they lighted on Truls' chin, then climbed up to his nose and reached his eyes. Then he awoke with a pang, sprang up, and stared confusedly about him.

Suddenly his eyes fell upon Garibaldi, who lay immovable at the foot of the bed; he stooped down and touched him. The poor bear was stone cold! It had died quietly in the night. Truls, with a dim notion that Garibaldi's death was due to his own lack of watchfulness, made haste to rouse his friend and explain to him, with tears of grief and remorse, that he had, without meaning to do it, used Garibaldi as a pillow, and that the poor animal had probably died in consequence. Annibale, however, showed no disposition to reproach Truls, but, leaping out of bed with a frightened face, flung himself down over the bear, hugged him, and wept over him, overwhelming him with caresses and endearing names. But it was all in vain. Garibaldi was, and remained, dead. He had caught a violent cold during the night of the storm at sea, from which he had never recovered.

Although it was yet early in the morning, all the city seemed to be awake and to be surging and roaring out-

side of the windows like a storm-beaten sea. Stage-coaches, carriages, and enormous drays laden with bales and barrels and boxes, were pouring in steady streams up and down the street; people of all sorts and conditions were hurrying hither and thither; and out in the harbor, but a stone's throw distant, there was a forest of masts, and big and little steam-boats rushed shrieking in all directions. It seemed like tempting Providence to venture out into this wild turmoil, and Truls implored Annibale not to risk it, when he perceived that the latter was bent upon some such dangerous expedition.

Annibale, however, had seen great cities before, and gave no heed to his companion's fear, but tore himself away, promising to return before noon. With a painful fascination Truls stood watching him from the window, following his lithe and dexterous motions as he wound himself through the crowd and dodged the huge wheels and wagon-poles, as they seemed on the point of knocking him down. When at last the Savoyard vanished around a street-corner, and Truls was about to relapse into his sad meditations, the kind-hearted servant-girl caused a sensation by entering with Karen and a tray, upon which were three pieces of bread and three cups of coffee. Truls then awakened his brother, who had slept soundly through the recent excitement, and the three had quite a pleasant meal, considering their forlorn condition.

They covered Garibaldi with a blanket. He had had a hard life of it on board the steamer, and had suffered much. Now his career was finished. At least, so Alf

and Truls supposed, until a very extraordinary thing happened.

They had finished their breakfast some little time, when the door opened and Annibale entered with a little, smoky, and shrivelled-up Italian. He was Annibale's uncle; his name was Giacomo Bianchi, and by trade he was a tobacconist. When he talked he used his arms, legs, eyes, and mouth, all with equal vigor. Fiddle-John's children stood and gazed at him in undisguised wonder; they had never in all their lives seen anything so lively.

"*Ecco!*" he cried, pointing excitedly first to the dead bear and then to Truls; "the fit is perfect. He is of the same height, and will do perfectly well. If he has ordinary intelligence, and not too much of it, he can act the bear as well as if he were born one. I will prepare the skin for you, and stuff it just enough to fit his figure. Then you can make money like the sands of the sea. I have a small hand-organ at home, and a tambourine which that vagabond Gregorio left me for a debt. You give me half of what you earn, and I will lend you all these things. You will become a rich man before you die. The bigger boy can play the hand-organ, the little girl can strike the tambourine, and you yourself lead the bear and make him dance. Behold, my son, your fortune is made. *Ecco*, I have spoken!"

Giacomo's dark eyes flashed with enthusiasm as he unfolded this glorious scheme, and he flourished his stick so violently in the direction of Karen that she grew frightened and began to cry. Her brothers, too, viewed

the excitable little man with suspicion, and listened in no friendly spirit to his unintelligible talk. To their guileless Norse minds his gestures seemed at first to indicate insanity, but after awhile they concluded that, for some reason, he was angry at their sister. Then they clinched their fists in their pockets and made themselves ready to pounce upon him, the very moment he ventured to touch her.

His apparent wrath suddenly left him, however, and he came up to shake hands with each of them, smiling, and nodding his shaggy head with extreme affability. Still they could not quite conquer their distrust of him, and it required a long and lively pantomime to induce them to accompany him to his own dwelling. At last they yielded, because they knew of nothing else to do. Garibaldi was put into a bag, and Giacomo and the boys, taking each a corner, carried him easily. First they went to Castle Garden to inquire for their father, but there was no one there who knew anything about him. Another steamer had just come in with over eleven hundred Polish Jews, and the officials were too busy to give heed to the questions of the strange-looking boys who talked a strange-sounding language. All their attempts to get possession of the baggage were also unavailing; and with heavy hearts they plodded along together with the Italian and Garibaldi, winding their way through a labyrinth of dirty streets, until they reached a little, ill-smelling bird-shop in Canal Street.

Here, too, there was a bedlam of noise, and the young Norsemen remained standing in the middle of the floor,

staring about them in helpless bewilderment. Two great blue-and-yellow macaws were shrieking overhead, an ancient and wise-looking cockatoo was apparently scolding them for their undignified behavior, and uncounted paroquets, pigeons, and canary-birds were chirping, cooing, and screaming in a confused chorus which would have racked the nerves of a mummy. The barking of a number of dogs, which seemed to object to the limited area of their cages, added to the uproar; and it was a great relief to the whole juvenile company when Giacomo invited them up-stairs, where he had his own personal domicile.

The bird-store, according to Annibale's assertion, was a source of enormous revenue, but belonged to his other uncle, Matteo, who was a citizen of much weight and influence in the Italian colony. This great man, however, it was understood, had more important matters to attend to, and left the business in charge of his humbler brother, Giacomo. A vague impression of these facts Annibale had managed to communicate to his friends, in spite of the linguistic difficulties under which he labored; and the Norse boys, who during the two weeks on the steamship had learned the Italian names for many common things and ideas, were pleasantly surprised at the readiness with which they comprehended the mixture of signs, gestures, and words which constituted Annibale's medium of communication.

Uncle Giacomo's rooms proved much more agreeable than the shop below. The noise of the birds penetrated the floor only as a subdued confusion of sounds, and did

not interfere with conversation. On a little low table at the window there was a multitude of small, sharp tools, and an array of bottles which emitted strong but not unpleasant odors. Some of them had feathers sticking through their stoppers, and others were labelled "Poison" in big red letters. About the walls there were rows of shelves, upon which stood bright-colored birds, perching upon twigs, as if on the point of taking flight, owls with big yellow eyes and a dignified sullenness of expression, hawks with wings outspread, swooping down upon unseen, unsuspicious rabbits; and, besides, there were little pet dogs and birds, whose skins had been preserved by the taxidermist's art for sorrowing owners.

All these objects the boys and Karen found highly entertaining, and Uncle Giacomo, who was bent upon making a good impression, allowed them to take down and examine anything that struck their fancy. The work of skinning poor Garibaldi also served to occupy their minds, and thus the forenoon passed rapidly until it was time to sit down to dinner. They did not sit down, however, for their dinner consisted only of bread and milk, and that could be eaten just as well standing. In the afternoon they were allowed to fetch up some rabbits and guinea-pigs from the store, and when they had played with them for a couple of hours, Uncle Giacomo brought them a green parrot that could talk and scold in both English and Italian. Neither Alf nor Truls nor Karen understood its talk; but, for all that, it entertained them, and served for a time to keep their minds from dwelling on their misfortunes. They scarcely knew what was to

become of them; the world seemed so vast and so pitiless, and they themselves such a very small part of it. They thought with flutterings of hope and fear of their father, and determined never to abandon their search for him until they should find him.

Their fate seemed strange and incomprehensible. But a few weeks ago they were living happily in their quiet Norse home, in the little cottage under the mountain-wall. Now they were flung out, helpless and alone, into a huge whirlpool of foreign life; their mother, whom they had loved more than anyone else in the whole world, was dead, and their father was wandering about, no one knew where, vainly seeking them, perhaps, and not knowing whither to turn. Indeed, much can happen in two short weeks. If they had but known what was to befall them before they left their happy home! Oh, if they had but known!

V.

Nearly a week passed before Garibaldi's skin was properly padded and prepared for the reception of its new occupant; but then it fitted to perfection, and was as soft and flexible as an overcoat. Truls put it on with perfect ease, and breathed as freely through Garibaldi's nose as if it had been his own. Fortunately the bear had been of the shaggy, long-haired kind, and when the opening was laced together with fine silk cords the joining was completely hidden by the fur. The children had repeated rehearsals in Uncle Giacomo's room; and they

all agreed that Truls made a very respectable bear. He could walk on his hind-legs beautifully, he could salute with his right fore-paw, and he could even nod with his head in a very intelligent fashion. In fact, there was a danger that he might be too intelligent.

"Now, do remember," Alf would cry out to him, "a bear cannot blow his nose. He may be allowed to sneeze, and even to cough; but he must not be too frisky and intelligent. And remember, that if you laugh or make any sound whatever, the game is up and we are ruined. Uncle Giacomo only keeps us to make money with us, but he is not unkind, and as long as we don't starve, we ought to be thankful. It all depends upon you, whether we shall have a home or be thrown into the streets."

It was with a great flutter of excitement that the Savoyard and his Norse friends started out early one Monday morning in the middle of May. Alf was carrying the hand-organ, Karen the tambourine, and Annibale was leading the make-believe bear by the same iron chain which had regulated the movements of Garibaldi. They were about to open their first performance on the sidewalk at the corner of Broadway and Canal Street, but two policemen were immediately on hand and sternly commanded them to "trot." Trot they accordingly did; but the sidewalks were everywhere so crowded that they seemed in danger of being knocked down, in case they should offer to obstruct the hurrying stream of humanity.

It was not until they reached the broad steps of the

Sub-Treasury in Wall Street that they summoned courage to make a second stop; and Truls was by that time so tired of the unnatural four-footed gait that he rose, without invitation, and began to promenade in a very unbearlike fashion. Presently Alf's hand-organ began to wail a very sad air from "Il Trovatore," and Karen struck the tambourine with a vigor which threatened to ruin both her knuckles and the drum-skin. A number of newsboys and bootblacks instantly scampered up to witness this attractive entertainment, and half a dozen brokers and bank-messengers also paused to view the antics of the little bear. Annibale shouted and swung his whip, and the animal saluted and danced slowly and clumsily (as he had been commanded), and at the end of five minutes quite a shower of pennies dropped into the Savoyard's hat. The crowd increased; the newsboys screamed with delight, and scrambled up the steps, pell-mell, whenever the bear approached them. Truls began to enjoy the fun, and chuckled to himself at the thought that he could chase a whole flock of big boys who, if they had known what sort of a creature he was, would in all likelihood have chased him. This reflection made him every moment bolder, and he would have been in danger of overstepping his part altogether if Alf had not screamed to him in Norwegian:

"Now, take care, smarticat, don't be too intelligent!"

Nevertheless, just as he was resolving to heed this advice, a little ragged bootblack, while trying to back away from him, fell, turned a dexterous somersault, and came down on his feet on the sidewalk at the foot of the stairs.

The sight was so comical that Truls lost control of himself and burst out laughing; but in the same instant his brother and sister were at his side, and made so terrific a noise with their respective instruments that his laughter was completely drowned in the din. Someone, however, must have noticed his mirth; for there was a shriek of merriment among the boys, and one of them cried out:

"Did you hear that? The bear is a-laughin'! He is a jolly old coon, that bear is."

"No, he was only a-yawnin'!" shouted another boy. "He is a queer old party, and he knows lots of tricks."

"Them b'ars is a mighty funny lot," the first boy rejoined. "I onct seed one at the circus; he could ride bare-back and drink beer."

"I onct knowed one as could smoke cigars and kiss his boss," shouted number two, determined not to be outdone.

All these comments escaped the bear's brother, but Annibale caught a suspicion that something was wrong. He hastily gathered in the second shower of pennies, and made a sign to his friends to stop the entertainment. They made their way as quickly as they could down to the water-front, and thence to the Battery Park, where there was plenty of room for another exhibition. The newsboys and bootblacks followed them for a couple of blocks, but seeing that they had no intention of stopping, gradually dropped behind and returned to their accustomed haunts. Alf and Truls heaved a sigh of relief

when the last of their importunate followers had disappeared; and it was with a lighter heart that they took their station under the trees of the park and commenced the same programme which had been so successful in Wall Street.

Their audience was here even larger than it had been at their first performance, but it was not nearly so profitable; for the foreign emigrants and corner-loafers who abound in this locality had probably no money to spare, or they preferred to have their entertainment gratis. Hardly half a dozen pennies dropped into Annibale's hat, in spite of his repeated invitations to contribute. It was obvious that they had hit upon a bad locality, where art was not properly appreciated.

As Karen's knuckles were by this time quite numb, it was agreed that Annibale should take his turn at the hand-organ and give Alf a chance to distinguish himself at the tambourine. They had just completed this arrangement, and were strolling rather aimlessly past Castle Garden toward the Coney Island Pier, when they saw a dense crowd gathered at the entrance of the great immigration depot. Curiosity prompted them to discover the cause of the demonstration, and as everyone fell aside to make room for the bear, they had no difficulty in reaching the open space in the centre of the throng.

What was their horror when they suddenly found themselves confronted with a real bear—a huge black beast which was dancing slowly upon his hind-legs, and every now and then, with an angry yawn, showing an array of terrible teeth! They wished themselves well

IN BATTERY PARK.

out of sight again, and strove with all their might to avoid attracting attention. But instead of that, they found themselves pushed right into the middle of the ring. And the moment the huge bear spied a comrade, down he dropped on all-fours and insisted upon making his acquaintance. With a wild scream which was anything but bearlike, Truls rose up and rushed toward his brother Alf, flinging his paws about his neck. The keeper of the big bear gave him a cut with his whip, but he still strained at his chain and gave forth angry growls. The people fled in all directions, and Alf grabbed his disguised brother in his arms and ran as fast as he could carry him. The others followed; but before they had overtaken him he was stopped by a policeman, who inquired whether he had a license. The boy stared in abject terror at the officer of the law.

"Pl-please, sir," he stammered, imploringly, in his native tongue, "don't hurt my brother! He isn't a bear at all, if you please, sir; and—and—I am a harmless lad who—who—arrived from Norway the other day, and—and—never did mortal thing any harm as long as I lived, sir!"

"Don't jabber yer Dutch at me, ye young scalawag!" the policeman replied, seizing the boy by the arm and shaking him. "Ef it is an honest loivelihood ye're afther, why don't ye drap that poor dumb cr'atur' and foind some dacent imployment, begorra?"

Alf was altogether too frightened to make any answer to this suggestion, of which, moreover, he understood not a word. He only gazed with his large blue eyes at

the policeman, and moved his lips nervously, without being able to utter a sound.

"Pl—please, sir," he faltered, after several vain attempts to speak, "please let me go." And Truls, completely forgetting his disguise, raised two hairy paws imploringly toward the officer and begged tearfully.

"Please, sir, do let my brother go!"

The policeman's face underwent a sudden and startling change. His eyes nearly popped out of his head, his jaw dropped down on his chest, and the veins on his forehead swelled. "I'll be blowed," he cried in breathless amazement, "ef the dumb cratur' ain't a-talkin' Dutch!"

He stooped for a minute, with his hands resting upon his knees, and stared with a perplexed expression at the supposed bear; then the situation began to dawn upon him, and he burst out into a tremendous laugh.

"Oh, it is a foine bear ye be, sonny!" he exclaimed, lifting the boy-bear unceremoniously on his arm, and grabbing hold of Alf's collar with his disengaged hand. "A smart young un ye be, be jabers! It is an alderman ye will be before ye doi—if ye only vote the roight ticket. 'Tis a shame, it is, ye don't talk a Christian language, sech as a gintleman can understand."

He was moving up Greenwich Street, talking in this humorous strain, half to himself and half to his prisoners, whom he was dragging reluctantly along, when his progress was suddenly arrested by a little girl who became unaccountably entangled in his legs.

"Mr. Policeman," the child cried, in the same unintelligible tongue, gazing up with a pale and excited face at

the tall officer, "please don't hurt my brothers. And won't you please take me along, too? I have been bad, too, Mr. Policeman—much badder than Truls."

"Why, how-de-do, sis!" the officer asked, with a broad grin. "Is it the bear ye be, did ye say, as lent yer skin to this little chap? Ah, be jabers! now I begin to take in yer capers. It is a moighty mixed-up lot ye be, and up to no end of thricks. But jest ye wait till his honor gits hold on ye, and he will know how to git each one of ye back into his roight skin."

This sinister allusion was lost, however, on the three culprits, and even if they had understood it, it would probably not have impressed them greatly. Their life had been so exciting since they left their quiet Norse valley, that they had almost ceased to be surprised at anything that might happen to them. Alf and Karen plodded on wearily at the policeman's side, holding on to the tails of his coat, and showing no desire to part company with him; and Truls, who was wellnigh exhausted by the labors and excitement of the day, was only too glad to be able to rest his shaggy head on the officer's shoulders, and to embrace his neck with his two hairy paws. The officer, somehow, seemed to enjoy the situation; for he laughed and chuckled incessantly to himself, as if he were contemplating some delightful plan which promised a great deal of amusement. He shook his club good-naturedly at the crowd which followed him, and pushed his way onward, until he reached a large brick building, over the door of which was carved, in big Roman letters, "Police Precinct, No. ——." Here he

entered with his prisoners, and after having made an entry in a book, consigned them to a large, bare, and dreary-looking room, where a few miserable people were reposing in various attitudes upon the floor.

The two Norse boys, who vaguely understood that this was some kind of a prison, looked with horror upon the ragged and untidy occupants of the room, and withdrew with their sister into the remotest corner they could find, so as to escape observation. Here they held a consultation, glancing all the while fearfully about them, and lowering their voices to a whisper.

"Truls," said Alf, raising his guileless eyes to those of his younger but braver-hearted brother, "what do you think will become of us? do you think we shall have to stay long in this dreadful place?"

"Oh, no, you sillibub!" replied the ursine Truls, with well-feigned cheerfulness; "we will be let out before night; and anyhow, I know what I am going to do. You remember that handsome American gentleman on board the steamboat, whom I wanted to fight because I thought he was making fun of father?"

"Yes, I remember," said Alf.

"Well, he gave me his card, which I gave you to keep in your pocket-book; and he made me promise that if ever I needed a friend, I should send for him. There is an address on the card, and I shouldn't wonder if he is a great man; and then everybody will be sure to know him."

"Oh, Truls!" his brother exclaimed, admiringly; "you are always so bright and so clever; and I have the

card here; and I'll not lose it. But don't you think you had better take off your bear-skin, so that the judge may see you aren't a bear, but a little boy?"

"I have thought of that," Truls rejoined, earnestly; "but the trouble is I haven't anything else to put on. So I shall have to go to the judge as I am, and I guess he won't be so very mad, when I tell him I haven't got nothing else under."

A dreary hour passed—dreary beyond expression. The two boys tried each to persuade the other that he was, on the whole, not at all afraid, but really quite cheerful. The only one whose argument was really convincing, however, was Karen; for she went peacefully to sleep on Truls' shoulder, and did not wake until the policeman came and summoned them all into court. They made quite a sensation when they entered; and people rose and craned their necks to catch a glimpse of the curious group. It was probably the first time that a bear had marched on its hind-legs into a police-court and taken its place behind the bar as a prisoner. The judge smiled a little when he saw it, and leaned himself half over to the policeman who was apparently giving an account of the case.

"The officer charges you with roaming about with an unlicensed bear," he said severely, fixing a stern glance upon Alf. "What have you to say to the charge?"

Alf gazed up helplessly, and shook his head.

"Why don't you answer?" repeated the judge, impatiently. "Why didn't you take out a license for your bear?"

The policeman again leaned over and explained that the prisoners were Dutch, or some other kind of foreigners, and that they did not understand a word of English.

"Hm," growled his Honor, "why didn't you tell me that before? Is there anyone in this court-room," he went on, raising his voice, "who understands foreign languages and would be willing to help the court out of a difficulty?"

He looked expectantly about the large room, but no one volunteered to act as interpreter of anything so comprehensive as "foreign languages."

"The gintleman over there," the policeman remarked, pointing out a well-dressed man in the audience, "looks as if he understood furrin languages."

The gentleman in question disclaimed all knowledge of the languages referred to, and the Court visited him with a look of serious displeasure. It was very annoying, and there seemed positively no way of disposing of the case, except to recommit the prisoners until an interpreter could be found. The judge was about to resort to that expedient, when a new prisoner was led into the court, and the boys gave a simultaneous exclamation of surprise at beholding Jens Skoug, the emigration agent. Mr. Skoug had evidently come into collision with a policeman's club, or some other unyielding substance, for his left eye was much blackened, and he had a great bump on his forehead. He had been arrested the previous night for disturbing the peace.

"That man, it appears, is acquainted with these Dutch

boys," the Court remarked, nodding to the policeman who had charge of Mr. Skoug; "bring him up."

"Do you understand foreign languages?" the justice went on, addressing the emigration agent in his severest judicial tones.

"Yes, lots of them," replied Jens, drowsily.

"Do you know these boys?"

Jens contemplated the boys with a puzzled frown; then he shook his head boozily and replied:

"No, yer Honor, I never saw them in all my life. They are not my style, yer Honor; don't look as if they had moved in the best society."

"Well, never mind that," interrupted the Court; "but can't you find out anything about them? why they did not license their bear? Who provides for them? Where do they live?"

Jens, in turning his back to the Court, gave Alf and Karen and the bear a fierce glance, as if to say that he would make them smart, if they dared in any way to compromise him. Then, to their surprise, he stooped down and talked with them earnestly for several minutes.

"Your Honor," he resumed, rising and facing the judge; "these boys are, as you supposed, Dutch. They are utterly destitute, and have no money wherewith to buy a license for their bear. In other words, they are vagrants; and if I may be permitted to make a suggestion, I think the Reform School or the workhouse would be the right place for them. They are a hardened lot, I am afraid, judging by their talk——"

"You may spare your suggestions," the judge interrupted curtly; "though they happen to fit in exactly with what I had determined to do with them. Their bear will have to be killed or sold, and they are hereby recommitted, and will be sent to the Island for thirty days."

Mr. Skoug again stooped down and explained to the two culprits; but he had no sooner mentioned the word "kill" than Alf gave a shout, half of anger, half of dread, pulled his Norse tolle-knife * from its sheath, and with one swift motion slit the bear's skin from the neck downward. The policeman rushed forward, the audience jumped up on the benches, the judge himself started at the flash of the knife, and was on the point of leaping over his desk. What was his amazement when, instead of a bear, he saw a little shivering boy in very scanty attire! A roar of laughter and a deafening salvo of applause burst forth from all parts of the room, and it was in vain that the judge hammered with all his might on his desk, and in thunderous tones demanded order. The Irish policeman, to whose taste for practical jokes the whole scene was due, laughed as if he were going to split his sides. He would not have ventured to confess that he had planned some such dramatic incident, although, as he admitted to himself, it had turned out even more startling than he had dared to hope.

When order was finally restored, the Court commanded

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* All Norse peasant lads wear a sheathed knife at the side, called a "tolle-knife."

that the prisoners be removed; but Truls, who now comprehended the situation, and was determined not to submit to further imposition, marched boldly up to the judge, and put Mr. Tenney's card before him on the desk.

"This gentleman," he said, confidently, "made me promise to send for him if I should ever need a friend. Now I need him, and if you would kindly send someone to fetch him, I should be much obliged."

The judge understood the purport of this speech, even though the words were unintelligible to him. Mr. Tenney's name was well known to him, as that of a citizen of great wealth and influence, and his prisoners immediately rose in his estimation when he heard that they enjoyed the protection of so prominent a man. He therefore beckoned to a policeman, wrote a hasty note, and told him to have it instantly despatched. The boys and their sister, in the meanwhile, were permitted to sit down in the court-room, awaiting Mr. Tenney's arrival. Mr. Skoug, who betrayed a great anxiety to be off, pleading a variety of business engagements, was then examined and fined ten dollars. He had just managed to disappear through a side-room when Mr. Tenney's tall and portly figure was seen entering. He gave the boys a friendly nod, as he walked rapidly up to the judge, with whom he conversed amicably for several minutes. There was something brisk, energetic, and business-like in all his movements. He laughed very heartily when the recent incident with the bear was related to him, and the judge joined in the laugh, and asserted that it was the most

amusing thing that ever had occurred in all his long experience on the bench. Then Mr. Tenney apologized for having taken up so much of the Court's valuable time, and the Court expressed itself delighted to have made Mr. Tenney's acquaintance and to have been in any way able to serve him; whereupon Mr. Tenney had the three children conveyed to his carriage, and they drove away through the glorious May sunshine, up one street and down another, until they reached a large and stately house on Madison Avenue. Here they stepped out of the carriage, and a liveried servant flung the doors open before them, as they entered the house.

Such magnificence the boys had never beheld before: long, wonderful mirrors which looked like strips of lake standing on end, carpets which felt soft under the feet like fine moss, and gilt and carved furniture, which seemed to have stepped right out of a fairy story. It was certainly very extraordinary; but still more extraordinary was the kindness and consideration with which they were treated by Mr. Tenney and his wife. Two pretty rooms were assigned to them on the fourth floor of the house; little Karen was dressed in beautiful clothes, and the boys themselves got each a new suit, the like of which they had never had on their backs before. They felt like young princes, and if they could only have talked with the kind people who took so much trouble on their account, they would have expressed to them their gratitude, and perhaps, too, solicited their aid in ascertaining the whereabouts of their lost father.

Mr. Tenney, however, guessed their thoughts, and did

not need to be told that their minds were torn with anxiety. He first procured a Norwegian interpreter from one of the steamship companies, and made the boys describe to him accurately the time and circumstances of Fiddle-John's disappearance. He wrote letters to the emigration commissioners, inserted advertisements in the newspapers, and set the whole official machinery in motion to get a clew by which to unravel the mystery.

Investigations were set on foot, detectives were employed, the Castle Garden officials were questioned and cross-examined, but there was no one who had the slightest recollection of having seen Fiddle-John. Thus three days passed. Mr. Tenney's determination to accomplish his purpose increased, the greater the obstacles were that he encountered. There was a streak of obstinacy in his temperament, and there seemed to be an impression abroad that Mr. Tenney was not to be trifled with, when once he was aroused, and that may have been the reason why Fiddle-John grew in the course of a week to be a kind of public character, and people asked each other jocosely when they met in street cars or in hotel vestibules :

" How do you do ? Seen Fiddle-John ? "

Someone, it appears, had seen Fiddle-John, and that was the purser of the steamboat Ruckert, whose encounter with the lamented Garibaldi was yet fresh in the boys' memories. He came late one evening to Mr. Tenney's residence, and explained to him that a man called Fiddle-John had just been put aboard the ship, as a lunatic, to be taken back to Norway free of charge.

The ship was to sail the next day at noon; and if Mr. Tenney would hold himself responsible for the consequences, the purser said he would undertake to restore Fiddle-John to his family within—well, within five minutes.

Mr. Tenney was quite ready to assume all the responsibility in the matter, and accordingly the purser raised the window, and beckoned to a carriage which had stopped on the other side of the street. The carriage drove up before the door, and out stepped Fiddle-John. But oh, how miserable he looked! The light from the gas-lamp fell upon his pale face, his disordered hair, and his tall, stooping figure. He was led carefully up the steps, and the children flew into his arms, hugging him, kissing him, and weeping over him. He sat down on a low stool, and stared about him in a bewildered fashion. But gradually, as his eyes rested upon the dear familiar faces, his expression softened, the wild look of fright departed from his face, and the tears began slowly to course down his cheeks.

"O, children!" he said in a hoarse, broken voice; "I thought I should never see you again!"

He covered his face with his hands, and wept long and silently.

"They wanted to make a madman of me," he sobbed; "and they almost succeeded. Whatever I did or said—it made no difference—it only proved that I was mad. I came to believe it, children, and the thought was terrible to me; if I had staid another day, I should never have recovered my reason."

VI.

Five years have passed since Fiddle-John and his sons were rescued from misery by Mr. Tenney. They now live in the porter's lodge of Mr. Tenney's beautiful Berkshire country-seat; and Fiddle-John, with all his eccentricities, makes a very acceptable porter. The little stone cottage at the gate of the larger villa looks very picturesque with the green vines trailing over it, and it is very comfortably and prettily furnished. Little Karen is now a matronly little body, with a strict sense of order, and many housewifely accomplishments. She goes to the public school in the morning, but studies at home in the afternoon, and keeps her father company. The boys are both big fellows now, and they are as good Americans as any to the manner born. Truls brags of American enterprise, and the blessings of democratic institutions, as if every drop of his Norse blood had become naturalized. He is an engineer, and earns good wages, and is full of hopefulness for the future. It need scarcely be said that his sister adores him, and regards him as one of the most remarkable men of the century.

Alf, who has inherited his father's handsome face, and incapacity for practical concerns, is at present preparing to enter college. Mr. Tenney is much interested in him, as a lad of unusual ability and a singular sweetness of character; and it is owing to his generosity that Alf has been able to follow the career for which he is by nature

and inclination adapted. He has his father's beautiful voice, too, and makes a sensation in the church choir every Sunday when he sustains the lovely tenor solo in the anthems "As Pants the Hart," and "I Know that My Redeemer Liveth."

He is a rather serious fellow, with thoughtful eyes, and a frank and open countenance. Some think he would have a fine career as a clergyman, but it is difficult to tell whether his inclination, in later years, will turn in that direction. His father, however, does all in his power to encourage this ambition, and it is not unlikely that his hopes may some day be fulfilled. In fact, it is Fiddle-John's favorite occupation to hope and dream about the future of his sons.

During the long summer afternoons he sits in the shadow of the vines, outside of his cottage, while his daughter reads aloud to him from the old Norse ballad books which he yet loves so dearly. And it happens very frequently, then, that the young ladies and gentlemen who are visiting at the neighboring villas come, in a company, and beg him to sing to them. They throw themselves down in easy attitudes upon the soft, close-trimmed lawn; and their bright garments, their crimson sunshades, and their fresh, youthful faces make a fine picture against the green background of elms and chestnut trees.

To the gentle and guileless minstrel it is a great pleasure to see these gay and happy creatures; and when the young girls hang upon his arms and urge him to sing, his eyes beam with delight.

"Now, do sing, Fiddle-John," they coaxingly say. "You know we have walked miles and miles to hear your voice. And here is a young lady from New York, who never heard a Norse song in all her life, and is disappointed, because you look so nice and gentle, and not wild and savage as a son of the Vikings should."

Fiddle-John likes this kind of banter very well; and when, finally, he yields to their coaxing and lifts up his clear, strong voice, singing the sad, wild ballads of his native land, there falls a hush upon the noisy company, as if they were in the presence of a renowned artist. These are Fiddle-John's happiest moments. And it was just on such an occasion when, on a beautiful afternoon in July, he had been entertaining the young people with his songs, that a swarthy-looking Savoyard walked up before his door, and began to whip up a bear which danced to a tune from "Il Trovatore," played upon a wheezy hand-organ.

"Stop, you sacrilegious brute!" said one of the young men, addressing, not the bear, but his master; "we have a better kind of music here than your asthmatic organ can produce."

The Savoyard, being apparently well accustomed to this manner of address, swung his organ across his back and was about to take his departure, when Karen, prompted by some idle impulse, stepped up to the bear and patted it. Then a sudden change came over the young man's countenance. He stared for a moment fixedly at the little girl.

"Take care, *Carina mia*," he said, with a smile; "that bear is a real one!"

"Annibale!" she cried in surprise; and, to be sure, it was Annibale!

He had grown five years older, but in other respects he had changed but little. He knew but very little more English than he had done on the day of his arrival, and his ambition still did not extend beyond hand-organs and bears. He reaped a plentiful harvest of coins that night; but that was owing to little Karen, and not to the doleful hand-organ. She ran into the cottage and spread out upon the lawn a rug, made out of a small bear-skin. "Do you know that, Annibale?" she cried.

"Garibaldi, my poor Garibaldi!" exclaimed the Savoyard, while the tears glittered in his eyes; and he stooped down and caressed the furry head.

Now the curiosity of the young ladies was excited, and the whole company clamored for the story of Annibale and the bear-skin. They all seated themselves in a ring about Fiddle-John, and he told the story, as I have told it to you. For I had the good luck to be one of the listeners.