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"THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE IS THE LEGITIMATE SOURCE, AND THE HAPPINESS OF THE PEOPLE THE TRUE END OF GOVERNMENT."

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A Tale of Norway.

FEATS ON THE FIORD.

BY HARRIET MARTINEAU.

CHAPTER V.

The Water-Sprites' Doings.

Erica now profited by her lover's industry in the morning. He had so far advanced with the raft, that, though no one would have thought of taking it in its present state to the mouth of the fiord for shipment, it would serve as a conveyance in still water, for a short distance, safely enough.

And still indeed the waters were. As Erica and Oddo were busily and silently employed in tying moss round their oars, to muffle their sound, the ripple of the tide upon the white sand could scarcely be heard; and it appeared to the eye as if the lingering remains of the daylight brooded on the fiord, unwilling to depart. The stars had, however, been showing themselves for some time; and they might now be seen twinkling below almost as clearly and steadily as overhead. As Erica and Oddo put their little raft off from the shore, and then waited, with their oars suspended, to observe whether the tide carried them towards the islet they must reach, it seemed as if some invisible hand was pushing them forth, to shiver the bright pavement of constellations as it lay. Star after star was shivered, and its bright fragments danced in their wake; and those fragments reunited and became a star again, as the waters closed over the path of the raft, and subsided into perfect stillness.

The tide favored Erica's object. A few strokes of the oar brought the raft to the right point for landing on the islet. They stepped ashore, and towed the raft along till they came to the skiff, and then they fastened the raft with the boat-hook which had been fixed there for the skiff. This done, Oddo ran to turn over the little boat, and examine its condition; but he found he could not move it. It was frozen fast to the ground. It was scarcely possible to get a firm hold of it, it was so slippery with ice; and all pulling and pushing of the two together was in vain.

This circumstance caused a good deal of delay; and, what was worse, it obliged them to make some noise. They struck at the ice with sharp stones; but it was long before they could make any visible impression; and Erica proposed, again and again, that they should proceed on the raft. Oddo was unwilling. The skiff would go so incomparably faster that it was worth spending some time upon it; and the fears that he had had of its leaking were removed, now that he found what a sheet of ice it was covered with—ice which would not melt to admit a drop of water while they were in it. So he knocked and knocked away, wishing that the echoes would be quiet for once, and then laughing as he imagined the ghost stories that would spring up all round the fiord to-morrow, from the noise he was making.

Erica worked hard too; and one advantage of their labor was that they were well warmed before they put off again.—The boat's icy fastenings were all broken at last, and it was launched; but all was not yet ready. The skiff had lain in a direction east and west; and its north side had so much thicker a coating of ice than the other, that its balance was destroyed. It hung so low on one side as to promise to upset with a touch.

'We must clear off more of the ice,' said Erica. 'But how late it is grow[illegible]

'No more knocking, I say,' replied [illegible]do. 'There's a quieter way of trimming the boat.'

He fastened a few stones to the gunwale on the lighter side, and took a few more for the purpose of shifting the weight if necessary, while on their way.

They did not leave quiet behind them when they departed. They had roused the multitude of eider-ducks, and other sea-fowl, which thronged the islet, and which now, being roused, began their night-feeding and flying, though at an earlier hour than usual. When their discordant cries were left so far behind as to be softened by distance, the flapping of wings and swash of water, as the fowl plunged in, still made the air busy all around.

The rowers were so occupied with the management of their dangerous craft, that they had not spoken since they left the islet. The skiff would have been unmanageable by any maiden and boy in our country; but on the coast of Norway it is as natural to persons of all ages and degrees to guide a boat as to walk. Swiftly but cautiously they shot through the water, till, at length, Oddo uttered a most hideous croak.

'What do you mean?' asked Erica, hastily glancing round her.

Oddo laughed, and looked upwards as he croaked again. He was answered by a similar croak, and a large raven was seen flying homeward over the fiord for the night. Then the echoes all croaked, till the whole region seemed to be full of ravens.

'Are you sure you know the cove?' asked Erica, who wished to put an end to this sound, unwelcome to the superstitious. 'Do not make that bird croak so; it will be quiet if you let it alone.—Are you sure you can find the cove again?'

'Quite sure. I wish I was as sure that Hund would not find it again before me. Pull away.'

'How much further is it?'

'Further than I like to think of. I doubt about your arm holding out. I wish Rolf was here.'

Erica did not wish the same thing. She thought Rolf was, on the whole, safer waging war with bears than pirates; especially if Hund was among them. She pulled her oar cheerfully, observing that there was no fatigue at present; and that when they were once fairly afloat in the heavier boat, and had cleared the cove, there need be no hurry—unless, indeed they should see something of the pirate schooner on the way; and of this she had no expectation, as the booty that might be had where the fishery was beginning was worth more than anything that could be found higher up the fiord—to say nothing of the danger of running up into the country so far as that getting away again depended upon one particular wind.

Yet Erica looked behind her after every few strokes of her oar; and once, when she saw something, her start was felt like a start of the skiff itself. There was a fire glancing and gleaming and quivering over the water, some way down the fiord.

'Some people night-fishing,' observed Oddo. 'What sport they will have! I wish I was with them. How fast we go! How you can row when you choose! I can see the man that is holding the torch. And the spearman—see how he stands at the bow—now going to cast his spear! I wish I was there.'

'We must get further away—into the shadow somewhere—or wait,' observed Erica. 'I had rather not wait—it is growing so late. We might creep along under that promontory, in the shadow, if you would be quiet. I wonder whether you can be silent in the sight of night-fishing.'

'To be sure,' said Oddo, disposed to be angry, and only kept from it by the thought of last night. He helped to [illegible] overhanging rocks, and only spoke once more, to whisper that the fishing-boat was drifting down with the tide, and that he thought their cove lay between them and the fishing-party.

It was so. As the skiff rounded the point of the promontory, Oddo pointed out what appeared like a mere dark chasm in the high perpendicular wall of rock that bounded the waters. This chasm still looked so narrow on approaching it, that Erica hesitated to push her skiff into it, till certain that no one was there. Oddo, however, was so clear that she might safely do this, so noiseless was their rowing, and it was so plain that there was no footing on the rocks by which he might enter to explore, that in a sort of desperation, and seeing nothing else to be done, Erica agreed. She wished it had been summer, when either of them might have learned what they wanted by swimming. This was now out of the question; and stealthily therefore she pulled her little craft into the deepest shadow, and crept into the cove.

At a little distance from the entrance it widened; but it was a wonder to Erica that even Oddo's eyes should have seen Hund moor his boat here from the other side of the fiord; though the fiord was not more than a gunshot over in this part. Oddo himself wondered, till he recalled how the sun was shining down into the chasm at the time. By starlight, the outline of all that the cove contained might be seen; the outline of the boat, among other things. There she lay!—but there was something about her which was unpleasant enough. There were three men in her.

What was to be done now? Here was the very worst danger that Erica had feared—worse than finding the boat gone—worse than meeting it in the wide fiord. What was to be done?

There was nothing for it but to do nothing—to lie perfectly still in the shadow, ready, however, to rush out on the first movement of the boat to leave the cove; for, though the canoe might remain unnoticed at present, it was impossible that anybody could pass out of the cove without seeing her. In such a case, there would be nothing for it but a race; a race for which Erica and Oddo held themselves prepared, without any mutual explanation; for they dared not speak.—The faintest whisper would have crept over the water to the ears in the larger boat.

One thing was certain—that something must happen presently. It is impossible for the hardiest men to sit inactive in a boat, for any length of time, in a January night in Norway. In the calmest nights the cold is only to be sustained by means of the glow from strong exercise. It was certain that these three men could not have been long in their places, and that they would not sit many minutes more, without some change in their arrangements.

They did not seem to be talking; for Oddo, who was the best listener in the world, could not discover that a sound issued from their boat. He fancied they were drowsy; and, being aware what were the consequences of yielding to drowsiness in severe cold, the boy began to entertain high hopes of taking these three men prisoners. The whole country would ring with such a feat, performed by Erica and himself.

The men were, however, too much awake to be made prisoners of at present. One was seen to drink from a flask; and the hoarse voice of another was heard grumbling, as far as the listeners could make out, at being kept waiting. The third then rose to look about him; and Erica trembled from head to foot. He only looked upon the land, however, declared he saw nothing of those he was expecting, and began to warm himself as he stood, by repeatedly clapping his arms across his breast, in the way that hackney-coachmen and porters do in England. This was Hund. He could not have been known by his figure; for all persons look alike in wolfskin pelisses; but the voice and the action were his. Oddo saw how Erica shuddered.

The other two men then rose; and, after a consultation, the words of which could not be heard, all stepped ashore, and climbed a rocky pathway.

'Now, now!' whispered Erica. 'Now we can get away.'

'Not without the boat,' said Oddo.—'You would not leave them the boat!'

'No—not if—but they will be back in a moment. They are only gone to hasten their companions.'

'I know it,' said Oddo. 'Now two strokes forward!'

While she gave these two strokes, which brought the skiff to the stern of the boat, Erica saw Oddo had taken out a knife, which gleamed in the starlight.—It was for cutting the thong by which the boat was fastened to a birch pole, the other end of which was hooked on shore. This was to save his going ashore to unhook the pole. It was well for him that boat-chains were not in use, owing to the scarcity of metal in that region. The clink of a chain would certainly have been heard.

Quickly and silently he entered the boat and tied the skiff to its stern; and he and Erica took their places where the men had sat one minute before. They used their own muffled oars to turn the boat round, till Oddo observed that the boat's oars were muffled too. Then voices were heard again. Strongly did the two companions draw their strokes till a good breadth of water lay between them and the shore; and then till they had again entered the deep shadow which shrouded the mouth of the cove. There they paused.

'In with you!' some loud voice said, as man after man was seen in outline, coming down the pathway. 'In with you! We have lost time enough already.'

'Where is she? I can't see the boat,' answered the foremost man.

'You can't miss her,' said one behind, 'unless the brandy has got into your eyes.'

'So I should have said; but I do miss her. It is very incomprehensible to me.'

Oddo shook with stifled laughter as he partly saw and partly overheard the perplexity of these men. At last one gave a deep groan, and another declared that the spirits of the fiord were against them, and there was no doubt that their boat was now lying twenty fathoms deep, at the bottom of the creek; drawn down by the strong hand of an angry water-spirit. Oddo squeezed Erica's little hand as he heard this. If it had been light enough, he would have seen that even she was smiling.

One of the men mourned their having no other boat. Another said if they had a dozen boats, he would not set foot in one, after what had happened. He should go straight back, the way he came, to their own vessel. Another said he would not go till he had looked abroad over the [illegible] This he persisted in, though told by the rest that it was absurd to suppose that the boat had loosed itself, and gone out into the fiord, in the course of the two minutes that they had been absent. He showed the fragment of the cut thong, in proof of the boat not having loosed itself, and set off for a point on the heights that overlooked the fiord. One or two went with him; the rest returning up the narrow pathway at some speed—such speed that Erica thought they were afraid of the hindmost being caught by the same enemy that had taken their boat. Oddo observed this too; and quickened their pace by setting up very loud the mournful cry with which he was accustomed to call out to the plovers, on the mountain side, on sporting days. No sound can be more melancholy; and now, as it rang from the rocks, it was so unsuitable to the place, and so terrible to the already frightened men, that they ran on as fast as the slipperiness of the rocks would allow, till they were all out of sight over the ridge.

'Now for it, before the other two come out above us there!' said Oddo; and in another minute, they were again in the fiord, keeping as much in the shadow as they could, till they must strike over to the islet.

'Thank God that we came!' exclaimed Erica. 'We shall never forget what we owe you, Oddo. You shall see, by the care we take of your grandfather and Ulla, that we do not forget what you have done this night. If Nipen will only forgive, for the sake of this——'

'We were just in the nick of time,' observed Oddo. 'It was better than if we had been earlier.'

'I do not know,' said Erica. 'Here are their brandy-bottles, and many things besides. I had rather not have had to bring these away.'

'But if we had been earlier, they would not have had their fright. That is the best part of it. Depend upon it, some that have not said their prayers for a long while will say them to-night.'

'That will be good. But I do not like carrying home these things that are not ours. If they are seen at Erlingsen's, they may bring the pirates down upon us. I would leave them on the islet, but that the skiff has to be left there too; and that would explain our trick.'

Erica would not consent to throw the property overboard. That would be robbing those who had not actually injured her. She thought that if the goods were left upon some barren, uninhabited part of the shore, the pirates would probably be the first to find them; and that if not, the rumor of such an extraordinary fact, spread by the simple country people, would be sure to reach them. So Oddo carried on shore, at the first stretch of white beach they came to, the brandy flasks, the bear-skins, the tobacco-pouch, the muskets and powder-horns, and the tinder-box. He scattered these about, just above high-water mark, laughing to think how report would tell of the sprites' care in placing all these articles out of reach of injury from the water.

Oddo did not wait for light while doing this. When he returned, he found Erica gazing up over the towering precipices, at the Northern Lights. She was glad that they had not appeared sooner, to spoil their adventure; but she was thankful to have the way home thus illumined, now that the business was done. She answered with so much alacrity to Oddo's question whether she was not very weary, that he ventured to say two things which had before been upon his tongue, without his having courage to utter them.

'You will not be so afraid of Nipen any more,' said he, glancing at her face, of which he could see every feature by the quivering light. 'You see how well everything has turned out.'

'Oh hush! It is too soon to speak so. There is no knowing till next Christmas, nor even then, that Nipen forgives; and the first twenty-four hours are not over yet. Pray do not speak any more, Oddo.'

'Well, not about that. But what was it exactly that you thought Hund would do with this boat and those people?—Did you think that they would come up to Erlingsen's to rob the place?'

'Not for the object of robbing the place; but I thought, and I still think, that they would have carried off Rolf, led on by Hund——'

'O, ho! carried off Rolf! So here is the secret of your wonderful courage to-night—you who durst not look round at your own shadow last night! This is the secret of your not being tired,—you who are out of breath with rowing a mile sometimes!'

'That is in summer,' pleaded Erica.—'However, you have my secret, as you say—a thing which is no secret at home.—We all think Hund bears such a grudge against Rolf, for having got the houseman's place——'

'And for nothing else?'

'That,' continued Erica, 'he would be glad to—to—'

'To get rid of Rolf, and be houseman, and get betrothed instead of him. Well; Hund is baulked for this time. Ron must look to himself after to-day.'

Erica sighed deeply. She did not believe that Rolf would attend to his own safety; and the future looked very dark—By this time the skiff was deposited where it had been found. Both the rowers were getting very tired, and Erica's strength and spirits failed the more, the further the enemy was left behind.

A breath of wind seemed to bring a sudden darkening of the friendly lights. Both rowers looked down the fiord, and uttered an exclamation at the same time.

'See the fog!' cried Oddo, putting fresh strength into his oar.

'O Nipen! Nipen!' exclaimed Erica. 'Here it is, Oddo—the west wind!'

The west wind is, in winter, the great foe of the fishermen of the fiords; it brings in the fog from the sea; and the fogs of the Arctic Circle are no trifling enemy.

'The wind must have just changed,' said Oddo, pulling exhausting strokes, as the fog marched towards them over the water, like a solid and lofty wall. 'The wind must have gone right round in a minute.'

'To be sure—since you said what you did of Nipen,' replied Erica bitterly.

Oddo made no answer; but he did what he could. Erica had to tell him not to wear himself out too quickly, as there was no saying now how long they should be on the water.

How long they had been on the water, how far they had deviated from the right course, they could not at all tell, when, at last, more by accident than skill, they touched the shore near home, and heard friendly voices, and saw the light of torches through the thick air. The fog had wrapped them round so that they could not even see the water, or each other. They had rowed mechanically, sometimes touching the rock, sometimes grazing upon the sand, but never knowing where they were till the ringing of a bell, which they recognized as the farm bell, roused hope in their hearts, and strengthened them to throw off the fatal drowsiness caused by cold and fatigue. They made towards the bell; and then heard Peder's shouts, and next saw the dull light of two torches which looked as if they could not burn in the fog. The old man helped to pull up the boat upon the beach, and to lift out the benumbed rowers; and they were presently revived by having their limbs chafed, and by a strong dose of the universal medicine—corn-brandy and camphor—which in Norway, no one thinks of refusing upon occasion.

When Erica was in bed, warm beneath an eider-down coverlid, her mistress bent over her and whispered,

'You saw and heard Hund himself?'

'Hund himself, madame.'

'What shall we do if he comes back before Erlingsen is home from the hunt?'

'If he comes it will be in fear and in penitence, thinking that all the powers are against him. But O, madame, let him never know how it really was!'

'He must not know. Leave that to me, and go to sleep now, Erica. You ought to rest well; for there is no saying what you and Oddo have saved us from. I could not have asked such a service.—And her kind and grateful mistress kissed Erica's cheek.

Stiorna here opened her eyes for an instant. When she next did so her mistress was gone; and she told in the morning what an odd dream she had had; of her mistress being in her room, and kissing Erica. It was so distinct a dream that if the thing had not been so ridiculous, she could almost have declared that she had seen it.

CHAPTER VI.

Spring.

Great was Stiorna's consternation at Hund's non-appearance, the next day, seeing, as she did, with her own eyes, that the boat was in its proper place. She saw, too, that no one wished him back.—He was rarely spoken of; and then it was with dislike or fear; and when she wept over the idea of his being drowned, or carried off by hostile spirits, the only comfort offered her was that she need not fear his being dead, or that he could not come back if he chose. She was indeed obliged to suppose, at last, that it was his choice to keep away; for amidst the flying rumors that amused the inhabitants of the district for the rest of the winter—rumors of the movements of the pirate-vessel, and of the pranks of the spirits of the region, there were some such clear notices of the appearance of Hund—so many eyes had seen him in one place and another, by land and by water, by day and night, that Stiorna could not doubt of his being alive. She could not conceal from herself that he had joined the pirates; and heartily as these pirates were feared throughout the Nordland coast, they were not more heartily hated by any than by the jealous Stiorna.

Her salt was wanted as much as if Hund had brought home a boat full of cod. Erlingsen and Rolf came home sooner than might reasonably have been expected, and well laden with bear's flesh. The whole family of bears had been found and shot. The flesh of the cubs had been divided among the hunters; and Erlingsen was complimented with the feet of the old bear, as it was he who roused the neighbors and led the hunt. Busy was every farm-house in salting some of the meat, freezing some, and cooking a part for a feast on the occasion.

Arlingsen kept a keen and constant look-out upon the fiord, amidst all the occupations and gayeties of the rest of the winter. His wife's account of the adventures of the day of his absence made him anxious; and he never went a mile out of sight of home, so vivid in his imagination was the vision of his house burning, and his family at the mercy of the pirates. Nothing happened, however, to confirm his fears. The enemy were never heard of in the fiord; and the cod-fishers who came up, before the softening of the snow, to sell some of their produce in the interior of the country, gave such accounts as seemed to show that the fishing-grounds were the object of the foreign thieves; for foreign they were declared to be—some said Russian, and others a mixture from hostile nations.

The interval of security gave Rolf a good opportunity to ridicule and complain of Erica's fears. He laughed at the danger of an attack from Hund and his comrades, as that danger was averted. He laughed at the west wind and fog sent by Nipen's wrath, as Erica had reached home in spite of it. He contended that, so far from Nipen being offended, there was either no Nipen, or it was not angry, or it was powerless; for everything had gone well; and he always ended by pointing to the deer—a good thing led to the very door—and to the result of the bear hunt—a great event always in Nordland, and in this instance one of most fortunate issue. There was no saying how many of the farm-yard would live and flourish this summer, on account of the timely destruction of this family of bears. So Rolf worked away, with a cheerful heart, as the days grew longer—now mending the boat, now ploughing, now fishing, and then rolling logs into the melting streams, to be carried down into the river, or into the fiord, when the rush of waters should come from the heights of Sulitelma.

Hard as Rolf worked, he did not toil like Oddo. Between them, they had to supply Hund's place—to do his work.—Nobody desired to see Hund back again; and Erlingsen would willingly have taken another in his stead, to make his return impossible; but there was no one to be had. It was Oddo's desire that the place should remain vacant till he could show that he, young as he was, was worth as much as Hund. If any one was hired, he wished that it might be a herd-boy, under him; and strenuously did he [illegible] this spring to show that he was beyond a mere herd-boy's place. It was he who first fattened, and then killed and skinned the deer. It was he who watched the making of the first eider-duck's nest, and brought home the first down. All the month of April he never failed in the double work of the farm-yard and the islet. He tended the cattle in the morning, and turned out the goats when the first patch of green appeared from beneath the snow. Then he watched for the eggs; and never had Madame Erlingsen had such a quantity brought home. Then he was ready to bring home the goats again long before sunset, and to take his turn at mending any fence that might have been injured by the spring floods; and then he never forgot to wash and dress himself, and go in for his grandmother's blessing. If the young ladies were disposed to dance, he was never too tired to play the clarionet; though it now and then happened that the tune went rather oddly; and when Orga and Frolich looked at him to see what he was about, his eyes were shut, and his fingers looked as if they were moving of their own accord.—If this happened, the young ladies would finish their dance at once, and thank him, and his mistress would wish him good night; and when he was gone, his master would tell old Peder that that grandson of his was a promising lad, and very diligent; and Peder would make a low bow, and say it was greatly owing to Rolf's good example; and then Erica would blush, and be kinder than ever to Oddo the next day.

So came on and passed away the spring of this year at Erlingsen's farm. It soon passed; for spring in Nordland lasts only a month. In that short time had the snow first become soft, and then dingy, and then vanished, except on the heights and in places where it had drifted. The streams had broken their long silence, and now leaped and rushed along, till every rock overhanging both sides of the fiord was musical with falling waters, and glittering with silver threads. Every mill was going, after the long idleness of winter; and about the bridges which spanned the falls were little groups of peasants gathered, mending such as had burst with the floods, or strengthening such as did not seem secure enough for the passage of the herds to the mountain.

Busy as the maidens were with the cows, and with the care of the young kids, they found leisure to pry into the promise of the spring. In certain warm nooks, where the sunshine was reflected from the surrounding rocks, they daily watched for what else might appear, when once the grass had shown itself from beneath the snow. There they found the strawberry, and the wild raspberry, promising to carpet the ground with their white blossoms; while in the corner the lily of the valley began to push up its pair of leaves; and from the crevices of the rock, the barberry and the dwarf birch grew, every twig showing swelling buds, or an early sprout.

While these cheerful pursuits went on out of doors during the one month of spring, a slight shade of sadness was thrown over the household within by the decline of Ulla.

'The winter and I are going together, my dear,' said she one day, when Erica placed on her pillow a green shoot of birch which she had taken out of the very mouth of a goat. 'The hoary winter and I have lived out our time, and we are departing together. I shall make way for you young people, and give you your turn, as he is giving way to spring; and let nobody pretend to be sorry for it.—Who pretends to be sorry when winter is gone?'

'But winter will come again so soon and so certainly, Ulla,' said Erica, mournfully; 'and when it is come again, we shall still miss you.'

'Well, my dear, I will say nothing against that. It is good for the living to miss the dead, as long as they do not wish them back. As for me, Erica, I feel as if I would not but miss you, go where I may.'

'O, do not say that, Ulla.'

'Why not say it if I feel it? Who could be displeased with me for grasping still at the hand that has smoothed my [illegible] place that will be good, no doubt, but where everything must be strange at first? He who gave you to me to be my nurse, will not think the worse of me for missing you, wherever I may be.'

'There will be little Henrica,' observed Erica.

'Ah, yes! there is nothing I think of more than that. That dear child died on my shoulder. Fain would her mother have had her in her arms at the last; but she was in such extremity that to move her would have been to end all at once; and so she died away, with her head on my shoulder. I thought then it was a sign that I should be the first to meet her again. But I shall take care and not stand in the way of her mother's rights.'

Here Ulla grew so earnest in imagining her meeting with Henrica, still fancying her the dependent little creature she [illegible] to be gone. Erica's idea was that this child might now have become so wise and mighty in the wisdom of a better world, as to be no such plaything as Ulla supposed; but she said nothing to spoil the old woman's pleasure.

When Peder came in to sit by his old companion's bed, and sing her to sleep, she told him that she hoped to be by when he opened his now darkened eyes upon the sweet light of a heavenly day; and, if she might, she would meantime make up his dreams for him, and make him believe that he saw the most glorious sights of old Norway—more glorious than are to be seen in any other part of this lower world. There should be no end to the gleaming lakes, and dim forests, and bright green valleys, and silvery waterfalls that he should see in his dreams, if she might be allowed to make them. There was no end to the delightful things Ulla looked to be able to do for those she left behind, when once she should have quitted her present helpless state; and she thought so much of these things, that when M. Kollsen arrived, he found that instead of her needing to be reconciled to death, she was impatient to be gone. The first thing he heard her say, when all was so dim before her eyes, and so confused to her failing ears, that she did not know the pastor had arrived, was that she was less uneasy about Nipen's displeasure against the young people. Perhaps she might be able to explain and prevent mischief; and if not, the young people's marriage would soon be taking place now, and then they might show such attention to Nipen as would make the spirit forgive and forget.

'Hush, now, dear Ulla!' said Erica.—'Here is the pastor.'

'Do not say "hush!"' said M. Kollsen, sternly. 'Whatever is said of this kind I ought to hear, that I may meet the delusion. I must have conversation with this poor woman, to prevent her very last breath being poisoned with superstition. You are a member of the Lutheran church, Ulla?'

With humble pleasure, Ulla told of the satisfaction which the bishop of Tronyem of seventy years ago, had expressed at her confirmation. It was this which obtained her a good place, and Peder's regard, and all the good that had happened in her long life since. Yes; she was indeed a member of the Lutheran church, she thanked God.

'And in what part of the Scriptures of our church do you find mention of—of—I hate the very names of these pretended spirits. Where in the Scriptures are you bidden or permitted to believe in spirits and demons of the wood and the mountain?'

Ulla declared that her learning in the Scriptures was but small. She knew only what she had been taught, and a little that she had picked up; but she remembered that the former bishop of Tronyem himself had hung up an axe in the forest, on Midsummer-eve, for the wood-demon's use if it pleased.

Peder observed, that we all believe so many things that are not found mentioned in the Scriptures, that perhaps it would be wisest and kindest, by a dying bed, where moments were precious, to speak of those high things which the Scriptures discourse of, and which all Christians believe.

Rolf had continued his kind offices to the old couple, with the utmost respect and propriety, to the end, refusing to go out of call during the last few days of Ulla's decline; but he had observed, some anxiety, that there was certai[illegible] shoal of herring in the fiord, and [illegible] was high time he was making use [illegible] sunny days, for his fishing. In or[illegible] go about this duty without any [illegible] when again at liberty, he had br[illegible] the skiff up to the beach for repai[illegible] had it nearly ready for use by the [illegible] the funeral. The family boat [illegible] large for his occasions, now that [illegible] was not here to take an oar; and [illegible] pected to do great things alone in [illegible] tle manageable skiff.

When he had assisted Peder to [illegible] la's head in the grave, and guided [illegible] back to the house, Rolf drew Erica['s] within his own, and led her away [illegible] for a walk. No one interfered with the[m] for the family knew that their hearts [illegible] be very full, and that they must [illegible] much to say to each other, now that [illegible] event had happened which was to c[illegible] their marriage very soon. They wo[illegible] now wait no longer than to pay pr[illegible] respect to Ulla's memory, and to impr[illegible] the house and its furniture a little, [illegible] to make it fit for the bride.

Rolf would have led Erica to the be[illegible] but she begged to go first to see the gr[illegible] again, while they knew that no one [illegible] there. The grave was dug close by the little mound beneath which Henrica lay. Henrica's was railed round, with a paling which had been fresh painted—a task which Erlingsen performed with his own hands every spring. The forget-me-not, which the Nordlanders plant upon the graves of those they love, overran the hillock, and the white blossoms of the wild [illegible] thick grass; so that this grave looked perfect contrast to that of Ulla, new made and bare. The lovers looked [illegible] this last with dissatisfaction.

'It shall be completely railed in before to-morrow night,' said Rolf.

'But cannot we dress it a little now? I could transplant some flower-roots presently, and some forget-me-not from Henrica's hillock, if we had sods for the rest. Never mind spoiling any other nook. The grass will soon grow again.'

Rolf's spade was busy presently; and Erica planted and watered till the new grave, if it did not compare with the child's, showed tokens of care, and promise of beauty.

'Now,' said Rolf, when they had done, and put away their tools, and sat down on the pine log from which the pales were to be made, so that their lengthening shadows fell across the new grave, [illegible] Erica, you know what she who [illegible] would like us to be settling [illegible] self said her burial-day would so[illegible] and then would come our wed[illegible]

'When everything is rea[illegible] Erica, 'we will fix; but no[illegible] is much to be done;—there [illegible] certainties.'

'Uncertainties! What [illegible] I know of none—except in [illegible]

Rolf stopped to peel [illegible] pieces some of the bark of [illegible] on which he was sitting. [illegible] wistfully at him; he saw [illegible]

'It is often an uncertai[illegible] after all that has happe[illegible] mean to marry me at [illegible] many doubts, and so m[illegible] and so many fears! [illegible] shall never be any ne[illegible] than we are.'

'That is your sort [illegible] doubt and fear,' said Erica, smiling. [illegible] Who is there [illegible]

'I do not want any rallying or jo[illegible] Erica. I am quite serious.'

'Seriously, then—are we not [illegible] than we were a year ago? We are betrothed; and I have shown you that I [illegible] believe we are to be married, if——'

'Ay, there. "If" again?'

'If it shall please the Powers above not to separate us, by death or otherwise.'

'Death! at our age! And separa[illegible] when we have lived on the same farm [illegible] years! What have we to do with d[illegible] and separation?'

Erica pointed to the child's grave, [illegible] rebuke of his rash words. She then qu[illegible] etly observed that they had enemies—o[illegible] deadly enemy not very far off, if nothing were to be said of any but human foes.—Rolf declared that he had rather h[illegible] Hund for a declared enemy than for a companion. Erica understood this very well; but she could not forget that Hund wanted to be houseman in Rolf's stead, and that he d[illegible] prevent their m[illegible] riage.

[illegible] Because it would [illegible] tings. There will be no difficulty [illegible] ing for the pastor [illegible] ready. But now, Rolf [illegible] well, do promise not to run into [illegible] danger.'

'According to you [illegible] one can never get out of danger [illegible] is the use of taking care, if all [illegible] of earth and air are against [illegible] think me as helpless, under Nipen [illegible] as the poor infant that [illegible] fiord the other day in a [illegible]

'I am not speaking of Nipen [illegible] (not because I do not think [illegible] speaking of Hund. Do promise [illegible] to go more than four miles [illegible] ord. After that, there is [illegible] of precipices, without a single [illegible] There is not a boat [illegible] there is not an eye [illegible] bear witness what had become of [illegible] you and Hund should [illegible]

'If Hund and I should [illegible] would bring him home [illegible] should become of him [illegible]

'And all the pirate [illegible] them all in your [illegible] home with your left [illegible] to be such a boaster [illegible] to go beyond the [illegible]

'Indeed, I can on[illegible] the shoal is. Four [illegible] say four furlongs [illegible] I will engage [illegible] in four furlongs.'