THE SUSQUEHANNA REGISTER.

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

VOLUME 28---NUMBER 14. MONTROSE, PA., THURSDAY MORNING, APRIL 7, 1853. WHOLE NUMBER, 1469.

A Tale of Norway.

FEATS ON THE FIORD.

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CHAPTER XI.

The day after Erica's departure to the dairy, Peder was sitting alone in his house, weaving a frail-basket. Sometimes he sighed to think how empty and silent the house appeared to what he had ever known it before. Ulla's wheel stood in the corner, and was now never to be heard, any more than her feeble, aged voice, which had sung ballads to the last. Erica's light, active step was gone for the present; and would it ever again be as light and active as it had been? Rolf's hearty laugh was silent; perhaps forever. Oddo was an inmate still, but Oddo was much altered of late; and who could wonder? Though the boy was strangely unbelieving about some things, he could not but feel how wonders and misfortunes had crowded upon one another since the night of his defiance of Nipen.

From the hour of Hund's return, the boy had hardly been heard to speak. All these thoughts were too melancholy for old Peder; and to break the silence, he began to sing as he wove his basket.

He had nearly got through a ballad of a hundred and five stanzas, when he heard a footstep on the floor.

"Oddo, my boy," said he, "surely you are in early. Can it be dinner-time yet?"

"No, not this hour," replied Oddo, in a low voice, which sank to a whisper as he said, "I have left Hund laying the troughs to water the meadow; and if he misses me I don't care. I could not stay; I could not help coming; and if he kills me for telling you, he may; for tell you I must."

And Oddo went to close and fasten the door; and then he sat down on the ground, rested his arms on his grandfather's knees and told his story in such a low tone that no "little bird" under the eaves "could carry the matter."

"O grandfather, what a mind that fellow has. He will go crazy with horror soon. I am not sure that he is not crazy now."

"He has murdered Rolf, has he!"

"I can't be sure; but the oddest thing is that he mixes up wolves with his rambling talk. Rolf can hardly have met with mischief from any wolf at this season."

"No, boy; not Rolf. But did not Hund speak of orphan children, and how wolves have been known to devour them when snow was on the ground?"

"Why, yes," said Oddo, surprised at such a guess.

"There was a reason for Hund's talking so of wolves, my dear. Tell me quick what he said of Rolf; and what made him say anything to you—to an inquisitive boy like you."

"He is like one bewitched that cannot hold his tongue. While I was bringing the troughs, one by one, for him to lay where the meadow was driest, he still kept muttering and muttering to himself. As often as I came within six yards of him, I heard him mutter, mutter. Then, when I helped him to lay the troughs, he began to talk to me. I was not in the mind to make him many answers; but on he went just the same as if I had asked him a hundred questions."

"It was such an opportunity for a curious boy, that I wonder you did not."

"Perhaps I might, if he had stopped long enough. But if he stopped a moment to wipe his brows, (for he was all trembling with the heat,) he began again before I could well speak. He asked me whether I had ever heard that drowned men could show their heads above the water and stare with their eyes, and throw their arms about, a whole day—two days, after they were drowned."

'Ay! indeed. Did he ask that?'

'Yes, and several other things. He asked whether I had ever heard that the islets in the fiord were so many prison houses.'

'And what did you say?'

'I wanted him to explain; so I said they were prison-houses to the eider-ducks when they were sitting, for they never stir a yard from their nest. But he did not hear a word I spoke. He went on about drowned men being kept prisoners in the islets, moaning because they can't get out. And he says they will knock, knock, as if they could cleave the thick hard rock.'

'What do you think of all this, my boy?'

'Why, when I said I had not heard a word of any such thing, even from my grandmother or Erica, he declared he had heard the moans himself—moaning and crying; but then he mixed up something about the barking of wolves that made confusion in the story. Though he had been hot just before, there he stood shivering, as if it was winter, as he stood in the broiling sun. Then I asked him if he had seen dead men swim and stare, as he said he had heard them moan and cry?'

'And what did he say then?'

'He started bolt upright, as if I had been picking his pocket. He was in a passion for a minute, I know, if ever he was in his life. Then he tried to laugh as he said what a lot of new stories—stories of spirits, such stories as people love—he should have to carry home to the north, whenever he went back to his own place.'

'In the north—his own place in the north! He wanted to mislead you there, boy. Hund was born some way to the south.'

'No, was he really? how is one to believe a word he says, except when he speaks as if he was in his sleep—straight out from his conscience, I suppose! He began to talk about the bishop next, wanting to know when I thought he would come, and whether he was apt to hold private talk with every sort of person at the houses he stayed at.'

'How did you answer him? You know nothing about the bishop's visits.'

'So I told him; but, to try him, I said I knew one thing—that a quantity of fresh fish would be wanted when the bishop comes with his train; and I asked him whether he would go fishing with me as soon as we should hear that the bishop was drawing near.'

'He would not agree to that, I fancy.'

'He asked how far out I thought of going. Of course, I said to Vogel islet—at least as far as Vogel islet. Do you know, grandfather, I thought he would have knocked me down at the word? He muttered something, I could not hear what, to get off. By that time we were laying the last trough. I asked him to go for some more; and the minute he was out of sight I scampered here. Now, what sort of a mind do you think this fellow has?'

'Not an easy one, it is plain. It is too clear also that he thinks Rolf is drowned.'

'But do you think so, grandfather?'

'Do you think so grandson?'

'Not a bit of it. Depend upon it, Rolf is all alive, if he is swimming and staring, and throwing his arms about in the water. I think I see him now. And I will see him, if he is to be seen alive or dead.'

'And pray, how?'

'I ought to have said if you will help me. You say sometimes, grandfather, that you can pull a good stroke with the oar still; and I can steer as well as our master himself; and the fiord never was stiller than it is to-day. Think what it would be to bring home Rolf, or some good news of him! We would have a race up to the seater afterwards to see who could be the first to Erica.'

'Gently, gently, boy! What is Rolf about not to come home, if he is alive?'

'That we shall learn from him. Did you hear that he told Erica he should go as far as Vogel islet, dropping something about being safe there from pirates and everything?'

Peder really thought there was something in this. He sent off Oddo to his work in the little meadow, and himself sought out Madame Erlingsen, who, having less belief in spirits and enchantments than Peder, was in proportion more struck with the necessity of seeing whether there was any meaning in Hund's revelations, lest Rolf should be perishing for want of help. The story of his disappearance had spread through the whole region; and there was not a fisherman on the fiord who had not, by this time, given an opinion as to how he was drowned. But madame was well aware that, if he were only wrecked, there was no sign that he could make that would not terrify the superstitious minds of the neighbors, and make them keep aloof, instead of helping him. In addition to all this, it was doubtful whether his signals would be seen by anybody, at a season when every one who could be spared was gone up to the dairies.

As soon as Hund was gone out after dinner, the old man and his grandson put off in the boat, carrying a note from Madame Erlingsen to her neighbors along the fiord, requesting the assistance of one or two rowers on an occasion which might prove one of life or death. The neighbors were obliging. The Holbergs sent a stout farm-servant with directions to call at a cousin's, lower down, for a boatman; so that the boat was soon in fast career down the fiord—Oddo full of expectation, and of pride, in commanding such an expedition; and Peder being relieved from all necessity of rowing more than he liked.

Oddo had found occasionally the truth of a common proverb:—he had easily brought his master's horses to the water, but could not make them drink. He now found that he had easily got rowers into the boat, but that it was impossible to make them row beyond a certain point. He had used as much discretion as Peder himself about not revealing the precise place of their destination; and when vogel islet came in sight, the two helpers at once gave him hints to steer so as to keep as near the shore, and as far from the island, as possible. Oddo gravely steered for the island, notwithstanding. When the men saw that this was his resolution, they shipped their oars, and refused to strike another stroke, unless one of them might steer. That island had a bad reputation; it was bewitched or haunted; and in that direction the men would not go. They were willing to do all they could to oblige; they would row twenty miles without resting, with pleasure; but they would not brave Nipen, nor any other demon, for any consideration.

'How far off is it Oddo?' asked Peder.

'Two miles, grandfather. Can you and I manage it by ourselves, think you?'

'Ay, surely; if we can land these friends of ours. They will wait ashore till we call for them again.'

'I will leave you my supper, if you will wait for us here, on this head-land,' said Oddo to the men.

The men could make no other objection than that they were certain the boat would never return. They were very civil—would not accept Oddo's supper on any account—would remain on the watch—wished their friends would be persuaded; and, when they found all persuasion in vain, declared they would bear testimony to Erica, and, as long as they should live, to the bravery of the old man and boy who thus threw away their lives in search of a comrade who had fallen a victim to Nipen.

Amidst these friendly words, the old man and his grandson put off once more alone, making straight for the islet. Of the two Peder was the greater hero, for he saw the most ground for fear.

'Promise me, Oddo said he, not to take advantage of my not seeing. As sure as you observe anything strange, tell me exactly what you see.'

'I will, grandfather. There is nothing yet but what is so beautiful that I could not, for the life of me, find out anything to be afraid of. The water is as green as our best pasture, as it washes up against the grey rock. And that grey rock is all crested and tufted with green again, wherever a bush can spring. It is all alive with sea-birds, as white as snow, as they wheel above it in the the sun.'

'Tis the very place,' said Peder, putting new strength into his old arm. Oddo rowed stoutly too for some way; and then he stopped to ask on what side the remains of a birch ladder used to hang down as Peder had often told him.

'On the north side; but there is no use in looking for that, my boy. That birch ladder must have rotted away, with frost and wet, long and long ago.'

'It is likely,' said Oddo; 'but thinking that some man must have put it there, I should like to see whether it really is impossible for one with a strong hand and light foot to mount this wall. I brought our longest boat-hook, on purpose to try. Where a ladder hung before, a foot must have climbed; and if I mount, Rolf may have mounted before me.'

It chilled Peder's heart to remember the aspect of the precipice which his boy talked of climbing; but he said nothing, feeling that it would be in vain. This forbearance touched Oddo's feelings.

'I will run into no folly, trust me,' said he. 'I do not forget that you depend on me for getting home; and that the truth about Nipen and such things, depends, for an age to come, on our being seen at home again safe. But I have a pretty clear notion that Rolf is somewhere on the top there.'

'Suppose you call him, then.'

Oddo had much rather catch him. He pictured to himself the pride and pleasure of mastering the ascent; the delight of surprising Rolf asleep in his solitude, and the fun of standing over him to waken him, and witness his surprise. He could not give up the attempt to scale the rock; but he would do it very cautiously.

Slowly and watchfully they passed round the islet, Oddo seeking with his eye any ledge of the rock on which he might mount. Pulling off his shoes, that his bare feet might have the better hold, and stripping off almost all his clothes, for lightness in climbing and perhaps swimming, he clambered up to more than one promising spot, and then, finding that further progress was impossible, had to come down again. At last, seeing a narrow chasm filled with leafy shrubs, he determined to try how high he could reach by means of these. He swung himself up by means of a bush which grew downwards, having its roots firmly fixed in a crevice of the rock. This gave him hold of another, which brought him in reach of a third; so that, making his way like a squirrel or a monkey, he found himself hanging at such a height, that it seemed easier to go on than to turn back. For some time after leaving his grandfather, he had spoken to him, as an assurance of his safety. When too far off to speak, he had sung aloud, to save the old man from fears; and now that he did not feel at all sure whether he should ever get up or down, he began to whistle cheerily.—He was pleased to hear it answered from the boat. The thought of the old man sitting there alone, and his return wholly depending upon the safety of his companion, animated Oddo afresh to find a way up the rock. It looked to him as like a wall as any other rock about the islet. There was no footing where he was looking;—that was certain. So he advanced further into the chasm, where the rocks so nearly met that a giant's arm might have touched the opposite wall.—Here there was promise of release from his dangerous situation. At the end of a ledge, he saw something like poles hanging on the rock—some work of human hands certainly. Having scrambled towards them, he found the remains of a ladder, made of birch poles, fastened together with thongs of leather. This ladder had once, no doubt hung from top to bottom of a chasm; and its lower part, now gone, was that ladder of which Peder had often spoken as a proof that men had been on the island.

With a careful hand, Oddo pulled at the ladder; and it did not give way.—He tugged harder, and still it only shook. He must try it; there was nothing else to be done. It was well for him now that he was used to dangerous climbing—that he had had adventures on the slippery, cracked glaciers of Sulitelma, and that being on a height, with precipices below, was no new situation to him. He climbed, trusting as little as possible to the ladder, setting his foot in preference on any projection of the rock, or any root of the smallest shrub. More than one pole cracked; more than one fastening gave way, when he had barely time to shift his weight upon a better support.—He heard his grandfather's voice calling, and he could not answer. It disturbed him, now that his joints were strained, his limbs trembling, and his mouth parched so that his breath rattled as it came.

He reached the top, however. He sprang from the edge of the precipice, unable to look down, threw himself on his face, and panted and trembled, as if he had never before climbed anything less safe than a staircase. Never before, indeed, had he done anything like this.—The feat was performed—the islet was not to him inaccessible. This thought gave him strength. He sprang to his feet again, and whistled, loud and shrill. He could imagine the comfort this must be to Peder; and he whistled more and more merrily till he found himself rested enough to proceed on his search for Rolf. He went briskly on his way, not troubling himself with any thoughts of how he was to get down again.

Never had he seen a place so full of water birds and their nests. Their nests strewed all the ground; and they themselves were strutting and waddling, fluttering and vociferating, in every direction. They were perfectly tame, knowing nothing of men, and having had no experience of disturbance. The ducks that were leading their broods allowed Oddo to stroke their feathers; and the drakes looked on without taking any offence.

'If Rolf is here,' thought Oddo, 'he has been living on most amicable terms with his neighbors.'

After an anxious thought or two of Nipen—after a glance or two around the sky and shores for a sign of wind—Oddo began in earnest his quest of Rolf. He called his name—gently—then louder.

There was some kind of answer. Some sound of human voice he heard, he was certain; but so muffled, so dull, that whence it came he could not tell. It might even be his grandfather, calling from below. So he crossed to quite the verge of the little island, wishing with all his heart that the birds would be quiet, and cease their civility of all answering when he spoke. When quite out of hearing of Peder, Oddo called again, with scarcely a hope of any result, so plain was it to his eyes that no one resided on the island. On its small summit there was really no intermission of birds' nests;—no space where any one had lain down;—no sign of habitation—no vestige of food, dress or utensils. With a saddened heart, therefore, Oddo called again; and again he was sure there was an answer; though whence and what he could not make out.

He then sang a part of a chant that he had learned by Rolf singing it as he sat carving his share of the new pulpit. He stopped in the middle, and presently believed that he heard the air continued, though the voice seemed so indistinct, and the music so much as if it came from underground, that Oddo began to recall, with some doubt and fear, the stories of the enchantment of the place. It was not long before he heard a cry from the water below. Looking over the precipice he saw what made him draw back in terror; he saw the very thing Hund had described—the swimming and staring head of Rolf, and the arms thrown up in the air. Not having Hund's conscience, however, and having much more curiosity, he looked again; and then a third time.

'Are you Rolf, really?' asked he at last.

'Yes; but who are you—Oddo or the demon—up there where nobody can climb? Who are you?'

'I will show you. We will find each other out,' thought Oddo, with a determination to take the leap, and ascertain the truth.

He leaped, and struck the water at a sufficient distance from Rolf. When he came up again, they approached each other, staring, and each with some doubt as to whether the other was human or a demon.

'Are you really alive, Rolf?' said the one.

'To be sure I am Oddo,' said the other; 'but what demon carried you to the top of that rock that no man ever climbed?'

Oddo looked mysterious, suddenly resolving to keep his secret for the present.

'Not that way,' said Rolf. 'I have not the strength I had, and I can't swim round the place now. I was just resting myself when I heard you call, and came out to see. Follow me home.'

He turned and began to swim homewards. Oddo had the strongest inclination to go with him, to see what would be revealed; but there were two objections. His grandfather must be growing anxious; and he was not perfectly sure yet whether his guide might not be Nipen in Rolf's likeness, about to lead him to some hidden prison.

'Give me your hand, Rolf,' said the boy, bravely.

It was a real, substantial, warm, hand.

'I don't wonder you doubt,' said Rolf, 'I can't look much like myself—unshaven, and shrunk, and haggard as my face must be.'

Oddo was now quite satisfied; and he told of the boat and his grandfather.—The boat was scarcely further off than the cave; and poor Rolf was almost in extremity for drink. The water and brandy he brought with him had been finished nearly two days and he was suffering extremely from thirst. He thought he could reach the boat, and Oddo led the way, bidding him not mind his being without clothes till they could find him some.

Glad was the old man to hear his boy's call from the water; and his face lighted up with wonder and pleasure when he heard that Rolf was not far behind. He lent a hand to help him into the boat, and asked no questions till he had given him food and drink. He reproached himself for having brought neither camphor or assafœtida, to administer with the corn-brandy. Here was the brandy however; and some water, and fish, and bread, and cloud berries. Great was the amazement of Peder and Oddo at Rolf's pushing aside the brandy, and seizing the water. When he had drained the last drop, he even preferred the cloud berries to the brandy. A transient doubt then occurred, whether this was Rolf, after all.—Rolf saw it in their faces, and laughed; and when they had heard his story of what he had suffered from thirst, they were quite satisfied, and wondered no longer.

He was all impatience to be gone. It tried him more now to think how long it would be before Erica could hear of his preservation than to bear all that had gone before. Being without clothes however, it was necessary to visit the cave, and bring away what was there. In truth Oddo was not sorry for this. His curiosity was so great that he felt it impossible to go home without seeing it; and the advantage of holding the secret knowledge of such a place was one which he would not give up. He seized an oar, gave another to Rolf; and they were presently off the mouth of the cave. Peder sighed at their having to leave him again; but he believed what Rolf said of there being no danger, and of their remaining close at hand. One or the other came popping up beside the boat, every minute, with clothes, or net, or line, or brandy-flask, and finally with the oars of the poor broken skiff; being obliged to leave the skiff itself behind. Rolf did not forget to bring away whole handfuls of beautiful shells, which he had amused himself with collecting for Erica.

At last they entered the boat again; and while they were dressing, Oddo charmed his grandfather with a description of the cave—of the dark, sounding walls, the lofty roof, and the green tide breaking on the white sands. It almost made the listener cool to hear of these things; but, as Oddo had remarked, the heat had abated. It was near midnight, and the sun was going to set. Their row to the shore would be in the cool twilight; and then they should take in companions, who, fresh from rest, would save them the trouble of rowing home.

When all were too tired to talk, and the oars were dipping somewhat lazily, and the breeze had died away, and the sea-birds were quiet, old Peder who appeared to his companions to be asleep, raised his head, and said,

'I heard a sob! Are you crying Oddo?'

'Yes, grandfather.'

'What is your grief, my boy?'

'No grief—anything but grief now.—I have felt more grief than you know of though, or anybody. I did not know it fully myself till now.'

'Right, my boy; and right to say it out too.'

'I don't care now who knows how miserable I have been. I did not believe all the time, that Nipen had anything to do with these misfortunes——'

'Right, Oddo!' exclaimed Rolf, now.

'But I was not quite certain; and how could I say a word against it when I was the one to provoke Nipen? Now Rolf is safe, and Erica will be happy again, and I shall not feel as if everybody's eyes were upon me, and know that it is only out of kindness that they do reproach me as having done all the mischief. I shall hold up my head again now—as some may think I have done all along; but I did not in my own eyes—no, not in my own eyes for all these weary days that are gone.'

'Well they are gone now,' said Rolf. 'Let them go by and be forgotten.'

'Nay—not forgotten,' said Peder.—'How is my boy to learn if he forgets—'

'Don't fear that for me, grandfather,' said Oddo, as the tears still streamed down his face. 'No fear of that. I shall not forget these last days;—no, not as long as I live.

CHAPTER XII.

Plot and Counterplot.

The comrades who were waiting and watching on the point were duly amazed to see three heads in the boat, on her return; and duly delighted to find that the third was Rolf—alive, and no ghost.—They asked question upon question, and Rolf answered some fully and truly, while he showed reserve upon others; and at last when closely pressed, he declared himself too much exhausted to talk, and begged permission to lie down in the bottom of the boat and sleep. Upon this a long silence ensued. It lasted till the farmhouse was in sight at which one of the rowers was to be landed. Oddo then exclaimed,

'I wonder what we have all been thinking about. We have not settled a single thing about what is to be said and done; and here we are almost in sight of home and Hund's cunning eyes.'

'I have settled all about it,' replied Rolf, raising himself up from the bottom of the boat, where they all thought he had been sleeping soundly. 'My mind,' said he, 'is quite clear. The first thing that I have decided upon is that I may rely on the honor of our friends here.—You have proved your kindness, friends, in coming on this expedition, but for which I should have died in my hole, like a superannuated bear in its den. This is a story that the whole country will hear of; and our grandchildren will tell it, on winter nights, when there is talk of the war that brought the pirates on our coasts. Your names will go abroad with the story, comrades, and, on one condition, with high honor; and that condition is, that you say not a word beyond the family you live in for the next few days, of the adventure of this night, or of your having seen me. More depends on this than you know of now; more than I will tell, this day, to any person save my master. My good old friend there will help me to a meeting with my master, without asking a question as to what I have to say to him. Will you not, Peder?'

'Surely. I have no doubt you are right,' replied Peder.

The neighbors were rather sorry but they could not object. They smiled at Oddo, and nodded encouragement, when he implored Rolf to fix a time when everything might be known, and to answer just this and just that little inquiry.

'Oddo,' said his grandfather, 'be a man among us men. Show that your honor is more to you than your curiosity.'

'Thank you, grandfather, I will. I will ask only one more question; and that Rolf will thank me for. Had we not better fix some place far away from Hund's eyes and thoughts, for my master and Rolf to have their talk; and then I will guide my master——'

'Guide your master,' cried Rolf, laughing, when your master knew every rock and every track in the country years enough before you were born!'

'You did not let me finish,' said Oddo. 'You may want a messenger, he or you; and I know every track in the country; and there is no one swifter of foot or that can keep counsel better.'

'That is true, Rolf,' said Peder. 'If the boy is too curious to know everything, it is not for the sake of telling it again.—If you should happen to want a messenger, it may be worth attending to what he says.'

'I have no objection to add that to my plan, if Erlingsen pleases,' said Rolf. 'I must see Erlingsen; but there is neither person I must make haste to see—that I would fly to, if I could. What I wish is, that my master would meet me on the road to where she is; supposing Hund is to remain at home.'

He was told that there was no fear of Hund's roving while the Bishop was daily expected. Rolf having been out of the way, the whole story of the journey of the Bishop of Tronyem had to be told him.—It made him thoughtful; and he dropped a word or two of satisfaction, as if it had thrown new light upon what he was thinking of.

'All this,' said he, 'only makes me wish the more to see Erlingsen immediately. I should say the best way will be for you to set me ashore some way short of home, and ask Erlingsen to meet me at the Black Tarn. There cannot be a quieter place; and I shall be so far on my way to the seater.'

'If you will just make a looking glass of the Black Tarn,' said Oddo, 'you will see that you have no business to carry such a face as yours to the seater. Erica will die of terror at you for the mountain-demon, before you can persuade her it is only you.'

'I was thinking,' said one of the rowers, who relished the idea of going down to posterity in a wonderful story—'I was just thinking that your wisest way will be to take a rest in my bed at Holberg's, without anybody knowing, and shave yourself with my razor, and dress yourself in my Sunday clothes, and to show yourself to your betrothed in such a trim as that she will be glad to see you.'

'Do so, Rolf,' urged Peder. Everybody said 'do so,' and agreed that Erica would suffer far less by remaining five or six hours longer in her present state of mind, than by seeing her lover look like a ghastly savage, or perhaps hearing that he was lying by the roadside, dying of his exertions to reach her. Rolf tried to laugh at all this; but he could not contradict it. He would not hear a word of a messenger being sent. He declared that it would only torment her, as she would not believe in his return till she saw him; and he dropped something about everybody being so wanted at home that nobody ought to stray.

All took place as it was settled in the boat. Before the people on Holberg's farm had come in to breakfast, Rolf was snug in bed, with a large pitcher of whey by the bedside, to quench his still insatiable thirst. No one but the Holbergs knew of his being there; and he got away unseen in the afternoon, rested, shaven, and dressed, so as to look more like himself, though still haggard. Packing his old clothes into a bundle, which he carried with a stick over his shoulder, and laden with nothing else but a few rye-cakes and a flask of the everlasting corn-brandy, he set forth, thanking his hosts very heartily for their care, and somewhat mysteriously assuring them that they would hear something soon, and that in the meantime they had better not be caught far from home.

As he expected, he met no one whom he knew. Nine tenths of the neighbors were far away on the seaters; and of the small remainder, almost all were attending the Bishop on the opposite shore of the lake. Rolf shook his head at every deserted farm house that he passed, thinking how the pirates might ransack the dwellings if they should happen to discover that few inhabitants remained in them but those whose limbs were too old to climb the mountain. He shook his head again when he thought what consternation he might spread through these dwellings by dropping at the doors the news of how near the pirate schooner lay.

Leaving the last of the farm-houses behind, he ascended the ravine, and came out upon the expanse of rich herbage which Erica had trodden a few days before. He thought, as she had done, of his own description of their journeying together to the seater, and of the delight with which she would leap from the cart to walk with him, on the first sight of the waving grass on the upland. His heart beat joyously at the thought, instead of mourning like hers. He was transported with happiness when he thought how near he was to her now, and on the eve of a season of delight—a few balmy summer weeks upon the pastures, to be followed by his marriage. This affair of the pirates once finished, was ever man so happy as he was going to be? The thought made him spring as lightly through the tall grass that lay between him and the Black Tarn as the reindeer from point to point of the mountain steep.

The breeze blew in his face, refreshing him with its coolness, and with the fragrance of the birch, with which it was loaded. But it brought something else—a transient sound which surprised Rolf—voices of men, who seemed, if he could judge from so rapid a hint, to be talking angrily. He began to consider whom, besides Oddo, Erlingsen could have thought it necessary to bring with him, or whether it was somebody met with by chance. At all events, it would be wisest not to show himself, and to approach with all possible caution. Cautiously, therefore, he drew near, keeping a vigilant watch all around, and ready to pop down into the grass on any alarm. Being unable to see any one near the tarn, he was convinced the talkers must be seated under the crags on its margin; and he therefore made a circuit, to get behind the rocks, and then climbed a huge fragment, which seemed to have been toppled down from some steep, and to have rolled to the brink of the water. Two stunted pines grew out of the summit of this crag; and between these pines Rolf placed himself, and looked down from thence.

Two men sat on the ground in the shadow of the rock. One was Hund, and the other must undoubtedly be one of the pirate crew. His dress, arms, and broken language all showed him to be so; and it was, in fact, the same man that Erica had met near the same place, though that she had such an adventure was the last thing her lover dreamed of as he surveyed the man's figure from above.

This man appeared surly. Hund was extremely agitated.

'It is very hard,' said he, 'when all I want is to do no harm to anybody—neither to my old friends nor new acquaintances—that I cannot be left alone. I have done too much mischief in my life already.—The demons have made sport of me—it is their sport that I have twice as many lives to answer for as any man of twice my age in Nordland; and now that I would be harmless for the rest of my days——'

'Don't trouble yourself to talk about your days,' interrupted the pirate; 'they will be too few to be worth speaking of, if you do not put yourself under our orders again. You are a deserter; and as a deserter you go back with me, unless you choose to go as a comrade.'

'And what might I expect that your orders would be, if I went with you?'

'You know very well that we want you for a guide. That is all you are worth.—In a fight, you would only be in the way—unless, indeed, you could contrive to get out of the way.'

'Then you would not expect me to fight against my master and his people?'

"Nobody was ever so foolish as to expect you to fight, more or less, I should think. No, your business would be to pilot us to Erlingsen's and answer truly all our questions about their ways and doings."

'Surprise them in their sleep!' muttered Hund. "Wake them up with the light of their own burning roofs! And they would know me by that light! They would point me out to the bishop;—they would find time in their hurry to mark me for the monster they might well think me!"

"Yes; you would be in the front of course," observed the pirate. "But there is one comfort for you;—if you are so earnest to see the bishop as you told me you were, my plan is the best. When once we lock him down on board our schooner, you can have him all to yourself. You can confess your sins to him the whole day long; for nobody else will want a word with either of you. You can show him your enchanted island, down in the fiord, and see if he can lay the ghost for you."

Hund sprang to his feet in an agony of passion. The well-armed pirate was up as soon as he. Rolf drew back two paces, to be out of sight, if by chance they should look up, and armed himself with a heavy stone. He heard the pirate say,

'You can try to run away if you like; I shall shoot you through the head before you have gone five yards. And you may refuse to return with me; and then I shall know how to report you to my captain.—I shall tell him that you are lying at the bottom of this lake—if it has a bottom—with a stone tied round your neck, like a drowned cat. I hope you may chance to find your enemy there, to make the place the pleasanter.'

Rolf could not resist the impulse to send his heavy stone into the middle of the tarn, to see the effect upon the men below. He gave a good cast on the very instant; and prodigious was the splash, as the stone hit the water, precisely in the middle of the little lake. The men did not see the cause of the commotion that followed; but, starting and turning at the splash, they saw the rings spreading in the dark waters which had lain still as the heavens but a moment before. How could two guilty, superstitious men doubt that the waters were thrown into agitation at the pirate's last words? Yet they glanced fearfully round the landscape far and near. They saw no living thing but a hawk, which, startled from its perch on a scathed pine, was wheeling round in the air in an unsteady flight. The pirate pointed to the bird with one hand, while he laid the other on the pistol in his belt.

'Yes,' said Hund, trembling, 'the bird saw it. Did you see it?'

'See what?'

'The water-sprite, Uldra. Before you throw me in to the water-sprite, we will see which is the strongest.'

And in desperation, Hund, unarmed as he was, threw himself upon the pirate—sprang at his throat—and both wrestled with all their force. Rolf could not but look; and he saw that the pirate had already drawn his pistol, and all would be over with Hund in a moment if he did not interfere. He stood forward between the two pine stems, on the ridge of the rock, and uttered very loud the mournful cry which had so terrified his enemies at Vogel islet. The combatants flew asunder as if parted by a flash of lightning. Both looked up to the point whence the sound had come; and there they saw what they supposed to be Rolf's spectre, pointing at them, and the eyes staring as when looking up from the waters of the fiord. How could these guilty and superstitious men doubt that it was Rolf's spectre which, rising through the centre of the tarn, had caused the late commotion in the waters? Away they fled—at first in different directions; but it amused Rolf to observe that, rather than be alone, Hund turned to follow the track of the tyrant who had just been threatening and insulting him, and driving him to struggle for his life.

'Ay,' thought Rolf, 'it is his conscience that makes me so much more terrible to him than that ruffian. I never hurt a hair of his head; and yet through his conscience, my face is worse than the blasting lightning to his eyes. When will all the people hereabouts find out, as my mistress said when I was a boy, (apt as boys are, to remember the wise things that such a gentle mistress says)—when will people find out that the demons and sprites they live in fear of all come out of their own heads and hearts? Here in Hund's case, is guilt shaping out visions whichever way he turns. Not one of my ghost-stories is there, for months past, but I am at the bottom of it, and that only through his consciousness of having had wanting to injure me. There is the opposite case—of one so innocent as the