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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 XIII.

Midnight.

THIS was the day when the first cheese of the season was found to be perfect and complete. Frolich, Stiorna, and Erica examined it carefully, and pronounced it a well pressed, excellent gammel cheese, such as they should not be ashamed to set before the bishop, and therefore one which ought to satisfy the demon. It now only remained to carry it to its destination;—to the ridge where the first cheese of the season was always laid for the demon, and where, it appeared, he regularly came for his offering, as no vestige of the gift was ever to be found the next morning—only the round place in the grass where it had lain, and the marks of some feet which had trodden the herbage.

'Help me up with it upon my head, Stiorna,' said Erica.

And off went Erica with her cheese.

The ridge on which she laid it would have tempted her at any other time to sit down. It was green and soft with mosses, and offered as comfortable a couch to one tired with the labors of the day as any to be found at the farm. She selected the softest tuft of moss on which to lay the cheese, put her offering reverently down, and then diligently gathered the brightest blossoms from the herbage around, and strewed them over the cheese. She then walked rapidly homewards, without once looking behind her. If she had had the curiosity and courage to watch for a little while, she would have seen her offering carried off by an odd little figure, with nothing very terrible in its appearance; namely a woman about four feet high, with a flat face, and eyes wide apart, wearing a reindeer garment like a wagoner's frock, a red comforter about her neck, a red cloth cap on her head, a blue worsted sash and leather boots up to the knee;—in short such a Lapland girl as Erica would have given a rye-cake to as charity, but would not have thought of asking to sit down even in her master's kitchen;—for the Norwegian servants are very high and saucy towards the Lapps who wander to their doors. It is not surprising that the Lapps who pitch their tents on the mountain should like having a fine gammel cheese for the trouble of picking it up; and the company whose tents Erica had passed on her way up to the seater kept a good look-out on all the people round, and carried off every cheese meant for the demon. While Erica was gathering and strewing the blossoms, this girl was hidden near; and, trusting to Erica's not looking behind her the rogue swept off the blossoms, and threw them at her, before she had gone ten yards, trundled the cheese down on the other side of the ridge, made a circuit, and was at the tents with her prize before supper time.

On her way homewards Erica remembered this was Midsummer Eve—a season when her mother was in her thoughts more than at any other time; for Midsummer Eve is sacred in Norway to the wood-demon, whose victim she believed her mother to have been. Every woodman sticks his axe into a tree that night, that the demon may, if he pleases, begin the work of the year by felling trees or making a fagot. Erica hastened to the seater to discover whether Erlingsen had left his axe behind, and whether Jan had one with him.

Jan had an axe, and, remembering his duty, though tired and sleepy, was just going to the nearest pine-grove with it when Erica reached home. She seized Erlingsen's axe and went also, and stuck it in a tree just within the verge of the grove, which was in that part a thicket, from the growth of underwood. This thicket was so near the back of the dairy that the two were home in five minutes. Yet they found Frolich almost as impatient as if they had been gone an hour.—She asked whether their heathen worship was done at last, so that all might go to bed; or whether they were to be kept awake till midnight by more mummery?

Erica replied by showing that Jan was already gone to his loft over the shed, and begging leave to comb and curl Frolich's hair, and see her to rest at once. Stiorna was asleep; and Erica herself meant to watch the cattle this night. They lay couched in the grass, all near each other, and within view, in the mild slanting sunshine; and she intended to sit on the bench outside the home-shed, and keep her eye on them till morning.

'You are thinking of the bishop of Tronyem's cattle,' said Frolich.

'I am dear. This is Midsummer Eve you know—when, as we think, all the spirits love to be abroad.'

'You will die before your time, Erica,' said the weary girl. 'Those spirits give you no rest of body or mind. What a day's work we have done! And now you are going to watch till twelve, one, two o'clock! I could not keep awake,' she said yawning, 'if there was one demon at the head of the bed, and another at the foot, and the underground people running like mice all over the floor.'

'Then go and sleep, dear. I will fetch your comb, if you will just keep an eye on the cattle for the moment I am gone.'

As Erica combed Frolich's long fair hair, and admired its shine in the sunlight and twisted it up behind, and curled it on each side, the weary girl leaned her head against her, and dropped asleep.—When all was done, she just opened her eyes to find her way to bed, and say,

'You may as well go to bed comfortably; for you will certainly drop asleep here, if you don't there.'

'Not with my pretty Spiel in sight. I would not lose my white heifer for seven nights' sleep. You will thank me when you find your cow, and all the rest safe in the morning. Good night, dear.'

And Erica closed the door after her young mistress, and sat down on the bench outside with her face towards the sun, her lure by her side, and her knitting in her hands. She was glad that the herd lay so that by keeping her eye on them she could watch that wonder of midsummer night within the Arctic Circle, the dipping of the sun below the horizon to appear again immediately. She had never been far enough to the north to see the sun complete its circle without disappearing at all; but she did not wish it. She thought the softening of the light which she was about to witness, and the speedy renewing of day, more wonderful and beautiful.

She sat, soothed by her employment and by the tranquility of the scene, and free from fear. She had done her duty by the spirits of the mountain and the wood; and in case of the appearance of any object that she did not like, she could slip into the house in an instant. Her thought were therefore wholly Rolf's.—She could endure now to contemplate a long life spent in doing honor to his memory by the industrious discharge of duty. She would cloud nobody's happiness, but would do all she could to make Rolf's memory pleasant to those who had known him, and wished him well. She thought she could do all this in prospect of the day when her grave should be dug beside those of Peder and Ulla, and when her spirit should meet Rolf, and learn at length how he had died, and be assured that he had watched over her as faithfully as she had remembered him.

As these thoughts passed through her mind, making her future life appear shorter and less dreary than she could have imagined possible a few hours before, her fingers were busily at work, and her eyes rested on the lovely scene before her—the flowery pasture in which the dappled herd were lying, while far, far beyond, a yellow glittering expanse of waters spread as if to receive the sinking sun. From the elevation at which she was, it appeared as if the ocean swelled up into the very sky, so high was the horizon line; and between lay a vast region of rock and river, hill and dale, forest, fiord, and town, part in golden sunlight, part in deep shadow, but all, though bright as the skies could make it, silent as became the hour. As Erica found that she could glance at the sun itself without losing sight of the cattle, which still lay within her indirect vision, she carefully watched the descent of the orb, anxious to observe precisely when it should disappear, and how soon its golden spark would kindle up again from the waves. When its lower rim was just touching the waters, its circle seemed to be of an enormous size, and its whole mass to be flaming. Its appearance was very unlike that of of the comparatively small, compact, brilliant luminary which rides the sky at noon. Erica was just thinking so, when a rustle in the thicket, within the pine grove, made her involuntarily turn her head in that direction.—Instantly remembering that it was a common device of the underground people for one of them to make the watcher look away in order that others might drive off the cattle, she resumed her duty, and gazed steadfastly at the herd. They were safe—neither reduced to the size of mice or wandering off, though she had let her eye glance away from them.

As she stood gazing she once more heard the rustle in the wood. Though it crossed her mind that the wood-demon was doubtless there making choice of his axe and his tree, she could not move.

'Erica!' cried a voice at that moment from the wood—a voice which thrilled her whole frame. 'My Erica!'

She not only looked towards the wood now, but sprang forwad; but her eyes were so dazzled by having gazed at the sun that she could see nothing. Then she remembered how many forms the cunning demon could assume, and she turned back thinking how cruel it was to delude her with her lover's voice, when instead of his form, she should doubtless see some horrid monster. She turned in haste, and laid her hand on the latch of the door, glancing once more at the horizon.

There was now no sun at all. The burnish was gone from every point of the landscape, and a mild twilight reigned.

One good omen had vanished; but there was still enchantment around; for again she heard the thrilling 'Erica!'

There was no huge beast glaring thro' the pine stems and trampling down the thicket; but instead there was the figure of a man advancing from the shadow into the pasture.

'Why do you take that form?' said the trembling girl sinking down on the bench. 'I had rather have seen you as a bear.—Did you not find the axe? I laid it for you. Pray—pray, come no nearer.'

'I must, my love, to show you that it is your own Rolf. Erica, do not let your superstition come forever between us.'

She held out her arms;—she could not rise, though she strove to do so. Rolf sat beside her—she felt his kisses on her forehead—she felt his heart beat—she felt that not even a spirit could assume the very tones of that voice.

'Do forgive me,' she murmured; 'but it is Midsummer Eve; and I felt so sure——'

'As sure of my being the demon as I am sure there is no cruel spirit here, tho' it is Midsummer Eve. Look, love! see how the day smiles upon us!'

And he pointed to where a golden star seemed to kindle on the edge of the sea. It was the sun again rising after its few minutes of absence.

'Where are we, really?' cried Erica—'And how is all this? And where do you come from?'

And she gazed, still wistfully—doubtfully in her lover's face.

'I will show you, said he, smiling.—And while he still held her with one arm, lest in some sudden fancy, she should fly him as a ghost, he used the other hand to empty his pockets of the beautiful shells he had brought, tossing them into her lap.

'Did you ever see such, Erica? I have been where they lie in heaps. Did you ever see such beauties?'

'I never did Rolf; you have been at the bottom of the sea.'

And once more she shrank from what she took to be the grasp of a drowned man.

'Not to the bottom love,' replied he, still clasping her hand. 'Our fiord is deep; perhaps as deep as they say. I dived as deep as a man may, to come up with the breath in his body; but I could never find the bottom. Did I not tell you that I should go down as far as Vogel island; and that I should there be safe?'

'Yes! You did—you did!'

'Well! I went to Vogel island; and here I am safe!'

'It *is* you! We are together again!' she exclaimed, now in full belief. 'Thank God. Thank God.'

As she wept upon his shoulder, he told her where he had been, what perils he had met, how he had been saved, and how he had arrived the first moment he could; and then he went on to declare that their enemies would soon be disposed of: that they would be married, they would take possession of Peder's house, and make him comfortable, and would never be separated again as long as they lived.

They did not heed the time as they talked and talked.

Stiorna came forth with her milk pails, just before four o'clock. She started and dropped one of her pails, when she saw who was sitting on the bench; and Erica started no less at the thought of how completely she had forgotten the cattle and the underground people all this time.

The herd was all safe however—every cow as large as life, and looking exactly like itself; so that the good fortune of this Midsummer Eve had been perfect.

CHAPTER XIV.

Mountain Fare.

The appearance of Stiorna reminded the lovers that it was time to begin the business of the morning. They startled Stiorna with the news that a large company was coming to breakfast. Being in no very amiable temper towards happy lovers, she refused after a moments tho't, to believe what they said, and sat down sulking to her task of milking. So Rolf proceeded to rouse Jan; and Erica stepped to Frolich's bedside, and waked her with a kiss.

'Erica! No, can it be?' said the active girl, up in a moment. 'You look too happy to be Erica.'

'Erica never was so happy before, dear; that is the reason. You were right, Frolich—bless your kind heart for it!—Rolf was not dead. He is here.'

Frolich gallopaded round the room like one crazy, before proceeding to dress.

'Whenever you like to stop,' said Erica, laughing, 'I have some good news for you too.'

'I am to go to see the bishop!' cried Frolich, clapping her hands, and whirling round on one foot like an opera-dancer.

'Not so, Frolich.'

'There now! you promise me good news; and then you won't let me go and see the bishop, when you know that is the only thing in the world I want or wish for!'

'Would it not be a great compliment to you, and save you a great deal of trouble, if the bishop were to come here to see you?'

'Ah! that would be a pretty sight!—The bishop of Tronyem over the ankles in the sodden, trodden pasture of Sulitelma! The bishop of Tronyem sleeping upon hay in the loft, and eating his dinner off a wooden platter! That would be the most wonderful sight that Nordland ever saw.'

'Prepare, then, to see the bishop of Tronyem drink his morning coffee out of a wooden bowl. Meantime, I must go and grind his coffee. Seriously, Frolich, you must make haste to dress and help. The pirates want to carry off the bishop for ransom. Erlingsen is raising the country. Hund is coming here as a prisoner; and the bishop, and my mistress, and Orga, to be safe; and if you do not help me, I shall have nothing ready; for Stiorna does not like the news.'

Never had Frolich dressed more quickly. She thought it very hard that the bishop should see her when she had nothing but her dairy dress to wear; but she was ready all the sooner for this. Erica consoled her with the belief that the bishop was the last person who could be supposed to make a point of a silk gown for a mountain maiden.

A consultation about the arrangements was held before the door by the four who were in a good humor; for Stiorna remained aloof. This like other mountain dwellings, was a mere eating and sleeping shed, only calculated for a bare shelter, at night, at meals, and from occasional rain. There was no apartment at the seater in which the bishop could hold an audience, out of the way of the cooking and other household transactions. It could not be expected of him to sit on the bench outside, or on the grass, like the people of the establishment; for, unaccustomed as he was to spend his days in the open air, his eyes would be blinded, and his face blistered by the sun.

So the two young men set to work to raise a semicircular range of turf seats in the pleasantest part of the shady grove. The central seat, which was raised above the rest, and had a footstool, was well cushioned with dry and soft moss; and the rough bark was cut from the trunk of the tree against which it was built; so that the stem served as a comfortable back to the chair. Rolf tried the seat when finished; and as he leaned back, feasting his eyes on the vast sunny landscape which was to be seen between the trees of the grove, he declared that it was infinitely better to sit here than in the bishop's stall in Tronyem cathedral.

Frolich shook her head often and mournfully over the breakfast.

Do what they would it was only bread, cheese, butter, berries, and cream; and then berries and cream, butter, cheese, and bread. They garnished with moss, leaves, and flowers; they disposed their few bowls and platters to the best advantage—taking some from the dairy which could ill be spared. It was still but a poor apology for a feast; and Frolich looked so ready to cry as to make Erica laugh.

Presently, however, there were voices heard from the hill above. Some traveller who had met the budstick, had reported the proceedings below, and the news had spread to a northern seater. The men had gone down to the fiord; and here were the women with above a gallon of strawberries, fresh gathered, and a score of plovers' eggs. Next appeared a pony, coming westward over the pasture, laden with panniers containing a tender kid, a packet of spices, a jar of preserved cherries, and a few of the present season, early ripe; and a stone bottle of vinegar. Frolich's spirit rose higher and higher, as more people came from below, sent by Rolf on his way down. A deputation of Lapps came from the tents, bringing reindeer venison, and half of a fine gammel cheese. Erica and Frolich returned to their breakfast-table, to make new arrangements, now necessary, and place the fruit and spices. Erica closely examined the piece of gammel cheese brought by the Lapps, and then, with glowing cheeks, called Frolich to her.

'What now?' said Frolich. 'Have you found a way of telling fortunes with the hard cheese, as some pretend to do with the soft curds?'

'Look here,' said Erica. 'What stamp is this? The cheese has been scraped—almost pared, you see; but they have left one little corner. And whose stamp is there?'

'Ours,' said Frolich, coolly. 'This is the cheese you laid out on the ridge last night.'

'I believe it. I see it,' exclaimed Erica.

'Now, dear Erica, do not let us have the old story of your being frightened about what the demon will say and do. Nobody but you will be surprised that the Lapps help themselves with good things that lie strewing the ground. You know I gave you a hint, just twelve hours since, of what would become of this same cheese.'

'You did,' admitted Erica. To Frolich's delight and surprise, she appeared too busy—or was rather, perhaps, too happy—to lament this mischance, as she would formerly have done. Possibly she comforted herself with thinking, that if the demon had set its heart upon the cheese, it might have been beforehand with the Lapps. She contented herself with setting apart the dish till her mistress should decide what ought to be done with it. Just when a youth from the highest pasture on Sulitelma had come running and panting, to present Frolich with a handful of fringed pinks and blue gentian, plucked from the very edge of the glacier, so that their colors were reflected in the ice, Stiorna appeared, in haste, to tell that a party on horseback and on foot were winding out of the ravine, and coming straight up out of the pasture. All was now certainty; and great was the bustle, to put out of sight all unseemly tokens of preparation. In the midst of the hurry, Frolich found time to twist some of her pretty flowers into her pretty hair; so that it might easily chance that the bishop would not miss her silk gown. When, however, were unfashionable mothers known to forget the interests of their daughters? Madame Erlingsen never did; and she now engaged one of the bishop's followers to ride forward with a certain bundle which Orga had carried on her lip. The man discharged his errand so readily, that on the arrival of the train, Frolich was seen, so dressed, walking in silk attire, as to appear to all eyes as the daughter of the hostess.

As the bishop's horse, followed by those which bore the ladies, reached the house door, all present cried,

'Welcome to the mountain!' 'Welcome to Sulitelma!'

The bishop observed that, often as he had wished to look abroad from Sulitelma and to see with his own eyes what life at the seaters was like, he should have grown old without the desire being gratified, but for the design of the enemy upon him.—It was all he could do to go the rounds of his diocese, from station to station below, without thinking of journeys of pleasure. Yet here he was on Sulitelma!

When he and M. Kollsen and the ladies had dismounted, and were entering the house to breakfast, the gazers found leisure to observe the hindmost of the train of riders. It was Hund, with his feet tied under his horse, and the bridle held by a man on each side. He had seen and heard too much of the preparations against the enemy to be allowed to remain below, or at large anywhere, till the attack should be over. He could not dismount till some one untied his legs; and no one would do that till a safe place could be found, in which to confine him. It was an awkward situation enough, sitting there bound before everybody's eyes; and not the less for Stiorna's leaning her head against the horse, and crying at seeing him so treated; and yet Hund had often been seen, on small occasions, to look far more black and miserable. His face now was almost cheerful. Stiorna praised this as a sign of bravery; but the truth was, the party had been met by Rolf and Jan, going down the mountain. It was no longer possible to take Rolf for a ghost; and though Hund was as far as possible from understanding the matter, he was unspeakably relieved to find that he had not the death of his rival to answer for. It made his countenance almost gay to think of this even while stared at by men, women and children, as a prisoner.

'What is it?' whimpered Stiorna—'what are you a prisoner for, Hund?'

'Ask them that know,' said Hund. 'I thought at first that it was on Rolf's account; and now they see with their own eyes that Rolf is safe, they best know what they have to bring against me.'

'It is no secret,' said Madame Erlingsen. 'Hund was seen with the pirates, acting with and assisting them, when they committed various acts of thievery on the shore of the fiord. If the pirates are taken, Hund will be tried with them for robberies at Thore's, Kyril's, and Tank's, and other places along the shore, about which information has been given by a witness.'

'Thore's, Kyril's and Tank's!' repeated Hund to himself; 'then there must be magic in the case. I could have sworn that not an eye on earth witnessed the doings there. If Rolf turns out to be the witness, I shall be certain that he has the powers of the region to help him.'

So little is robbery to be dreaded at the seaters, that there really was no place where Hund could be fastened in;—no lock upon any door;—not a window from which he might not escape. The zealous neighbors, therefore, whose interest it was to detain him, offered to take it in turn to be beside him, his right arm tied to the left of another man. And thus it was settled.

After breakfast, notice was given that the party who had travelled all night wished to repose for a few hours. All others, therefore, withdrew, to secure quiet, some within the pine wood, others to the nearest breezy hill, to gossip and sport; while some few took the opportunity of going home, to see after their cattle, or other domestic affairs, intending to return in the afternoon.

CHAPTER XV.

Old Tales and Better Tidings.

When the bishop came forth in the afternoon to take his seat in the shade of the wood, those who were there assembled were singing *For Norge*. Instead of permitting them to stop, on account of his arrival, he joined in the song; and solely because his heart was in it. Seldom had he witnessed such a scene as this; and as he looked around him, and saw deep shades and sunny uplands, blue glaciers above green pastures and glittering waters below; and all around, herds on every hill-side, he felt his love of old Norway, and his thankfulness for being one of her sons, as warm as that of any one of the singers in the wood. Out of the fulness of his heart, the good bishop addressed his companions on the goodness of God in creating such a land, and placing them in it, with their happiness so far in their own hands as that little worthy of being called evil could befall them, except through faults of their own. M. Kollsen, who had before uttered his complaints of the superstition of his flock, hoped that his bishop was now about to attack the mischief vigorously.

The bishop, however, only took his seat—the mossy seat prepared for him—and declared himself to be now at the service of any who wished to converse with him. Instead of thrusting his own opinions and reproofs upon them, as it was M. Kollsen's wont to do, he waited for the people to open their minds to him in their own way; and by this means, whatever he found occasion to say had double influence from coming naturally.

In a few hours, many of the people were gone for the present—some being wanted at home, and others for the expected affair on the fiord. The bishop and M. Kollsen had thought themselves alone in their shady retreat when they saw Erica lingering near among the trees. With a kind smile, the bishop beckoned to her, and bade her sit down, and tell him whether he had not been right in promising, a while ago, that God would soothe her sorrows with time, as is the plan of his kind providence. He remembered well the story of the death of her mother. Erica replied that not only had her grief been soothed, but that she was now so blessed that her heart was burdened with its gratitude. She wished—she needed to pour out all that she felt; but M Kollsen was there, and she could not speak quite freely before him. He, for his part, observed that, if she was now so happy, she must have given up some of her superstitions; for certainly he had never known any one less likely to enjoy peace than Erica, on all occasions on which he had seen her—so great was her dread of evil spirits on every hand.

'I wish,' said Erica with a sigh, 'I do wish I knew what to think about Nipen.'

'Ay! here it comes,' observed M. Kollsen, folding his arms as if for an argument.

Encouraged by the bishop, Erica told the whole story of the last few months, from the night of Oddo's prank to that which found her at the feet of her friend; for she had cast herself down at the bishop's feet, sitting as she had done in her childhood, looking up in his face.

'You want to know what I think of all this?' said the bishop, when she had done. 'I think that you could hardly help believing as you have believed, amidst those strange circumstances, and with your mind full of the common accounts of Nipen. Yet I do not believe there is any such spirit as Nipen, or any demon in the forest, or on the mountain. Did you ever hear what spirits everybody in this country believed in before the blessed gospel was brought to old Norway?'

'I have heard of Thor—that yonder islet was named after; and that, when there was tempest with rolling thunder such as we never hear in this region, the people used to say it was Thor driving his chariot over the mountain ridge.'

'That was what people said of the thunder. What they said of fire and frost was that they were giants called Loke and Thrym, who dwelt in a dreadful tempestuous place, at the end of the earth, and came abroad to do awful things among men. The giant Frost drove home his horses at night—the hail clouds that sped through the air; and there sat the giant on the frost winds, combing the manes of his horses as they went. Fire was a cunning demon that stole in where it was not wanted; and when once in, it devoured all that it chose, till it rose into the sky at last in smoke. Then there was the giant Ægir, who brought in squalls from the sea, and made whirlpools in the fiords.'

'Why, that is like Nipen.'

'Very like Nipen;—perhaps the same. Then there was the good god Balder, (the white god,) who made everything bright and beautiful, and ripened the fruits of the earth. This god Balder was the sun. Then there were the three magical women, the Fates, who made men's lives happy or miserable. Did you ever hear how these giants and Fates were worshipped before Jehovah and Christ were known in this land?'

'I have heard Ulla sing many old songs about these and more; and how Thor and two companions as mighty as himself were travelling, and entered a curious house for the night; and wandered about in the great house, being frightened at a strange loud noise outside; and how they found in the morning that this house was the mitten of a giant infinitely greater than themselves; and that what they had taken for a separate chamber in the great house was the thumb of his mitten; and that the strange noise was the snoring of this giant Skrymir, who was asleep close by, after having pulled off his mittens.'

'That is one of the many tales belonging to the old religion of this country.—And how did this old religion arise?—Why the people saw grand spectacles every day, and heard wonders whichever way they turned; and they supposed that the whole universe was alive. The sun as it travelled they thought was alive, and kind and good to men. The tempest they thought was alive, angry with men. The fire and frost they thought was alive and angry with men. The fire and frost they thought were alive, pleased to make sport with men.'

'As people who ought to know better,' observed M. Kollsen, 'now think the wind is alive, and call it Nipen, or the mist of the lake and river, which they call the sprite Uldra.'

'It is true,' said the bishop, 'that we now have better knowledge, and see that the earth, and all that is in it, is made and moved by One Good Spirit, who, instead of sporting with men, or being angry with them, rules all things for their good. But I am not surprised that some of the old stories remain, and are believed in still—and by good and dutiful Christians too. The mother sings the old songs over the cradle; and the child hears tell of spirits and demons before it hears of the good God who 'sends forth the snow and rain, the hail and vapor, and the stormy winds fulfilling his word.' And when the child is grown to be a man or woman, the northern lights shooting over the sky, and the sighing of the winds in the pine forest, bring back those old songs and old thoughts about demons and sprites; and the stoutest man trembles. I do not wonder; nor do I blame any man or woman for this; though I wish they were as happy as the weakest infant, or the most worn-out old man, who has learned from the gentle Jesus to fear nothing at any time, because his Father was with him.'

'But what is to be done?' asked M. Kollsen.

'The time will come,' said the bishop, 'when the mother will sing to her babe of the gentle Jesus; and tell her growing child of how he loved to be alone with his Father in the waste and howling wilderness; and bade his disciples not be afraid when there was a tempest on the wide lake. Then when the child grows up to be a man, if he finds himself alone on the mountain or in the forest, he will think of Jesus, and fear no demon: and if a west wind and fog should overtake a woman in her boat on the fiord,' he continued, looking with a smile at Erica, 'she will never think of Nipen, but rather that she hears her Savior saying, 'Why are you afraid, O ye of little faith?'

Erica hid her face, ashamed under the good man's smile.

'In our towns,' continued he, 'much of this blessed change is already wrought. No one in my city of Tronyem now fears the angry and cunning fire-giant Loke; but every citizen closes his eyes in peace, when he hears the midnight cry of the watch, 'Except the Lord keepeth the watchman waketh but in vain.' In the wilds of the country, every man's faith will hereafter be his watchman crying out upon all that happens, 'It is the Lord's hand: let him do what seemeth to him good!' This might have been said, Erica, as it appears to me, at every turn of your story, where you and your friends were not in fault.'

He went on to remark on the story she had told him; and she was really surprised to find that there was not the slightest reason to suppose that any spirit had been employed to vex and alarm her. The fog and the pirates had overtaken and frightened many in the fiord with whom Nipen had no quarrel. Rolf's imprisonment, and all the sorrows that belonged to it, had been owing to his own imprudence.

She herself had seen that no wood-demon had touched the axes in this very grove, last night; and that it was no mountain sprite, but a Laplander, who had taken up the first gammel cheese.—She had also witnessed how absurdly mistaken Hund had been about the boat having been spirited away, and Vogel island being enchanted, and Rolf's ghost being allowed to haunt him. Here was a case before her very eyes in which people with superstitious minds may misunderstand what happens to themselves.

'O!' exclaimed Erica, dropped her hands from her glowing face, 'if I dared but think there were no bad spirits—if I dared only hope that everything that happens is done by God's own hand, I could bear everything! I would never be afraid again!'

'It is what I believe,' said the bishop. Laying his hand on her head, he continued,

'We know that the very hairs of your head are numbered. I see that you are weary of your fears—that you have long been heavy laden with anxiety. It is you, then, that he invites to trust him when he says by the lips of Jesus, 'Come, ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'

'Rest—rest is what I have wanted,' said Erica, while her tears flowed gently; 'but Peder and Ulla did not believe as you do, and could not explain things; and—'

'You should have asked me,' said M. Kollsen; 'I could have explained everything.'

'Perhaps so, sir; but—but, M. Kollsen, you always seemed angry; and you said you despised us for believing anything; and it is the most difficult thing in the world to ask questions which one knows will be despised.'

M. Kollsen glanced in the bishop's face, to see how he took this, and how he meant to support the pastor's authority. The bishop looked sad, and said nothing.

'And then,' continued Erica, 'there were others who laughed—even Rolf himself laughed; and what one fears becomes only the more terrible when laughed at.'

'Very true,' said the bishop. 'When Jesus sat on the well in Samaria, and taught how the true worship was come, he neither frowned on the woman who inquired, nor despised her, nor made light of her superstition about a sacred mountain.'

There was a long silence, which was broken at last by Erica asking the bishop whether he could not console poor Hund, who wanted comfort more than she had ever done. The bishop replied that the demons who most tormented poor Hund were not abroad on the earth or in the air, but within his breast—his remorse, his envy, his covetousness, his fear. He meant, however, not to lose sight of poor Hund, either in the prison to which he was to travel to-morrow, or after he should come out of it.

Here Frolich appeared running to ask whether those who were in the grove would not like to look forth from the ridge and see what good the budstick had done, and how many parties were on their way, from all quarters, to the farm.

M. Kollsen was glad to rise and escape from what he thought a schooling; and the bishop himself was as interested in what was going on as if the farm had been his home. He was actually the first at the ridge.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Watch on the Hill.

This part of the mountain was a singularly favorable situation for seeing what was doing on the spot on which every one's attention was fixed this day.

While the people on the fiord could not see what was going forward at Saltdalen, nor those at Saltdalen what were the movements at the farm, the watchers on the ridge could observe the proceedings at all the three points. The opportunity was much improved by the bishop having having a glass;—a glass of a quality so rare at that time, that there would probably have been some talk of magic and charms, if it had been in Olaf's hands, instead of the bishop's.

By means of this glass, the bishop, M. Kollsen, or Madam Erlingsen announced, from time to time, what was doing, as the evening advanced;—how parties of two or three were leaving Saltdalen, creeping towards the farm under cover of rising grounds, rocks, and pine-woods; how small companies, well armed, were hidden in every place of concealment near Erlingsen's; and how there seemed to be a great number of women about the place. Who these women could be, and why they should choose to resort to the farm when all its female inhabitants had left it for safety, it was difficult at first to imagine.—But the truth soon occurred to Frolich.—No doubt some one had remembered how strange and suspicious it would appear to the pirates, who supposed the bishop to be at the farm, that there should be no women in the company assembled to meet him. No doubt, these people in blue, white, and green petticoats, who were striding about the yards, and looking forth from the galleries, were men dressed in their wives' clothes, or in such as Erlingsen furnished from the family chests.—This disguise was as good as an ambush, while it also served to give the place the festive appearance looked for by the enemy. It was found afterwards that Oddo had acted as lady's maid, fitting the gowns to the shortest men, and dressing up their heads, so as best to hide the shaggy hair. Great numbers were certainly assembled before night; yet still a little group might be seen now and then, winding down from some recess of the wide-spreading mountain, making circuits by the ravines and water-courses, so as to avoid crossing the upland slopes, which the pirates might be surveying by means of such a glass as the bishop's.

The bishop was of opinion that scarcely a blow would be struck, so great was the country force compared with that of the pirates. He believed that the enemy would be overpowered, null disarmed almost without a struggle. Erica, who could not but tremble with fear as well as expectation, blessed his words in her heart; and so, in truth, did every woman present.

No one thought of going to rest, though Madame Erlingsen urged it upon those over whom she had influence. Finding that Erica had set up to watch the cattle the night before, she compelled her to go and lie down; but no compulsion could make her sleep; and Orga and Frolich

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*Erica knew thunder only by report, as there is none so far north as the part of Nordland where she lived. Thunder ceases at 66 degrees of latitude.