Ticket No. “9672”

Jules Verne

Chapter 1

“What time is it?” inquired Dame Hansen, shaking the ashes from her pipe, the last curling rings from which were slowly disappearing between the stained rafters overhead.

“Eight o’clock, mother,” replied Hulda.

“It isn’t likely that any travelers will come to-night. The weather is too stormy.”

“I agree with you. At all events, the rooms are in readiness, and if any one comes, I shall be sure to hear them.”

“Has your brother returned?”

“Not yet.”

“Didn’t he say he would be back to-night?”

“No, mother. Joel went to take a traveler to Lake Tinn, and as he didn’t start until very late, I do not think he can get back to Dal before to-morrow.”

“Then he will spend the night at Moel, probably.”

“Yes; unless he should take it into his head to go on to Bamble to see Farmer Helmboe.”

“And his daughter Siegfrid.”

“Yes. Siegfrid, my best friend, whom I love like a sister!” replied the young girl, smiling.

“All, well, Hulda, shut up the house, and let’s go to bed.”

“You are not ill, are you, mother?”

“No; but I want to be up bright and early to-morrow morning. I must go to Moel.”

“What for?”

“Why, we must be laying in our stock of provisions for the coming summer, and—”

“And I suppose the agent from Christiania has come down with his wagon of wines and provisions.”

“Yes; Lengling, the foreman at the saw-mill, met him this afternoon, and informed me of the fact as he passed. We have very little left in the way of ham and smoked salmon, and I don’t want to run any risk of being caught with an empty larder. Tourists are likely to begin their excursions to the Telemark almost any day now; especially, if the weather should become settled, and our establishment must be in a condition to receive them. Do you realize that this is the fifteenth of April?”

“The fifteenth of April!” repeated the young girl, thoughtfully.

“Yes, so to-morrow I must attend to these matters,” continued Dame Hansen. “I can

make all my purchases in two hours, and I will return with Joel in the kariol."

"In case you should meet the postman, don't forget to ask him if there is a letter for us —"

"And especially for you. That is quite likely, for it is a month since you heard from Ole."

"Yes, a month—a whole month."

"Still, you should not worry, child. The delay is not at all surprising. Besides, if the Moel postman has nothing for you, that which didn't come by the way of Christiania may come by the way of Bergen, may it not?"

"Yes, mother," replied Hulda. "But how can I help worrying, when I think how far it is from here to the Newfoundland fishing banks. The whole broad Atlantic to cross, while the weather continues so bad. It is almost a year since my poor Ole left me, and who can say when we shall see him again in Dal?"

"And whether we shall be here when he returns," sighed Dame Hansen, but so softly that her daughter did not hear the words.

Hulda went to close the front door of the inn which stood on the Vesfjorddal road; but she did not take the trouble to turn the key in the lock. In hospitable Norway, such precautions are unnecessary. It is customary for travelers to enter these country inns either by night or by day without calling any one to open the door; and even the loneliest habitations are safe from the depredations of thieves or assassins, for no criminal attempts against life or property ever disturb the peace of this primitive land.

The mother and daughter occupied two front rooms on the second story of the inn—two neat and airy, though plainly furnished rooms. Above them, directly under the sloping roof, was Joel's chamber, lighted by a window incased in a tastefully carved frame-work of pine.

From this window, the eye, after roaming over the grand mountain horizon, returned with delight to the narrow valley through which flowed the Maan, which is half river, half torrent.

A wooden staircase, with heavy balusters and highly polished steps, led from the lower hall to the floors above, and nothing could be more neat and attractive than the whole aspect of this establishment, in which the travelers found a comfort that is rare in Norwegian inns.

Hulda and her mother were in the habit of retiring early when they were alone, and Dame Hansen had already lighted her candle, and was on her way upstairs, when a loud knocking at the door made them both start.

"Dame Hansen! Dame Hansen!" cried a voice.

Dame Hansen paused on the stairs.

"Who can have come so late?" she exclaimed.

"Can it be that Joel has met with an accident?" returned Hulda, quickly.

And she hastened toward the door.

She found a lad there—one of the young rascals known as *skydskarls*, that make a living by clinging to the back of kariols, and taking the horse back when the journey is ended.

“What do you want here at this hour?” asked Hulda.

“First of all to bid you good-evening,” replied the boy, mischievously.

“Is that all?”

“No; that isn’t all; but a boy oughtn’t to forget his manners, ought he?”

“You are right. But who sent you?”

“Your brother Joel.”

“And what for?” asked Dame Hansen, advancing to the door with the slow and measured tread that is a characteristic of the inhabitants of Norway. There is quicksilver in the veins of their soil, but little or none in the veins of their bodies.

The reply had evidently caused the mother some anxiety, however, for she added hastily:

“Has anything happened to my son?”

“No, but the Christiania postman gave him a letter, and—”

“A letter from Drammen?” repeated Dame Hansen, in a lower tone.

“I don’t know about that,” replied the youth. “All I do know is, that Joel can’t get home before to-morrow, and he sent me here to deliver the letter.”

“It is important then?”

“I should judge so.”

“Hand it here,” said Dame Hansen, in a tone that betrayed keen anxiety.

“Here it is, clean and not wrinkled in the least. But the letter is not for you.”

Dame Hansen seemed to breathe more freely.

“Then who is it for?” she asked.

“For your daughter.”

“For me!” cried Hulda. “It is a letter from Ole! I am sure it is—a letter that came by way of Christiania. My brother did not want me to be kept waiting.”

Hulda had snatched the letter from the boy’s hand, and now taking it to the table upon which her mother had deposited the candle, she examined the address.

“Yes, it is from him. It is certainly from him! Heaven grant that he writes to announce the speedy return of the ‘Viking’!”

“Won’t you come in?” said Dame Hansen, turning to the boy.

“Only for a minute. I must get back home to-night, for I am to go with a kariol to-

morrow morning."

"Very well. Tell Joel, from me, that I expect to go to Moel to-morrow, and that he must wait for me there."

"To-morrow evening?"

"No; to-morrow morning, and he must not leave Moel until he sees me. We will return to Dal together."

"Very well, Dame Hansen."

"Won't you take a drop of *brandevin*?"

"With pleasure."

The boy approached the table, and Dame Hansen handed him a glass of the beverage which is such a powerful protection against the evening fogs. It is needless to say that he drained the glass, then,

"*God-aften!*" he said.

"*God-aften*, my son!"

This is the Norwegian good-night. It was simply spoken, without even an inclination of the head, and the lad instantly departed, without seeming to mind in the least the long walk that he had before him. The sound of his footsteps soon died away beneath the trees that border the swiftly flowing river.

Hulda still stood gazing at Ole's letter. Think of it! This frail envelope must have crossed the broad ocean to reach her, the broad ocean in which the rivers of western Norway lose themselves. She examined the different postmarks. Though mailed on the 15th of March, the missive had not reached Dal until the 15th of April. Why! a month had already elapsed since the letter was written! How many things might have happened in a month on the shores of Newfoundland! Was it not still winter, the dangerous season of equinoxes? Are not these fishing banks the most dangerous in the world, swept by terrible gales from the North Pole? A perilous and arduous vocation was this business of fishing which Ole followed! And if he followed it was it not that she, his betrothed, whom he was to marry on his return, might reap the benefits?

Poor Ole! What did he say in this letter? Doubtless that he loved Hulda as faithfully and truly as Hulda loved him, that they were united in thought, in spite of the distance that separated them, and that he longed for the day of his return to Dal.

Yes, he said all this, Hulda was sure of it. But perhaps he might add that the day of his return was near at hand—that the fishing cruise which had enticed the inhabitants of Bergen so far from their native land, was nearly at an end. Perhaps Ole would tell her that the "Viking" had finished taking aboard her cargo, that she was about to sail, and that the last days of April would not pass without a blissful meeting in the pleasant home at Vesfjorddal. Perhaps, too, he would assure her, at last, that she might safely appoint the day for the pastor to come to Moel to unite them in the little chapel whose steeple rose from a small grove not a hundred yards from Dame Hansen's inn.

To learn all this, it might only be necessary to break the seal, draw out Ole's letter, and

read it, through the tears of joy or sorrow that its contents would be sure to bring to Hulda's eyes, and doubtless more than one impatient girl of the south, or even of Denmark or Holland, would already have known all! But Hulda was in a sort of a dream, and dreams terminate only when God chooses to end them, and how often one regrets them, so bitter is the reality.

"Is it really a letter from Ole that your brother has sent you, my daughter?" inquired Dame Hansen.

"Yes; I recognize the handwriting."

"Well, are you going to wait until to-morrow to read it?"

Hulda took one more look at the envelope, then, after slowly breaking the seal, she drew out the carefully written letter, which read as follows:

"Saint-Pierre-Miquelon, March 17th, 1862.

"My Dearest Hulda,—You will hear, with pleasure, that our fishing venture has prospered, and that it will be concluded in a few days. Yes; we are nearing the end of the season, and after a year's absence how glad I shall be to return to Dal and find myself in the midst of the only friends I have in the world—yours and mine.

"My share in the profits of the expedition amounts to quite a handsome sum, which will start us in housekeeping. Messrs. Help Bros., the owners of the ship, have been informed that the 'Viking' will probably return by the 15th or 20th of May; so you may expect to see me at that time; that is to say, in a few weeks at the very longest.

"My dear Hulda, I trust to find you looking even prettier than at my departure, and in the best of health, you and your mother as well, also that hardy, brave comrade, my cousin Joel, your brother, who asks nothing better than to become mine.

"On receipt of this, give my very best respects to Dame Hansen—I can see her now, sitting in her wooden arm-chair by the old stove in the big hall—and tell her I love her with a twofold love, for she is my aunt as well as your mother.

"Above all, don't take the trouble to come to Bergen to meet me, for it is quite possible that the 'Viking' will arrive at an earlier date than I have mentioned. However that may be, my dear Hulda can count upon seeing me at Dal twenty-four hours after we land. Don't be too much surprised if I should arrive considerably ahead of time.

"We have had a pretty rough time of it, this past winter, the weather having been more severe than any our fishermen have ever encountered; but fortunately fish have been plenty. The 'Viking' brings back nearly five thousand quintals, deliverable at Bergen, and already sold by the efforts of Help Bros. And last, but not least, we have succeeded in selling at a handsome profit, and I, who have a share in the venture, will realize something quite handsome from it.

"Besides, even if I should not bring a small competence home with me, I have an idea, or rather, I have a presentiment that it is awaiting me on my return. Yes; comparative wealth, to say nothing of happiness! In what way? That is my secret, my

dearest Hulda, and you will forgive me for having a secret from you! It is the only one! Besides, I will tell you all about it. When? Well, as soon as an opportunity offers —before our marriage, if it should be delayed by some unforeseen misfortune— afterward, if I return at the appointed time, and you become my wife within a week after my arrival, as I trust you will.

“A hundred fond kisses, my darling Hulda. Kiss Dame Hansen, and Joel, too, for me. In fancy, I imprint another kiss upon your brow, around which the shining crown of the brides of the Telemark will cast a saint-like halo. Once more, farewell, dearest Hulda, farewell!

“Your devoted lover,

“OLE KAMP.”

Chapter 2

Dal is a modest hamlet consisting of but a few houses; some on either side of a road that is little more than a bridle-path, others scattered over the surrounding hills. But they all face the narrow valley of Vesfjorddal, with their backs to the line of hills to the north, at the base of which flows the Maan.

A little church erected in 1855, whose chancel is pierced by two narrow stained-glass windows, lifts its square belfry from out a leafy grove hard by. Here and there rustic bridges cross the rivulets that dance merrily along toward the river. In the distance are two or three primitive saw-mills, run by water-power, with a wheel to move the saw, as well as a wheel to move the beam or the tree; and seen from a little distance, the chapel, saw-mills, houses, and cabins, all seem to be enveloped in a soft olive haze that emanates from the dark-green firs and the paler birches which either singly or in groups extend from the winding banks of the Maan to the crests of the lofty mountains.

Such is the fresh and laughing hamlet of Dal, with its picturesque dwellings, painted, some of them, in delicate green or pale pink tints, others in such glaring colors as bright yellow and blood-red. The roofs of birch bark, covered with turf, which is mown in the autumn, are crowned with natural flowers. All this is indescribably charming, and eminently characteristic of the most picturesque country in the world. In short, Dal is in the Telemark, the Telemark is in Norway, and Norway is in Switzerland, with thousands of fiords that permit the sea to kiss the feet of its mountains.

The Telemark composes the broad portion of the immense horn that Norway forms between Bergen and Christiania.

This dependency of the prefecture of Batsberg, has the mountains and glaciers of Switzerland, but it is not Switzerland. It has gigantic water-falls like North America, but it is not America. The landscape is adorned with picturesque cottages, and processions of inhabitants, clad in costumes of a former age, like Holland, but it is not Holland. The Telemark is far better than any or all of these; it is the Telemark, noted above all countries in the world for the beauty of its scenery. The writer has had the pleasure of visiting it. He has explored it thoroughly, in a kariol with relays of post-horses—when he could get them—and he brought back with him such a vivid recollection of its manifold charms that he would be glad to convey some idea of it to the reader of this simple narrative.

At the date of this story, 1862, Norway was not yet traversed by the railroad that now enables one to go from Stockholm to Drontheim, by way of Christiania. Now, an extensive network of iron rails extends entirely across these two Scandinavian countries, which are so averse to a united existence. But imprisoned in a railroad-carriage, the traveler, though he makes much more rapid progress than in a kariol, misses all the originality that formerly pervaded the routes of travel. He misses the journey through Southern Sweden on the curious Gotha Canal, in which the steamboats, by rising from lock to lock, manage to reach an elevation of three hundred feet. Nor does he have an opportunity to visit the

falls of Trolletann, nor Drammen, nor Kongsberg, nor any of the beauties of the Telemark.

In those days the railroad existed only upon paper. Twenty years were to elapse before one could traverse the Scandinavian kingdom from one shore to the other in forty hours, and visit the North Cape on excursion tickets to Spitzberg.

In those days Dal was, and may it long remain, the central point for foreign or native tourists, these last being for the most part students from Christiania. From Dal they could wander over the entire Telemark and Hardanger region, explore the valley of Vesfjorddal between Lakes Mjos and Tinn, and visit the wonderful cataracts of the Rjukan Tun. The hamlet boasts of but one inn, but that is certainly the most attractive and comfortable imaginable, and one of the most important also, for it can offer four bed-chambers for the accommodation of its guests. In a word, it is Dame Hansen's inn.

A few benches surround the base of its pink walls, which are separated from the ground by a substantial granite foundation. The spruce rafters and weather-boarding have acquired such hardness and toughness with age that the sharpest hatchet can make little or no impression upon them. Between the roughly hewn rafters, which are placed horizontally one above the other, a mixture of clay and turf forms a stanch roof, through which the hardest winter rains can not force their way.

Upstairs, in the bedrooms, the ceilings are painted in dark red or black tints to contrast with the more cheerful and delicate hues of the wood-work.

In one corner of the large hall stands a huge cylinder stove, the pipe of which rises nearly to the ceiling, before it disappears in the kitchen chimney. In another corner stands a tall clock which emits a sonorous tick-tack, as its carved hands travel slowly around its enameled face. Here is a secretary, black with age, side by side with a massive iron tripod. Upon the mantel is an immense terra-cotta candlestick which can be transformed into a three-branched candelabrum by turning it upside down. The handsomest furniture in the house adorns this spacious hall—the birch-root table, with its spreading feet, the big chest with its richly wrought brass handles, in which the Sunday and holiday clothing is kept, the tall arm-chair, hard and uncomfortable as a church-pew, the painted wooden chairs, and the spinning-wheel striped with green, to contrast with the scarlet petticoat of the spinner.

Yonder stands the pot in which the butter is kept, and the paddle with which it is worked, and here is the tobacco-box, and the grater of elaborately carved bone.

And, finally, over the door which opens into the kitchen is a large dresser, with long rows of brass and copper cooking-utensils and bright-colored dishes, the little grindstone for sharpening knives, half-buried in its varnished case, and the egg-dish, old enough to serve as a chalice.

And how wonderful and amusing are the walls, hung with linen tapestries representing scenes from the Bible, and brilliant with all the gorgeous coloring of the pictures of Epinal.

As for the guests' rooms, though they are less pretentious, they are no less comfortable, with their spotless neatness, their curtains of hanging-vines that droop from the turf-covered roof, their huge beds, sheeted with snowy and fragrant linen, and their hangings

with verses from the Old Testament, embroidered in yellow upon a red ground.

Nor must we forget that the floor of the main hall, and the floors of all the rooms, both upstairs and down, are strewn with little twigs of birch, pine, and juniper, whose leaves fill the house with their healthful and exhilarating odor.

Can one imagine a more charming *posada* in Italy, or a more seductive *fonda* in Spain? No. And the crowd of English tourists have not yet raised the scale of prices as in Switzerland—at least, they had not at the time of which I write. In Dal, the current coin is not the pound sterling, the sovereign of which the travelers' purse is soon emptied. It is a silver coin, worth about five francs, and its subdivisions are the mark, equal in value to about a franc, and the skilling, which must not be confounded with the English shilling, as it is only equivalent to a French *sou*.

Nor will the tourist have any opportunity to use or abuse the pretentious bank-note in the Telemark. One-mark notes are white; five-mark notes are blue; ten-mark notes are yellow; fifty-mark notes, green; one hundred mark notes, red. Two more, and we should have all the colors of the rainbow.

Besides—and this is a point of very considerable importance—the food one obtains at the Dal inn is excellent; a very unusual thing at houses of public entertainment in this locality, for the Telemark deserves only too well its surname of the Buttermilk Country. At Tiness, Listhus, Tinoset, and many other places, no bread is to be had, or if there be, it is of such poor quality as to be uneatable. One finds there only an oaten cake, known as *flat brod*, dry, black, and hard as pasteboard, or a coarse loaf composed of a mixture of birch-bark, lichens, and chopped straw. Eggs are a luxury, and a most stale and unprofitable one; but there is any quantity of poor beer to be had, a profusion of buttermilk, either sweet or sour, and sometimes a little coffee, so thick and muddy that it is much more like distilled soot than the products of Mocha or Rio Nunez.

In Dame Hansen's establishment, on the contrary, cellar and larder were alike well-stored. What more could the most exacting tourist ask than salmon, either salt or smoked—fresh salmon that have never tasted tainted waters, fish from the pure streams of the Telemark, fowls, neither too fat nor too lean, eggs in every style, crisp oaten and barley cakes, fruits, more especially strawberries, bread—unleavened bread, it is here, but of the very best quality—beer, and some old bottles of that Saint Julien that have spread the fame of French vineyards even to this distant land?

And this being the case, it is not strange that the inn at Dal is well and favorably known in all the countries of Northern Europe.

One can see this, too, by glancing over the register in which many travelers have not only recorded their names, but paid glowing tributes to Dame Hansen's merits as an inn-keeper. The names are principally those of Swedes and Norwegians from every part of Scandinavia; but the English make a very respectable showing; and one of them, who had waited at least an hour for the summit of Gousta to emerge from the morning mist that enveloped it, wrote upon one of the pages:

"Patientia omnia vincit?"

Chapter 3

Without being very deeply versed in ethnography, one may be strongly inclined to believe, in common with many *savants*, that a close relationship exists between the leading families of the English aristocracy and the oldest families of Scandinavia. Numerous proofs of this fact, indeed, are to be found in the ancestral names which are identical in both countries. There is no aristocracy in Norway, however; still, though the democracy everywhere rules, that does not prevent it from being aristocratic to the highest degree. All are equals upon an exalted plane instead of a low one. Even in the humblest hut may be found a genealogical tree which has not degenerated in the least because it has sprung up anew in humble soil; and the walls are adorned with the proud blazons of the feudal lords from whom these plain peasants are descended.

So it was with the Hansens of Dal, who were unquestionably related, though rather remotely, to the English peers created after Rollo's invasion of Normandy, and though rank and wealth had both departed they had at least preserved the old pride, or rather dignity, which becomes all social ranks.

It was a matter of very little consequence, however. Whether he had ancestors of lofty lineage or not, Harald Hansen was simply a village inn-keeper. The house had come down to him from his father and from his grandfather, who were widely known and respected, and after his death his widow continued the business in a way that elicited universal commendation.

Whether or not Harald had made a fortune in the business, no one was able to say; but he had been able to rear his son Joel and his daughter Hulda in comfort; and Ole Kamp, a son of his wife's sister, had also been brought up like one of his own children. But for his uncle Harald, this orphan child would doubtless have been one of those poor creatures who come into the world only to leave it; and Ole Kamp evinced a truly filial devotion toward his parents by adoption. Nothing would ever sever the tie that bound him to the Hansen family, to which his marriage with Hulda was about to bind him still more closely.

Harald Hansen had died about eighteen months before, leaving his wife, in addition to the inn, a small farm on the mountain, a piece of property which yielded very meager returns, if any. This was especially true of late, for the seasons had been remarkably unpropitious, and agriculture of every kind had suffered greatly, even the pastures. There had been many of those "iron nights," as the Norwegian peasants call them—nights of north-easterly gales and ice that kill the corn down to the very root—and that meant ruin to the farmers of the Telemark and the Hardanger.

Still, whatever Dame Hansen might think of the situation of affairs, she had never said a word to any living soul, not even to her children. Naturally cold and reserved, she was very uncommunicative—a fact that pained Hulda and Joel not a little. But with that respect for the head of the family innate in Northern lands, they made no attempt to break down a reserve which was eminently distasteful to them. Besides, Dame Hansen never

asked aid or counsel, being firmly convinced of the infallibility of her own judgment, for she was a true Norwegian in that respect.

Dame Hansen was now about fifty years old. Advancing age had not bowed her tall form, though it had whitened her hair; nor had it dimmed the brightness of her dark-blue eyes, whose azure was reflected in the clear orbs of her daughter; but her complexion had taken on the yellow hue of old parchment, and a few wrinkles were beginning to furrow her forehead.

The madame, as they say in Scandinavia, was invariably attired in a full black skirt, for she had never laid aside her mourning since her husband's death. Below the shoulder-straps of a brown bodice appeared the long full sleeves of an unbleached cotton chemise. On her shoulders she wore a small dark-colored fichu that crossed upon her breast, which was also covered by the large bib of her apron. She always wore as a head-dress a close-fitting black-silk cap that covered almost her entire head, and tied behind, a kind of head-dress that is rarely seen nowadays.

Seated stiffly erect in her wooden arm-chair, the grave hostess neglected her spinning-wheel only to enjoy a small birchwood pipe, whose smoke enveloped her in a faint cloud.

Really, the house would have seemed very gloomy had it not been for the presence of the two children.

A worthy lad was Joel Hansen. Twenty-five years of age, well built, tall, like all Norwegian mountaineers, proud in bearing, though not in the least boastful or conceited. He had fine hair, verging upon chestnut, with blue eyes so dark as to seem almost black. His garb displayed to admirable advantage his powerful shoulders, his broad chest, in which his lungs had full play, and stalwart limbs which never failed him even in the most difficult mountain ascents. His dark-blue jacket, fitting tightly at the waist, was adorned on the shoulders with epaulets, and in the back with designs in colored embroidery similar to those that embellish the vests of the Breton peasantry. His yellow breeches were fastened at the knee by large buckles. Upon his head he wore a broad-brimmed brown hat with a red-and-black band, and his legs were usually incased either in coarse cloth gaiters or in long stout boots without heels.

His vocation was that of a mountain guide in the district of the Telemark, and even in the Hardanger. Always ready to start, and untiring in his exertions, he was a worthy descendant of the Norwegian hero Rollo, the walker, celebrated in the legends of that country. Between times he accompanied English sportsmen who repair to that region to shoot the riper, a species of ptarmigan, larger than that found in the Hebrides, and the jerpir, a partridge much more delicate in its flavor than the grouse of Scotland. When winter came, the hunting of wolves engrossed his attention, for at that season of the year these fierce animals, emboldened by hunger, not unfrequently venture out upon the surface of the frozen lake. Then there was bear hunting in summer, when that animal, accompanied by her young, comes to secure its feast of fresh grass, and when one must pursue it over plateaus at an altitude of from ten to twelve thousand feet. More than once Joel had owed his life solely to the great strength that enabled him to endure the embraces of these formidable animals, and to the imperturbable coolness which enabled him to eventually dispatch them.

But when there was neither tourist nor hunter to be guided through the valley of the Vesfjorddal, Joel devoted his attention to the *soetur*, the little mountain farm where a young shepherd kept guard over half a dozen cows and about thirty sheep—a *soetur* consisting exclusively of pasture land.

Joel, being naturally very pleasant and obliging, was known and loved in every village in the Telemark; but two persons for whom he felt a boundless affection were his cousin Ole and his sister Hulda.

When Ole Kamp left Dal to embark for the last time, how deeply Joel regretted his inability to dower Hulda and thus avert the necessity for her lover's departure! In fact, if he had been accustomed to the sea, he would certainly have gone in his cousin's place. But money was needed to start them in housekeeping, and as Dame Hansen had offered no assistance, Joel understood only too well that she did not feel inclined to devote any portion of the estate to that purpose, so there was nothing for Ole to do but cross the broad Atlantic.

Joel had accompanied him to the extreme end of the valley on his way to Bergen, and there, after a long embrace, he wished him a pleasant journey and a speedy return, and then returned to console his sister, whom he loved with an affection which was at the same time fraternal and paternal in its character.

Hulda at that time was exactly eighteen years of age. She was not the *piga*, as the servant in a Norwegian inn is called, but rather the *froken*, the young lady of the house, as her mother was the madame. What a charming face was hers, framed in a wealth of pale golden hair, under a thin linen cap projecting in the back to give room for the long plaits of hair! What a lovely form incased in this tightly fitting bodice of red stuff, ornamented with green shoulder-straps and surmounted by a snowy chemisette, the sleeves of which were fastened at the wrist by a ribbon bracelet! What grace and perfect symmetry in the waist, encircled by a red belt with clasps of silver filigree which held in place the dark-green skirt, below which appeared the white stocking protected by the dainty pointed toed shoe of the Telemark!

Yes, Ole's betrothed was certainly charming, with the slightly melancholy expression of the daughters of the North softening her smiling face; and on seeing her one instantly thought of Hulda the Fair, whose name she bore, and who figures as the household fairy in Scandinavian mythology.

Nor did the reserve of a chaste and modest maiden mar the grace with which she welcomed the guests who came to the inn. She was well known to the world of tourists; and it was not one of the smallest attractions of the inn to be greeted by that cordial shake of the hand that Hulda bestowed on one and all. And after having said to her, "*Tack for mad*" (Thanks for the meal), what could be more delightful than to hear her reply in her fresh sonorous voice: "*Wed bekomme*!" (May it do you good!)

Chapter 4

Ole Kamp had been absent a year; and as he said in his letter, his winter's experience on the fishing banks of Newfoundland had been a severe one. When one makes money there one richly earns it. The equinoctial storms that rage there not unfrequently destroy a whole fishing fleet in a few hours; but fish abound, and vessels which escape find ample compensation for the toil and dangers of this home of the tempest.

Besides, Norwegians are excellent seamen, and shrink from no danger. In the numberless fiords that extend from Christiansand to Cape North, among the dangerous reefs of Finland, and in the channels of the Loffoden Islands, opportunities to familiarize themselves with the perils of ocean are not wanting; and from time immemorial they have given abundant proofs of their courage. Their ancestors were intrepid mariners at an epoch when the Hanse monopolized the commerce of northern Europe. Possibly they were a trifle prone to indulge in piracy in days gone by, but piracy was then quite common. Doubtless commerce has reformed since then, though one may perhaps be pardoned for thinking that there is still room for improvement.

However that may be, the Norwegians were certainly fearless seamen; they are to-day, and so they will ever be. Ole Kamp was not the man to belie his origin; besides, he had served his apprenticeship under his father, who was the master of a Bergen coasting vessel. His childhood had been spent in that port, which is one of the most frequented in Scandinavia. Before he ventured out upon the open sea he had been an untiring fisher in the fiords, and a fearless robber of the sea-birds' nests, and when he became old enough to serve as cabin-boy he made a voyage across the North Sea and even to the waters of the Polar Ocean.

Soon afterward his father died, and as he had lost his mother several years before, his uncle Harald Hansen invited him to become a member of his family, which he did, though he continued to follow the same calling.

In the intervals between his voyages he invariably spent his time with the friends he loved; but he made regular voyages upon large fishing vessels, and rose to the rank of mate when he was but twenty-one. He was now twenty-three years of age.

When he visited Dal, Joel found him a most congenial companion. He accompanied him on his excursions to the mountains, and across the highest table-lands of the Telemark. The young sailor seemed as much at home in the fields as in the fiords, and never lagged behind unless it was to keep his cousin Hulda company.

A close friendship gradually sprung up between Joel and Ole, and quite naturally the same sentiment assumed a different form in respect to the young girl. Joel, of course, encouraged it. Where would his sister ever find a better fellow, a more sympathetic nature, a warmer and more devoted heart? With Ole for a husband, Hulda's happiness was assured. So it was with the entire approval of her mother and brother that the young girl

followed the natural promptings of her heart. Though these people of the North are undemonstrative, they must not be accused of a want of sensibility. No! It is only their way; and perhaps their way is as good as any other, after all.

So it came to pass that one day, when all four of them were sitting quietly together, Ole remarked, without any preamble whatever:

“An idea occurs to me, Hulda.”

“What is it?”

“It seems to me that we ought to marry.”

“I think so too.”

“And so do I,” added Dame Hansen as coolly as if the matter had been under discussion for some time.

“I agree with you,” remarked Joel, “and in that case I shall naturally become your brother-in-law.”

“Yes,” said Ole; “but it is probable that I shall only love you the better for it.”

“That is very possible.”

“We have your consent, then?”

“Upon my word! nothing would please me better,” replied Joel.

“So it is decided, Hulda?” inquired Dame Hansen.

“Yes, mother,” replied the girl, quietly.

“You are really willing?” asked Ole. “I have loved you a long time, Hulda, without saying so.”

“And I you, Ole.”

“How it came about, I really do not know.”

“Nor I.”

“But it was doubtless seeing you grow more beautiful and good day by day.”

“That is saying a little too much, my dear Ole.”

“No; I certainly ought to be able to say that without making you blush, for it is only the truth. Didn’t you see that I was beginning to love Hulda, Dame Hansen?”

“I suspected as much.”

“And you, Joel?”

“I was sure of it.”

“Then I certainly think that you ought to have warned me,” said Ole, smiling.

“But how about your voyages, Ole?” inquired Dame Hansen. “Won’t they seem intolerable to you after you are married?”

“So intolerable that I shall not follow the sea any more after my marriage.”

“You will not go to sea any more?”

“No, Hulda. Do you think it would be possible for me to leave you for months at a time?”

“So this is to be your last voyage?”

“Yes, and if we have tolerable luck, this voyage will yield me quite a snug little sum of money, for Help Bros. have promised me a share in the profits.”

“They are good men,” remarked Joel.

“The best men living,” replied Ole, “and well known and highly respected by all the sailors of Bergen.”

“But what do you expect to do after you cease to follow the sea, my dear Ole?” inquired Hulda.

“I shall go into partnership with Joel in his business, I have pretty good legs, and if they are not good enough, I will improve them by going into regular training. Besides, I have thought of a plan which will not prove a bad one perhaps. Why can’t we establish a messenger service between Drammen, Kongsberg and a few other towns in the Telemark Communication now is neither easy nor regular, and there might be money in the scheme. Besides, I have other plans, to say nothing of—”

“Of what?”

“Never mind, now. I will tell you on my return. But I warn you that I am firmly resolved to make my Hulda the happiest woman in the country. Yes, I am.”

“If you but knew how easy that will be!” replied Hulda, offering him her hand. “Am I not that already, and is there a home in all Dal as pleasant as ours?”

Dame Hansen hastily averted her head.

“So the matter is settled?” asked Ole, cheerfully.

“Yes,” replied Joel.

“And settled beyond recall?”

“Certainly.”

“And you feel no regret, Hulda?”

“None whatever, my dear Ole.”

“I think, however, that it would be better not to appoint the day for your marriage until after your return,” remarked Joel.

“Very well, but it will go hard with me if I do not return in less than a year to lead Hulda to the church at Moel, where our friend, Pastor Andersen, will not refuse to make his best prayer for us!”

And it was in this way that the marriage of Hulda Hansen and Ole Kamp had been decided upon.

The young sailor was to go aboard his vessel a week later; but before they parted the

lovers were formally betrothed in accordance with the touching custom of Scandinavian countries.

In simple and honest Norway lovers are almost invariably publicly betrothed before marriage. Sometimes the marriage is not solemnized until two or three years afterward, but one must not suppose that the betrothal is simply an interchange of vows which depend only upon the honesty of the parties interested. No, the obligation is much more sacred, and even if this act of betrothal is not binding in the eyes of the law, it is, at least, so regarded by that universal law called custom.

So, in this case, it was necessary to make arrangements for a ceremony over which Pastor Andersen should preside. There was no minister in Dal, nor in any of the neighboring hamlets. In Norway they have what they call Sunday towns, in which the minister resides, and where the leading families of the parish assemble for worship. They even lease apartments there, in which they take up their abode for twenty-four hours or more—time to perform their religious duties—and people return from the town as from a pilgrimage.

Dal, it is true, boasted of a chapel, but the pastor came only when he was summoned.

After all, Moel was not far off, only about eight miles distant, at the end of Lake Tinn, and Pastor Andersen was a very obliging man, and a good walker; so the worthy minister was invited to attend the betrothal in the twofold capacity of minister and family friend. The acquaintance was one of long standing. He had seen Joel and Hulda grow up, and loved them as well as he loved that young sea-dog, Ole Kamp, so the news of the intended marriage was very pleasing to him.

So Pastor Andersen gathered together his robe, his collar, and his prayer-book, and started off for Dal one misty, moisty morning. He arrived there in the company of Joel, who had gone half-way to meet him, and it is needless to say that his coming was hailed with delight at Dame Hansen’s inn, that he had the very best room in the house, and that the floor was freshly strewn with twigs of juniper that perfumed it like a chapel.

At one o’clock on the following day the little church was thrown open, and there, in the presence of the pastor and a few friends and neighbors, Ole and Hulda solemnly promised to wed each other when the young sailor should return from the last voyage he intended to make. A year is a long time to wait, but it passes all the same, nor is it intolerable when two persons can trust each other.

And now Ole could not, without good cause, forsake her to whom he had plighted his troth, nor could Hulda retract the promise she had given to Ole; and if Ole had not left Norway a few days after the betrothal, he might have profited by the incontestable right it gave him to visit the young girl whenever he pleased, to write to her whenever he chose, walk out with her arm in arm, unaccompanied by any member of the family, and enjoy a preference over all others in the dances that form a part of all fêtes and ceremonies.

But Ole Kamp had been obliged to return to Bergen, and one week afterward the “Viking” set sail for the fishing banks of Newfoundland, and Hulda could only look forward to the letters which her betrothed had promised to send her by every mail.

And these impatiently expected letters never failed her, and always brought a ray of

happiness to the house which seemed so gloomy after the departure of one of its inmates. The voyage was safely accomplished; the fishing proved excellent, and the profits promised to be large. Besides, at the end of each letter, Ole always referred to a certain secret, and of the fortune it was sure to bring him. It was a secret that Hulda would have been glad to know, and Dame Hansen, too, for reasons one would not have been likely to suspect.

Dame Hansen seemed to have become even more gloomy and anxious and reticent than ever, and a circumstance which she did not see fit to mention to her children increased her anxiety very considerably.

Three days after the arrival of Ole's last letter, as Dame Hansen was returning alone from the saw-mill, to which place she had gone to order a bag of shavings from the foreman, Lengling, she was accosted near her own door by a man who was a stranger in that part of the country.

"This is Dame Hansen, is it not?" he inquired.

"Yes; but I do not know you," was the reply.

"That doesn't matter," rejoined the man. "I arrived here only this morning from Drammen, and am now on my way back."

"From Drammen?" repeated Dame Hansen, quickly.

"You are acquainted, I think, with a certain Monsieur Sandgoist, who lives there?"

"Monsieur Sandgoist!" repeated Dame Hansen, whose face paled at the name. "Yes, I know him."

"Ah, well! When Monsieur Sandgoist heard that I was coming to Dal, he asked me to give his respects to you."

"Was that all?"

"And to say to you that it was more than probable that he would pay you a visit next month. Good health to you, and good-evening, Dame Hansen."

Chapter 5

Hulda was considerably surprised at the persistency with which Ole alluded in his letters to the fortune that was to be his on his return. Upon what did the young man base his expectations? Hulda could not imagine, and she was very anxious to know. Was this anxiety due solely to an idle curiosity on her part? By no means, for the secret certainly affected her deeply. Not that she was ambitious, this modest and honest young girl; nor did she in looking forward to the future ever aspire to what we call wealth. Ole's affection satisfied, and would always satisfy her. If wealth came, she would welcome it with joy. If it did not come, she would still be content.

This is precisely what Hulda and Joel said to each other the day after Ole's last letter reached Dal. They agreed perfectly upon this subject, as upon all others, by the way. And then Joel added:

"No; it is impossible, little sister. You certainly must be keeping something from me."

"Keeping something from you!"

"Yes; for I can not believe that Ole went away without giving you some clew to his secret."

"Did he say anything to you about it?"

"No; but you and I are not one and the same person."

"Yes, we are, brother."

"I am not Ole's betrothed, at all events."

"Almost," said the young girl; "and if any misfortune should befall him, and he should not return from this voyage, you would be as inconsolable as I would be, and your tears would flow quite as freely as mine."

"Really, little sister. I forbid you to even speak of such a thing," replied Joel. "Ole not return from his last voyage to the great fishing banks! What can have put such an idea into your head? You surely can not mean what you say, Hulda!"

"No, certainly not. And yet, I do not know. I can not drive away certain presentiments—the result, perhaps, of bad dreams."

"Dreams are only dreams."

"True, brother, but where do they come from?"

"From ourselves, not from heaven. You are anxious, and so your fears haunt you in your slumber. Besides, it is almost always so when one has earnestly desired a thing and the time when one's desires are to be realized is approaching."

"I know it, Joel."

“Really, I thought you were much more sensible, little sister. Yes, and more energetic. Here you have just received a letter from Joel saying that the ‘Viking’ will return before the end of the month, and it is now the 19th of April, and consequently none too soon for you to begin your preparations for the wedding.”

“Do you really think so, Joel?”

“Certainly I think so, Hulda. I even think that we have delayed too long already. Think of it. We must have a wedding that will not only create a sensation in Dal, but in all the neighboring villages. I intend it shall be the grandest one ever known in the district, so I am going to set to work immediately.”

An affair of this kind is always a momentous occasion in all the country districts of Norway, particularly in the Telemark, so that every day Joel had a conversation with his mother on the subject. It was only a few moments after Dame Hansen’s meeting with the stranger, whose message had so deeply agitated her, and though she had seated herself at her spinning-wheel as usual, it would have been plain to a close observer that her thoughts were far away.

Even Joel noticed that his mother seemed even more despondent than usual, but as she invariably replied that there was nothing the matter with her when she was questioned on the subject, her son decided to speak only of Hulda’s marriage.

“Mother,” he began, “you, of course, recollect that Ole announced in his last letter that he should probably return to Dal in a few weeks.”

“It is certainly to be hoped that he will,” replied Dame Hansen, “and that nothing will occur to occasion any further delay.”

“Do you see any objection to our fixing upon the twenty-fifth of May as the day of the marriage?”

“None, whatever, if Hulda is willing.”

“Her consent is already given. And now I think I had better ask you, mother, if you do not intend to do the handsome thing on that occasion?”

“What do you mean by the handsome thing?” retorted Dame Hansen, without raising her eyes from her spinning-wheel.

“Why, I am anxious, if you approve, of course, that the wedding should correspond with the position we hold in the neighborhood. We ought to invite all our friends to it, and if our own house is not large enough to accommodate them, our neighbors, I am sure, will be glad to lodge our guests.”

“Who will these guests be, Joel?”

“Why, I think we ought to invite all our friends from Moel, Tiness and Bamble. I will attend to that. I think, too, that the presence of Help Bros., the shipowners, would be an honor to the family, and with your consent, I repeat, I will invite them to spend a day with us at Dal. They are very fine men, and they think a great deal of Ole, so I am almost sure that they will accept the invitation.”

“Is it really necessary to make this marriage such an important event?” inquired Dame

Hansen, coldly.

“I think so, mother, if only for the sake of our inn, which I am sure has maintained its old reputation since my father’s death.”

“Yes, Joel, yes.”

“And it seems to me that it is our duty to at least keep it up to the standard at which he left it; consequently, I think it would be advisable to give considerable publicity to my sister’s marriage.”

“So be it, Joel.”

“And do you not agree with me in thinking that it is quite time for Hulda to begin her preparations, and what do you say to my suggestion?”

“I think that you and Hulda must do whatever you think necessary,” replied Dame Hansen.

Perhaps the reader will think that Joel was in too much of a hurry, and that it would have been much more sensible in him to have waited until Ole’s return before appointing the wedding-day, and beginning to prepare for it, but as he said, what was once done would not have to be done over again; besides, the countless details connected with a ceremonial of this kind would serve to divert Hulda’s mind from these forebodings for which there seemed to be no foundation.

The first thing to be done was to select the bride’s maid of honor. That proved an easy matter, however, for Hulda’s choice was already made. The bride-maid, of course, must be Hulda’s intimate friend, Farmer Helmboe’s daughter. Her father was a prominent man, and the possessor of a very comfortable fortune. For a long time he had fully appreciated Joel’s sterling worth, and his daughter Siegfrid’s appreciation, though of a rather different nature, was certainly no less profound; so it was quite probable that at no very distant day after Siegfrid had served as Hulda’s maid of honor, Hulda, in turn, would act in the same capacity for her friend. This is the custom in Norway, where these pleasant duties are generally reserved for married women, so it was rather on Joel’s account that Siegfrid Helmboe was to serve Hulda Hansen in this capacity.

A question of vital importance to the bride-maid as well as to the bride, is the toilet to be worn on the day of the wedding.

Siegfrid, a pretty blonde of eighteen summers, was firmly resolved to appear to the best possible advantage on the occasion. Warned by a short note from her friend Hulda—Joel had kindly made himself responsible for its safe delivery—she immediately proceeded to devote her closest attention to this important work.

In the first place, an elaborately embroidered bodice must be made to incase Siegfrid’s charming figure as if in a coat of enamel. There was also much talk about a skirt composed of a series of jupons which should correspond in number with the wearer’s fortune, but in no way detract from her charms of person. As for jewelry, it was no easy matter to select the design of the collar of silver filigree, set with pearls, the heart-shaped ear-rings, the double buttons to fasten the neck of the chemisette, the belt of red silk or woolen stuff from which depend four rows of small chains, the finger-rings studded with

tiny bangles that tinkle musically, the bracelets of fretted silver—in short, all the wealth of country finery in which gold appears only in the shape of the thinnest plating, silver in the guise of tin and pearls, and diamonds in the shape of wax and crystal beads. But what does that matter so long as the *tout ensemble* is pleasing to the eye? Besides, if necessary, Siegfrid would not hesitate to go to the elegant stores of M. Benett, in Christiania, to make her purchases. Her father would not object—far from it! The kind-hearted man allowed his daughter full liberty in such matters; besides, Siegfrid was sensible enough not to draw too heavily upon her father's purse, though everything else was of secondary importance provided Joel would see her at her very best on that particular day.

As for Hulda, her anxiety on the subject was no less serious, for fashions are pitiless, and give, besides, not a little trouble in the selection of their wedding-toilet.

Hulda would now be obliged to abandon the long plaits tied with bright ribbons, which had heretofore hung from under her coquettish cap, the broad belt with fancy buckles that kept her apron in place upon her scarlet skirt, the girdle to which were appended several small embroidered leather cases containing a silver tea-spoon, knife, fork, needle-case and scissors—articles which a woman makes constant use of in the household.

No, on the fast approaching day of the nuptials, Hulda's hair would be allowed to float down upon her shoulders, and it was so abundant that it would not be necessary for her to have recourse to the jute switches used by Norwegian girls less favored by nature. Indeed, for her clothing, as well as for her ornaments, Hulda would only be obliged to resort to her mother's big chest. In fact, these articles of clothing are transmitted from marriage to marriage through all the different generations of the same family. So one sees reappearing again and again upon the scene the bodice embroidered in gold, the velvet sash, the skirt of striped silk, the gold chain for the neck, and the crown—the famous Scandinavian crown—carefully preserved in the most secure of all the chests, and made of pasteboard covered with embossed gilt paper, and studded with stars, or garlanded with leaves—that takes the place of the wreath of orange-blossoms worn by brides in other European countries.

In this case the crowned betrothed, as the bride is styled, would certainly do honor to her husband; and he would be worthy of her in his gay wedding suit: a short jacket trimmed with silver buttons, silk-embroidered waistcoat, tight breeches fastened at the knee with a bunch of bright ribbons, a soft felt hat, yellow top-boots, and in his belt the Scandinavian knife—the dolknife—with which the true Norwegian is always provided.

Consequently, there was plenty to occupy the attention of the young ladies for some time to come. Two or three weeks would barely suffice if they wished to have everything in readiness before Ole's return; but even if Ole should arrive sooner than he expected, and Hulda should not be quite ready, she would not be inconsolable, nor would he.

The last weeks of April and the first weeks of May were devoted to these matters. Joel assumed charge of the invitations, taking advantage of the fact that his vocation of guide gave him considerable leisure at this season of the year. One would have supposed that he had a large number of friends in Bamble, for he went there very often. He had already written to Help Bros., inviting them to attend his sister's wedding, and in accordance with his prediction, these worthy shipowners had promptly accepted the invitation.

The fifteenth of May came, and any day now they might expect Ole to alight from his kariol, throw open the door, and shout in his hearty, cheerful voice:

“It is I! Here I am!”

A little patience was all that was needed now, for everything was in readiness, and Siegfrid needed only a word to appear before them in all her splendor.

The 16th and 17th passed, and still no Ole, nor did the postman bring any letter from Newfoundland.

“There is no cause for anxiety, little sister,” Joel said, again and again. “A sailing-vessel is always subject to delays. It is a long way from St. Pierre-Miquelon to Bergen. How I wish the ‘Viking’ were a steamer and I the engine. How I would drive along against wind and tide, even if I should burst my boiler on coming into port.”

He said all this because he saw very plainly that Hulda’s uneasiness was increasing from day to day.

Just at this time, too, the weather was very bad in the Telemark. Violent gales swept the high table-lands, and these winds, which blew from the west, came from America.

“They ought to have hastened the arrival of the ‘Viking,’” the young girl repeated again and again.

“Yes, little sister,” replied Joel; “but they are so strong that they may have hindered its progress, and compelled it to face the gale. People can’t always do as they like upon the sea.”

“So you are not uneasy, Joel?”

“No, Hulda, no. It is annoying, of course, but these delays are very common. No; I am not uneasy, for there is really not the slightest cause for anxiety.”

On the 19th a traveler arrived at the inn, and asked for a guide to conduct him over the mountains to the Hardanger, and though Joel did not like the idea of leaving Hulda, he could not refuse his services. He would only be absent forty-eight hours at the longest, and he felt confident that he should find Ole at Dal on his return, though, to tell the truth, the kind-hearted youth was beginning to feel very uneasy. Still, he started off early the next morning, though with a heavy heart, we must admit.

On the following day, at precisely one o’clock, a loud rap resounded at the door of the inn.

“It is Ole!” cried Hulda.

She ran to the door.

There, in a kariol, sat a man enveloped in a traveling-cloak, a man whose face was unknown to her.

Chapter 6

“Is this Dame Hansen’s inn?” he asked.

“Yes, sir,” answered Hulda.

“Is Dame Hansen at home?”

“No; but she will soon return, and if you wish to speak to her—”

“I do not. There is nothing I want to say to her.”

“Would you like a room?”

“Yes; the best in the house.”

“Shall we prepare dinner for you?”

“As soon as possible, and see to it that everything is of the very best quality.”

These remarks were exchanged between Hulda and the traveler before the latter had alighted from the kariol, in which he had journeyed to the heart of the Telemark across the forests, lakes, and valleys of Central Norway.

Every one who has visited Scandinavia is familiar with the kariol, the means of locomotion so dear to the hearts of her people. Two long shafts, between which trots a horse wearing a square wooden collar, painted yellow and striped with black, and guided with a simple rope passed, not through his mouth, but around his nose, two large, slender wheels, whose springless axle supports a small gay-colored, shell-shaped wagon-body, scarcely large enough to hold one person—no covering, no dash-board, no step—but behind, a board upon which the *skydskarl* perches himself. The whole vehicle strongly reminds one of an enormous spider between two huge cobwebs represented by the wheels of the vehicle.

At a sign from the traveler the *skydskarl* sprung to the horse’s head, and the stranger rose, straightened himself out, and finally alighted, though not without some difficulty, judging from two or three muttered curses.

“Will they put my kariol under shelter?” he asked, curtly, pausing upon the threshold.

“Yes, sir,” replied Hulda.

“And find my horse?”

“I will have him put in the stable immediately.”

“Have him well cared for.”

“Certainly, sir. May I ask if you intend to remain in Dal several days?”

“I don’t know yet.”

The kariol and horse were taken to a small barn built under the shelter of some trees at

the foot of the mountain. It was the only stable connected with the inn, but it sufficed for the requirements of its guests.

In a few moments the traveler was duly installed in the best chamber, where, after removing his cloak, he proceeded to warm himself before the fire he had ordered lighted. In the meantime, Hulda, to satisfy this exacting guest, bade the *piga* (a sturdy peasant-girl, who helped in the kitchen, and did the rough work of the inn during the summer) prepare the best dinner possible.

A strong, hardy man was this new-comer, though he had already passed his sixtieth year. Thin, slightly round-shouldered, of medium stature, with an angular head, smoothly shaven face, thin, pointed nose, small eyes that looked you through and through from behind large spectacles, a forehead generally contracted by a frown, lips too thin for a pleasant word ever to escape them, and long, crooked fingers, he was the very personification of an avaricious usurer or miser, and Hulda felt a presentiment that this stranger would bring no good fortune to Dame Hansen’s house.

He was a Norwegian unquestionably, but one of the very worst type. His traveling costume consisted of a broad-brimmed, low-crowned hat, a snuff-colored suit, the breeches fastened at the knee with a leather strap, and over all a large brown cloak, lined with sheep-skin to protect its wearer from the chilly night air.

Hulda did not ask him his name, but she would soon learn it, as he would have to enter it upon the inn register.

Just then Dame Hansen returned, and her daughter announced the arrival of a guest who demanded the best room and the best food that the inn afforded, but who vouchsafed no information in regard to the probable length of his stay.

“And he did not give his name?” asked Dame Hansen.

“No, mother.”

“Nor say whence he came?”

“No.”

“If he is not a tourist, what can have brought him to Dal?” said Dame Hansen to herself rather than to her daughter, and in a tone that indicated some uneasiness.

But Hulda could not answer this question, as the new-comer had acquainted her with none of his plans.

About an hour after his arrival the man came out into the main hall, from which his door opened, but seeing Dame Hansen sitting there, he paused upon the threshold.

Evidently he was as much of a stranger to his hostess as his hostess was to him; but he finally walked toward her, and after a long look at her from over his spectacles:

“You are Dame Hansen, I suppose?” he said, without even touching the hat he had not yet removed from his head.

“Yes, sir.”

In the presence of this man the widow, strange to say, experienced, like her daughter, an

uneasiness for which she could not account, but which her guest must have noticed.

“So you are really Dame Hansen, of Dal?” he continued.

“Certainly, sir. Have you anything particular to say to me?”

“Nothing; I only wished to make your acquaintance. Am I not your guest? And now I should like you to see that I have my dinner as soon as possible.”

“Your dinner is ready,” interposed Hulda, “and if you will step into the dining-room—”

“I will.”

As he spoke, the stranger directed his steps toward the door indicated, and a moment afterward he was seated near the window in front of a small, neatly spread table.

The dinner was certainly good. The most fastidious traveler could not have found fault with it; nevertheless, this ill-tempered individual was not sparing in his signs and words of dissatisfaction—especially signs, for he did not appear to be very loquacious. One could hardly help wondering whether this fault-finding was due to a poor digestion or a bad temper. The soup of cherries and gooseberries did not suit him, though it was excellent, and he scarcely tasted his salmon and salt-herring. The cold ham, broiled chicken and nicely seasoned vegetables did not seem to please him, and his bottle of claret and his half bottle of champagne seemed to be equally unsatisfactory, though they came from the best cellars in France; and when the repast was concluded the guest had not even a “*tack for mad*” for his hostess.

After dinner the old curmudgeon lighted his pipe and went out for a walk along the river bank.

On reaching the stream he turned and fixed his eyes upon the inn. He seemed to be studying it under all its varied aspects, as if trying to form a correct estimate of its value.

He counted every door and window, and finally on his return to the inn he stuck his knife into the horizontal beams at its base, as if to test the quality of the wood and its state of preservation. Could it be that he was trying to find out how much Dame Hansen’s inn was really worth? Did he aspire to become the owner of it, though it was not for sale? All this was certainly very strange, especially as he afterward turned his attention to the little yard, the trees and shrubs of which he counted carefully, and finally measured both sides of the inclosure with regular strides, after which the movement of his pencil over a page of his memorandum-book seemed to indicate that he was multiplying one by the other.

All the while Dame Hansen and her daughter were watching him from one of the windows of the inn. What strange creature was this, and what could be the object of his visit? It was greatly to be regretted that all this took place during Joel’s absence, especially as the eccentric individual was going to spend the night at the inn.

“What if he is a madman?” said Hulda.

“A madman? no,” replied Dame Hansen. “But he is a very eccentric person, to say the least.”

“It is always unpleasant to be ignorant of the name of the person you are entertaining,” remarked the young girl.

“Before he re-enters the house, Hulda, be sure that you carry the register into his room. Perhaps he will conclude to write his name in it.”

“Yes, mother.”

Just at dusk a fine rain began to fall, so the stranger returned to the inn. He asked for a small glass of brandy, then without saying a word, or even bidding any one good-night, he took his wooden candlestick, and entering his room bolted the door behind him, and nothing further was heard from him that night.

The *skydskarl* had taken refuge in the barn, where he was already sound asleep in company with the sorrel horse.

Dame Hansen and her daughter rose with the sun the next morning, but no sound came from the room of their guest, who was probably still sleeping. A little after nine o’clock he made his appearance even more glum and ill-tempered than the evening before, complaining that his bed had been hard, and that the noise in the house had kept, him awake; then he opened the door and looked out at the sky.

The prospect was not very cheering, certainly, for the wind was blowing a gale, and the stranger concluded not to venture out. Still he did not waste his time. With his pipe in his mouth he walked about the inn as if trying to familiarize himself with the arrangement of the interior. He visited all the different rooms, examined the furniture, and peered into cupboards and sideboards with as much coolness as if he had been in his own house.

Though the man was singular in appearance, his actions were certainly even more singular. Finally he seated himself in the big arm-chair, and proceeded to question Dame Hansen in a curt, almost rude tone. How long had the inn been built? Was it her husband that built it, or did he inherit it? How much land was there around it, and what was the extent of the adjoining *souter*? Was the inn well patronized, and did it pay well? How many tourists came there on an average during the summer? Did they usually spend one or several days there? etc., etc.

It was evident that the stranger had not looked at the register that had been placed in his room, for that would have given him all the information he desired upon this last point.

In fact, the book was still on the table where Hulda had placed it the evening before, and the traveler’s name was not in it.

“I do not understand how and why these matters can interest you, sir,” said Dame Hansen at last; “but if you wish to know the state of our business, nothing could be easier. You have only to examine the register, in which you would greatly oblige me by entering your name according to custom.”

“My name? I will write my name in it, certainly. I will write it there before I leave, which will be immediately after breakfast, as I am anxious to get back to Drammen by to-morrow evening.”

“Drammen!” repeated Dame Hansen, hastily.

“Yes. Will you give me my breakfast as soon as possible?”

“Do you live in Drammen?”

“Yes. May I ask if there is anything astonishing about the fact that I reside in Drammen?”

So, after spending scarcely twenty-four hours in Dal, or rather at the inn, the traveler left without making the slightest effort to see anything of the surrounding country, Gousta, and Rjukanfos, and the wonders of the valley of the Vesfjorddal were entirely ignored.

It certainly could not have been for pleasure that he left Drammen, so he must have come on business, and the sole object of his visit seemed to have been a careful examination of Dame Hansen’s establishment.

It was plain to Hulda that her mother was deeply troubled, for she seated herself in her big arm-chair, and pushing aside her spinning-wheel, remained there silent and motionless.

In the meantime the traveler had gone into the dining-room and seated himself at the table. Though the breakfast was as carefully prepared as the dinner of the evening before, it seemed to give no better satisfaction; and yet the guest eat and drank in the same leisurely fashion. His attention seemed to be chiefly bestowed upon the silver—a luxury highly prized among Norwegian peasants, where the few forks and spoons which are handed down from father to son are carefully preserved with the family jewels.

Meanwhile the *skydskarl* busied himself with his preparations for departure; and by eleven o’clock the horse and kariol were standing before the door of the inn.

The weather was still threatening; the sky was dull and overcast, and now and then big drops of rain dashed against the window-panes; but this traveler with his heavy cloak lined with sheep-skin was not a man to worry about the weather.

Breakfast over, he called for one more glass of brandy, lighted his pipe, and put on his coat, then stepping out into the hall he called for his bill.

“I will make it out immediately,” replied Hulda, seating herself at a small desk.

“Be quick about it,” said the traveler. “And now,” he added, “you had better bring me your book so I can write my name in it.”

Dame Hansen rose and left the room to get the register, which, on her return, she placed upon the large table.

The stranger picked up a pen and took one more long look at Dame Hansen over his spectacles; then he wrote his name in a large, round hand, and closed the book.

Just at that moment Hulda handed him his bill. He took it, examined each item separately, and then proceeded to add up the figures, grumbling all the while.

“Hum!” he exclaimed. “This is very dear! Seven marks and a half for a night’s lodging and two meals!”

“You forget the *skydskarl* and the horse,” remarked Hulda.

“Nevertheless, I think your charge very high. I really don’t see how you can expect to prosper if you are so exorbitant in your charges.”

“You owe me nothing, sir,” said Dame Hansen, in a voice that trembled so that it was

scarcely audible.

She had just opened the register and read the name inscribed upon it, and now taking the bill and tearing it up, she repeated:

“You owe me nothing.”

“That is exactly my opinion,’” replied the stranger.

And without bidding them good-bye on his departure any more than he had bidden them good-day on his arrival, he climbed into his kariol, and the *skydskarl* jumped upon the board behind him. A few seconds later he had disappeared around a turn in the road. When Hulda opened the book she found there only this name—

“Sandgoist, from Drammen.”

Chapter 7

It was on the afternoon of the following day that Joel was to return home; and Hulda, who knew that her brother would come back by the table-lands of the Gousta and along the left bank of the Maan, went to meet him at the ferry across that impetuous stream. On arriving there she seated herself on the little wharf which serves as a landing-place for the ferry-boat, and abandoned herself to her thoughts.

To the deep uneasiness caused by the non-arrival of the “Viking” was now added another great anxiety. This last was caused by the mysterious visit of Sandgoist, and Dame Hansen’s agitation in his presence. Why had she destroyed the bill and declined to accept the money due her as soon as she learned her guest’s name? There must be some secret concealed under all this—and a grave one.

Hulda was finally aroused from her reverie by the approach of Joel. She first caught a glimpse of him as he was descending the topmost slope; soon he reappeared in the midst of a narrow clearing between the burned and fallen trees. Then he vanished from sight behind a clump of pines, and at last reached the opposite bank and jumped aboard the ferry-boat. With a few vigorous strokes of the oar he propelled the boat swiftly through the rapids, and then leaped upon the little pier beside his sister.

“Has Ole returned?” he asked, hastily.

It was of Ole that he thought first of all; but his question remained unanswered.

“Have you received no letter from him?”

“Not one.”

And Hulda burst into tears.

“Don’t cry, little sister,” exclaimed Joel, “don’t cry. You make me wretched. I can not bear to see you weep. Let me see! You say you have received no letter. The matter is beginning to look a little serious, I must admit, though there is no reason to despair as yet. If you desire it, I will go to Bergen, and make inquiries there. I will call on Help Bros. Possibly they may have some news from Newfoundland. It is quite possible that the ‘Viking’ may have put into some port for repairs, or on account of bad weather. The wind has been blowing a hurricane for more than a week, and not unfrequently ships from Newfoundland take refuge in Iceland, or at the Faroe Islands. This very thing happened to Ole two years ago, when he was on board the ‘Strenna,’ you remember. I am only saying what I really think, little sister. Dry your eyes. If you make me lose heart what will become of us?”

“But I can’t help it, Joel.”

“Hulda! Hulda! do not lose courage. I assure you that I do not despair, not by any means.”

“Can I really believe you, Joel?”

“Yes, you can. Now, to reassure you, shall I start for Bergen to-morrow morning, or this very evening?”

“No, no, you must not leave me! No, you must not!” sobbed Hulda, clinging to her brother as if he was the only friend she had left in the world.

They started toward the inn. Joel sheltered his sister from the rain as well as he could, but the wind soon became so violent that they were obliged to take refuge in the hut of the ferryman, which stood a few hundred yards from the bank of the Maan.

There they were obliged to remain until the wind abated a little, and Joel was glad of an opportunity to have a longer conversation with his sister.

“How does mother seem?” he inquired.

“Even more depressed in spirits than usual,” replied Hulda.

“Has any one been here during my absence?”

“Yes, one traveler, but he has gone away.”

“So there is no tourist at the inn now, and no one has asked for a guide?”

“No, Joel.”

“So much the better, for I would much rather not leave you. Besides, if this unpleasant weather continues, it is not likely that many tourists will visit the Telemark this season. But tell me, was it yesterday that your guest left Dal?”

“Yes, yesterday morning.”

“Who was he?”

“A man who resides in Drammen, and whose name is Sandgoist.”

“Sandgoist?”

“Do you know him?”

“No.”

Hulda had asked herself more than once if she should tell her brother all that had occurred in his absence. When Joel heard how coolly their guest had conducted himself, and how he seemed to have come merely to appraise the house and its contents, what would he think? Would not he, too, fear that his mother must have had grave reasons for acting as she had? What were these reasons? What could there be in common between her and Sandgoist? Joel would certainly desire to know, and would be sure to question his mother, and as Dame Hansen, who was always so uncommunicative, would doubtless persist in the silence she had maintained hitherto, the relations between her and her children, which were so unnatural and constrained now, would become still more unpleasant.

But would Hulda be able to keep anything from Joel? A secret from him! Would it not be a violation of the close friendship that united them? No, this friendship must never be broken! So Hulda suddenly resolved to tell him all.

“Have you ever heard any one speak of this Sandgoist when you were in Drammen?” she asked.

“Never.”

“But our mother knew him, Joel; at least by name.”

“She knew Sandgoist?”

“Yes.”

“I certainly never heard the name before.”

“But she has, though she had never seen the man until day before yesterday.”

Then Hulda related all the incidents that had marked Sandgoist’s sojourn at the inn, not neglecting to mention Dame Hansen’s singular conduct at the moment of his departure. Then she hastened to add:

“I think, Joel, it would be best not to say anything to mother about it at present. You know her disposition, and it would only make her still more unhappy. The future will probably reveal what has been concealed from us in the past. Heaven grant that Ole may be restored to us, and then if any misfortune should befall the family there will at least be three of us to share it.”

Joel had listened to his sister with profound attention. Yes, it was evident that Dame Hansen must be at this man’s mercy, and it was impossible to doubt that he had come to take an inventory of the property. And the destruction of the bill at the time of his departure—a destruction that seemed only right and proper to him—what could be the meaning of that?

“You are right, Hulda,” said Joel. “I had better not say anything to mother about it. Perhaps she will feel sorry by and by that she has not confided in us. Heaven grant that it may not be too late! She must be wretched, poor woman! How strange it is that she can not understand that her children were born to sympathize with her.”

“She will find it out some day, Joel.”

“Yes; so let us wait patiently, little sister. Still, there is no reason why I should not try to find out who the man is. Perhaps Farmer Helmboe knows him. I will ask him the first time I go to Bamble, and if need be I will push on to Drammen. There it will not be difficult for me to at least learn what the man does, and what people think of him.”

“They do not think well of him, I am sure,” replied Hulda. “His face is very unprepossessing, and I shall be very much surprised if there is a noble soul concealed under such a repulsive exterior.”

“Come, come, little sister, it will not do to judge people by outward appearances,” exclaimed Joel. “Don’t be so suspicious, Hulda, and cheer up. Ole will soon be with us, and we will scold him roundly for having kept us waiting.”

The rain having ceased the pair left the hut and started up the path leading to the inn.

“By the way, I must go away again to-morrow, little sister,” said Joel.

“Go away again to-morrow!” repeated Hulda.

“Yes, early in the morning. On leaving the Hardanger I was informed by a comrade that a traveler, coming from the north by way of the Rjukanfos would arrive to-morrow.”

“Who is this traveler?”

“I don’t know his name, but I must be on hand to conduct him to Dal.”

“Ah, well! go, then, as there is no help for it,” replied Hulda, with a sigh.

“Yes, I must start to-morrow at sunrise. Do you really feel so badly about it, Hulda?”

“Yes, brother, I feel much more unhappy when you leave me, even if it is only for a few hours.”

“Ah, well, this time I shall not go alone.”

“Why, who is to accompany you?”

“You, little sister. You need diversion, and I am going to take you with me.”

“Oh, thank you, Joel, thank you!”

Chapter 8

The brother and sister left the inn at sunrise the next morning. The fifteen mile walk from Dal to the celebrated falls of the Rjukan, and back again, was a mere trifle for Joel, but it was necessary to economize Hulda's strength, so Joel hired foreman Lengling's kariol. This, like all kariols, had but one seat, but the worthy man was so large that he had been obliged to have his kariol built to order, and this being the case the vehicle was large enough to enable Hulda and Joel to sit side by side quite comfortably; and if the expected tourist was waiting for them at Rjukanfos as they anticipated, he could take Joel's place and the latter could either return afoot or mounted upon the step behind the kariol.

The road from Dal to the falls is very rough but indescribably charming. It is really rather a footpath than a road. The bridges across the countless streams that dance merrily along to the Maan are all constructed of unhewn logs, but the Norwegian horse traverses them with a sure step, and though the kariol has no springs, its long and slightly elastic shafts soften the jolting at least to some extent.

The day was charming, and Hulda and Joel drove along at a brisk pace through the flowery fields, bathed on the left by the clear waters of the Maan. Clumps of birches here and there shaded the sunny road, and the dew still glittered on the blades of grass. To the right of the torrent towered the snow-clad summit of the Gousta, which rises to an altitude of six thousand feet.

For nearly an hour, the vehicle moved on rapidly, the ascent being comparatively slight; but soon the valley became narrower, the gay rivulets were transformed into foaming torrents, and though the road wound in and out it could not avoid all the inequalities of the ground. Beyond came really dangerous passes, through which Joel guided the vehicle with no little skill; besides, with him Hulda feared nothing. When the road was very rough she clung to his arm, and the freshness of the morning air brought a glow to the pretty face which had been unusually pale for some time.

But it was necessary for them to ascend to still greater heights, for the valley here contracted into merely a narrow channel for the passage of the river, a channel inclosed on either side by massive walls of rock. Over the neighboring fields were scattered a few dilapidated farm-houses, the remains of *soeters*, which were now abandoned, and a few shepherd's huts almost hidden from view by clumps of birches and oaks. Soon it became impossible for them to see the river, though they could distinctly hear it dashing along in its rocky channel, and the country assumed an indescribably wild and imposing aspect.

A drive of two hours brought them to a rough saw-mill perched upon the edge of a water-fall at least fifteen hundred feet in height. Water-falls of this height are by no means rare in the Vesfjorddal, but the volume of water is usually small. This is not the case with the falls of the Rjukanfos however.

On reaching the saw-mill, Joel and Hulda both alighted.

“A half hour’s walk will not be too much for you, will it, little sister?” asked Joel.

“No, brother; I am not tired, and a little exercise will do me good.”

“It will be a good deal instead of a little, for you will have some pretty hard climbing to do.”

“I can cling to your arm, Joel.”

It was evident that the kariol must be abandoned at this point, for it would be impossible for it to make its way through the rough paths, the narrow passes, and over the big, fantastically shaped rocks that heralded the close proximity of the great falls.

Already, they could see in the distance a thick mist, the spray from the seething waters of Rjukan.

Hulda and Joel took a shady path which is well known to guides, and which leads to the end of the valley. A few moments afterward they found themselves upon a moss-covered rock almost in front of the fall. In fact there was no chance of getting any nearer to it on that side.

The brother and sister would have had considerable difficulty in making themselves heard if they had wished to speak; but their thoughts were those that could be exchanged without the agency of the lips.

The volume of the Rjukan fall is enormous, its height very considerable, and its roar deafening. The earth makes an abrupt descent of nine hundred feet to the bed of the Maan midway between Lake Mjos and Lake Tinn, nine hundred feet, that is to say six times the height of Niagara, though the width of this last water-fall from the American to the Canadian shore is three miles.

The Rjukan is so grand and unique in its aspect that any description falls far short of the reality, and even a painting can not do justice to it. There are certain wonders of nature that must be seen if one would form any adequate conception of their beauty; and this water-fall, which is one of the most widely celebrated in Europe, belongs to this category.

These were the very thoughts that were passing through the mind of a tourist who was at that very moment sitting perched upon a rock on the right bank of the Maan, from which spot he could command a nearer and more extended view of the fall.

Neither Joel nor his sister had yet noticed him, though he was plainly visible from the rock on which they were seated.

In a few minutes the traveler rose and very imprudently ventured out upon the rocky slope that is rounded like a dome on the side next the Maan. What the adventurous tourist wished to see was evidently the two caverns under the fall, the one to the left, which is ever filled to the top with a mass of seething foam, and the one to the right, which is always enshrouded in a heavy mist. Possibly he was even trying to ascertain if there were not a third cavern midway down the fall to account for the fact that the Rjukan at intervals projects straight outward into space a mass of water and spray, making it appear as if the waters had suddenly been scattered in a fine spray over the surrounding fields by some terrific explosion in the rear of the fall.

And now the daring tourist was slowly but persistently making his way over the rough and slippery ledge of rock, destitute alike of shrubbery or grass, know as the Passe de Marie, or the Maristien.

It is more than probable, however, that he was ignorant of the legend that has made this pass so widely know. One day Eystein endeavored to reach his betrothed, the beautiful Marie of Vesfjorddal, by this dangerous path. His sweetheart was holding out her arms to him from the other side of the gorge, when suddenly he lost his footing, fell, slipped further and further down the ledge of rock which is as smooth as glass, and disappeared forever in the seething rapids of the Maan.

Was this rash traveler about to meet a similar fate?

It seemed only too probable; and in fact he soon perceived the danger of his position, though not until it was too late. Suddenly his foot slipped, he uttered a cry, and after rolling nearly twenty feet, he finally succeeded in securing a hold upon a projecting rock on the very edge of the abyss.

Joel and Hulda, though they had not yet caught sight of him, heard his cry.

“What is that?” exclaimed Joel, springing to his feet.

“A cry!” replied Hulda.

“Yes, a cry of distress.”

“From what direction did it come?”

“Let us listen.”

Both looked first to the right, and then to the left of the fall, but they saw nothing, though they had certainly heard the words “Help! help!” uttered during one of the intervals between each rebound of the Rjukan.

The cry was repeated.

“Joel, some one who is in danger is calling for help,” cried Hulda. “We must go to his aid.”

“Yes, sister; and he can not be far off. But in what direction? Where is he? I see no one.”

Hulda hastily climbed a little knoll behind the mossy rock upon which she had been sitting.

“Joel!” she cried, suddenly.

“Do you see him?”

“There, there!”

As she spoke she pointed to the imprudent man whose body seemed to be almost overhanging the abyss. If his foothold upon a tiny ledge of rock failed him, or he was seized with dizziness, he was lost.

“We must save him!” said Hulda.

“Yes,” replied Joel, “if we can keep our wits about us we shall perhaps be able to reach him.”

Joel gave a loud shout to attract the attention of the traveler, who immediately turned his head toward the spot from which the sound proceeded; then the worthy fellow devoted a few moments to deciding how he could best rescue the stranger from his dangerous position.

“You are not afraid, are you, Hulda?” he asked.

“No, brother.”

“You know the Maristien well, do you not?”

“I have crossed it several times.”

“Then walk along the brow of the cliff, gradually getting as near the traveler as you possibly can; then allow yourself to slide down gently toward him, and take him by the hand, so as to prevent him from falling any further; but do not let him try to lift himself up, because if he should be seized with vertigo he would certainly drag you down with him, and you would both be lost.”

“And you, Joel?”

“While you are traversing the brow of the cliff I will creep along the edge of it on the river-side. I shall reach him about as soon as you do, and if you should slip I shall perhaps be able to prevent you both from falling.”

Then, taking advantage of another interval in the roaring of the torrent, Joel shouted in stentorian tones:

“Don’t move, sir. Wait; we will try to get to you!”

Hulda had already disappeared behind the trees that crowned the ledge, in order to ascend the Maristien from the other side of the declivity, and Joel soon caught a glimpse of the fast-receding form of the brave girl at the turn in the path where the last trees grew.

He, in turn, at the peril of his life, had begun to creep slowly along the shelving edge of the ledge that surrounds the Rjukan. What wonderful coolness, what steadiness of foot and of hand were required to thus advance in safety along the edge of an abyss whose borders were drenched with the spray of the cataract!

In a parallel direction, but at least one hundred feet above his head, Hulda was advancing obliquely in order to reach the traveler more easily; but the position of the latter was such that she could not see his face, that being turned toward the cataract.

Joel, on reaching a spot directly below the unfortunate man paused, and after planting his foot firmly in a small crevice in the rock, called out:

“Hallo, sir!”

The traveler turned his head.

“Don’t move, sir; don’t move an inch, but hold fast!”

“I’ll do that, my friend, never fear,” replied the stranger in a tone that reassured Joel. “If

I hadn’t a good grip, I should have gone to the bottom of the Rjukan a quarter of an hour ago.”

“My sister is also coming to help you,” continued Joel. “She will take hold of your hand, but don’t attempt to get upon your feet until I reach you. Don’t even move.”

“No more than a rock,” replied the traveler.

Hulda had already begun to descend the ledge, carefully selecting the less slippery parts of the slope with the clear head of a true daughter of the Telemark.

And she, too, now called out as Joel had done:

“Holdfast, sir.”

“Yes; I am holding fast, and I assure you that I shall continue to do so as long as I can.”

“And above all don’t be afraid!” added Hulda.

“I am not afraid.”

“We’ll save you yet!” cried Joel.

“I hope so, indeed; for by Saint Olaf I shall never succeed in getting out of this scrape myself.”

It was evident that the tourist had lost none of his presence of mind; but his fall had probably disabled him, and all he could do now was to keep himself upon the narrow shelf of rock that separated him from the abyss.

Meanwhile Hulda continued her descent, and in a few minutes reached the traveler; then, bracing her foot against a projecting point in the rock, she caught hold of his hand.

The traveler involuntarily attempted to raise himself a little.

“Don’t move, sir, don’t move,” cried Hulda. “You will be sure to drag me down with you, for I am not strong enough to keep you from falling! You must wait until my brother reaches us. When he gets between us and the fall you can then try to get up.”

“That is more easily said than done I fear.”

“Are you so much hurt, sir? I hope you have broken no bones.”

“No; but one leg is badly cut and scratched.”

Joel was about twenty yards from them, the rounded shape of the brow of the cliff having prevented him from joining them at once. He was now obliged to climb this rounded surface. This was, of course, the most difficult and also the most dangerous part of his task.

“Don’t make the slightest movement, Hulda!” he cried. “If you should both slip while I am not in a position to break your fall you would both be killed.”

“You need not fear that, Joel!” replied Hulda. “Think only of yourself, and may God help you!”

Joel began to crawl slowly up the rock, dragging himself along on his belly like a veritable reptile. Two or three times he narrowly escaped sliding down into the abyss

below, but finally he succeeded in reaching the traveler's side.

The latter proved to be an elderly but still vigorous-looking man, with a handsome face, animated with a very genial and kindly expression.

"You have been guilty of a very imprudent act, sir," remarked Joel as soon as he recovered his breath.

"Imprudent!" repeated the traveler. "Yes, and as absurd as it was imprudent."

"You have not only risked your life, but—"

"Made you risk yours."

"Oh! that is my business," replied Joel, lightly. Then he added, in an entirely different tone: "The thing to be done now is to regain the brow of the cliff, but the most difficult part of the task is already accomplished."

"The most difficult?"

"Yes, sir. That was to reach you. Now we have only to ascend a much more gradual slope.

"Still, you had better not place much dependence upon me, my boy. I have a leg that isn't of much use to me just now, nor will it be for some time to come I fear."

"Try to raise yourself a little."

"I will gladly do so if you will assist me."

"Then take hold of my sister's arm. I will steady you and push you from below."

"Very well, my friends, I will be guided entirely by you; as you have been so kind as to come to my assistance, I can not do less than yield you implicit obedience."

Joel's plan was carried out in the most cautious manner, and though the ascent was not made without considerable difficulty and danger, all three accomplished it more easily and quickly than they had thought possible. Besides, the injury from which the traveler was suffering was neither a sprain nor dislocation, but simply a very bad abrasion of the skin; consequently, he could use his limbs to much better purpose than he had supposed, and ten minutes later he found himself safe on the other side of the Maristien.

Once there, he would have been glad to rest awhile under the pines that border the upper *field* of the Rjukanfos, but Joel persuaded him to make one more effort. This was to reach a hut hidden among the trees, a short distance from the rock, on which the brother and sister had seated themselves on first arriving at the fall. The traveler yielded to their solicitations, and supported on one side by Hulda, and on the other by Joel, he finally succeeded in reaching the door of the humble dwelling.

"Let us go in, sir," said Hulda. "You must want to rest a moment."

"The moment will probably be prolonged to a quarter of an hour."

"Very well, sir; but afterward you must consent to accompany us to Dal."

"To Dal? Why, that is the very place I was going to!"

“Can it be that you are the tourist who was expected from the north?” asked Joel.

“Precisely.”

“Had I foreseen what was going to happen, I should have gone to the other side of the Rjukanfos to meet you.”

“That would have been a good idea, my brave fellow. You would have saved me from a foolhardy act unpardonable at my age.”

“Or at any age,” replied Hulda.

The three entered the hut which was occupied by a family of peasants, a father and two daughters, who received their unexpected guests with great cordiality.

Joel was able to satisfy himself that the traveler had sustained no injury beyond a severe abrasion of the skin a little below the knee; but though the wound would necessitate a week’s rest, the limb was neither broken nor dislocated.

Some excellent milk, an abundance of strawberries, and a little black bread were offered and accepted. Joel gave incontestable proofs of an excellent appetite, and though Hulda eat almost nothing, the traveler proved a match for her brother.

“My exertions have given me a famous appetite,” he remarked; “but I must admit that my attempt to traverse the Maristien was an act of the grossest folly. To play the part of the unfortunate Eystein when one is old enough to be his father—and even his grandfather—is absurd in the highest degree.”

“So you know the legend?” said Hulda.

“Of course. My nurse used to sing me to sleep with it in the happy days when I still had a nurse. Yes, I know the story, my brave girl, so I am all the more to blame for my imprudence. Now, my friends, Dal seems a long way off to a cripple like myself. How do you propose to get me there?”

“Don’t worry about that, sir,” replied Joel. “Our kariol is waiting for us at the end of the road, about three hundred yards from here.”

“Hum! three hundred yards!”

“But downhill all the way,” added Hulda.

“Oh, in that case, I shall do very well if you will kindly lend me an arm.”

“Why not two, as we have four at your disposal?” responded Joel.

“We will say two then. It won’t cost me any more, will it?”

“It will cost you nothing.”

“Except my thanks; and that reminds me that I have not yet thanked you.”

“For what, sir?” inquired Joel.

“Merely for saving my life at the risk of your own.”

“Are you quite ready to start?” inquired Hulda, rising to escape any further expression of gratitude.

“Certainly, certainly. I am more than willing to be guided by the wishes of the other members of the party.”

The traveler settled the modest charge made by the occupants of the cottage; then, supported by Joel and Hulda, he began the descent of the winding path leading to the river bank.

The descent was not effected without many exclamations of pain; but these exclamations invariably terminated in a hearty laugh, and at last they reached the saw-mill, where Joel immediately proceeded to harness the horse into the kariol.

Five minutes later the traveler was installed in the vehicle, with Hulda beside him.

“But I must have taken your seat,” he remarked to Joel.

“A seat I relinquish to you with the utmost willingness.”

“But perhaps by a little crowding we might make room for you?”

“No, no, I have my legs, sir—a guide’s legs. They are as good as any wheels.”

Joel placed himself at the horse’s head, and the little party started for Dal. The return trip was a gay one, at least on the part of the traveler, who already seemed to consider himself an old friend of the Hansen family. Before they reached their destination they found themselves calling their companion M. Silvius; and that gentleman unceremoniously called them Hulda and Joel, as if their acquaintance had been one of long standing.

About four o’clock the little belfry of Dal became visible through the trees, and a few minutes afterward the horse stopped in front of the inn. The traveler alighted from the kariol, though not without considerable difficulty. Dame Hansen hastened to the door to receive him, and though he did not ask for the best room in the house, it was given to him all the same.

Chapter 9

Sylvius Hogg was the name that the stranger inscribed upon the inn register, that same evening, directly underneath the name of Sandgoist, and there was as great a contrast between the two names as between the men that bore them. Between them there was nothing whatever in common, either mentally, morally, or physically. One was generous to a fault, the other was miserly and parsimonious; one was genial and kind-hearted, in the arid soul of the other every noble and humane sentiment seemed to have withered and died.

Sylvius Hogg was nearly sixty years of age, though he did not appear nearly so old. Tall, erect, and well built, healthy alike in mind and in body, he pleased at first sight with his handsome genial face, upon which he wore no beard, but around which clustered curling locks of silvery hair; eyes which were as smiling as his lips, a broad forehead that bore the impress of noble thoughts, and a full chest in which the heart beat untrammeled. To all these charms were added an inexhaustible fund of good humor, a refined and liberal nature, and a generous and self-sacrificing disposition.

Sylvius Hogg, of Christiania—no further recommendation was needed. That told the whole story. And he was not only known, appreciated, loved and honored in the Norwegian capital, but throughout the entire country, though the sentiments he inspired in the other half of the Scandinavian kingdom, that is to say in Sweden, were of an entirely different character.

This fact can easily be explained.

Sylvius Hogg was a professor of law at Christiania. In some lands to be a barrister, civil engineer, physician, or merchant, entitles one to a place on the upper rounds of the social ladder. It is different in Norway, however. To be a professor there is to be at the top of the ladder.

Though there are four distinct classes in Sweden, the nobility, the clergy, the gentry, and the peasantry, there are but three in Norway—the nobility being utterly wanting. No aristocracy is acknowledged, not even that of the office-holder, for in this favored country where privileged persons are unknown, the office-holder is only the humble servant of the public. In fact, perfect social equality prevails without any political distinctions whatever.

Sylvius Hogg being one of the most influential men in the country, the reader will not be surprised to learn that he was also a member of the Storthing; and in this august body, by the well-known probity of his public and private life even more than by his mighty intellect, he wielded a powerful influence even over the peasant deputies elected in such large numbers in the rural districts.

Ever since the adoption of the Constitution of 1814, it may be truly said that Norway is a republic with the King of Sweden for its president; for Norway, ever jealous of her rights, has carefully guarded her individuality. The Storthing will have nothing whatever

to do with the Swedish parliament; hence it is only natural that the most prominent and patriotic members of the Storthing should be regarded with distrust on the other side of the imaginary frontier that separates Sweden from Norway.

This was the case with Sylvius Hogg. Being extremely independent in character, and utterly devoid of ambition, he had repeatedly declined a position in the Cabinet; and a stanch defender of all the rights of his native land, he had constantly and unflinchingly opposed any threatened encroachment on the part of Sweden.

Such is the moral and political gulf between the two countries that the King of Sweden —then Oscar XV.—after being crowned at Stockholm, was obliged to go through a similar ceremony at Drontheim, the ancient capital of Norway. Such too is the suspicious reserve of Norwegian men of business, that the Bank of Christiania is unwilling to accept the notes of the Bank of Stockholm! Such too is the clearly defined line of demarkation between the two nations that the Swedish flag floats neither over the public buildings of Norway, nor from the masts of Norwegian vessels. The one has its blue bunting, bearing a yellow cross; the other a blue cross upon a crimson ground.

Sylvius Hogg was a thorough Norwegian in heart and in soul, and stoutly defended her rights upon all occasions; so, when in 1854 the Storthing was discussing the question of having neither a viceroy nor even a governor at the head of the state, he was one of the most enthusiastic champions of the measure.

Consequently, though he was by no means popular in the eastern part of Scandinavia, he was adored in the western part of it, even in the most remote hamlets. His name was a household word throughout Norway from the dunes of Christiansand to the bleak rocks of the North Cape, and so worthy was he of this universal respect that no breath of calumny had ever sullied the reputation of either the deputy or the professor. But though he was a Norwegian to the core he was a hot-blooded man, with none of the traditional coldness and apathy of his compatriots; but much more prompt and resolute in his thoughts and acts than most Scandinavians, as was proved by the quickness of his movements, the ardor of his words, and the vivacity of his gestures. Had he been born in France, one would have unhesitatingly pronounced him a Southerner.

Sylvius Hogg’s fortune had never exceeded a fair competence, for he had not entered into politics for the purpose of making money. Naturally unselfish, he never thought of himself, but continually of others; nor was he tormented by a thirst for fame. To be a deputy was enough for him; he craved no further advancement.

Just at this time Sylvius Hogg was taking advantage of a three months’ vacation to recuperate after a year of severe legislative toil. He had left Christiania six weeks before, with the intention of traveling through the country about Drontheim, the Hardanger, the Telemark, and the districts of Kongsberg and Drammen. He had long been anxious to visit these provinces of which he knew nothing; and his trip was consequently one of improvement and of pleasure. He had already explored a part of the region, and it was on his return from the northern districts that the idea of visiting the famous falls of the Rjukan —one of the wonders of the Telemark—first occurred to him. So, after surveying the route of the new railroad—which as yet existed only on paper—between the towns of Drontheim and Christiania, he sent for a guide to conduct him to Dal. He was to meet this

guide on the left bank of the Maan; but lured on by the beauties of the Maristien, he ventured upon the dangerous pass without waiting for his guide. An unusual want of prudence in a man like him and one that nearly cost him his life, for had it not been for the timely assistance rendered by Joel and Hulda Hansen, the journey would have ended with the traveler himself in the grim depths of the Rjukanfos.

Chapter 10

The people of Scandinavia are very intelligent, not only the inhabitants of the cities, but of the most remote rural districts. Their education goes far beyond reading, writing, and arithmetic. The peasant learns with avidity. His mental faculties are ever on the alert. He takes a deep interest in the public welfare and no mean part in all political and local affairs. More than half of the Storthing is made up of members of this rank in life. Not unfrequently they attend its sessions clad in the costume of their particular province; but they are justly noted for their remarkable good sense, acute reasoning powers, their clear though rather slow understanding, and above all, for their incorruptibility.

Consequently it is not at all strange that the name of Sylvius Hogg was a household word throughout Norway, and was uttered with respect even in the wilds of the Telemark; so Dame Hansen on receiving such a widely known and highly esteemed guest, thought it only proper to tell him how highly honored she felt at having him under her roof, if only for a few days.

“I don’t know that I am doing you much honor, Dame Hansen,” replied Sylvius Hogg, “but I do know that it gives me great pleasure to be here. I have heard my pupils talk of this hospitable inn for years. Indeed, that is one reason I intended to stop here and rest for about a week, but by Saint Olaf! I little expected to arrive here on one leg!”

And the good man shook the hand of his hostess most cordially.

“Wouldn’t you like my brother to fetch a doctor from Bamble?” inquired Hulda.

“A doctor! my little Hulda! Why! do you want me to lose the use of both my legs?”

“Oh, Mr. Sylvius!”

“A doctor! Why not send for my friend, the famous Doctor Bork, of Christiania? All this ado about a mere scratch, what nonsense!”

“But even a mere scratch may become a very serious thing if not properly attended to,” remarked Joel.

“Well, Joel, will you tell me why you are so very anxious for this to become serious?”

“Indeed, I am not, sir; God forbid!”

“Oh, well, He will preserve you and me, and all Dame Hansen’s household, especially if pretty little Hulda here will be kind enough to give me some attention.”

“Certainly, Mr. Sylvius.”

“All right, my friends. I shall be as well as ever in four or five days. How could a man help getting well in such a pretty room? Where could one hope for better care than in this excellent inn? This comfortable bed, with its mottoes, is worth a great deal more than all the nauseous prescriptions of the faculty. And that quaint window overlooking the valley

of the Maan! And the stream's soft, musical murmur that penetrates to the remotest corner of my cozy nest! And the fragrant, healthful scent of the pines that fills the whole house! And the air, this pure exhilarating mountain air! Ah! is not that the very best of physicians? When one needs him one has only to open the window and in he comes and makes you well without cutting off your rations."

He said all this so gayly that it seemed as if a ray of sunshine had entered the house with him. At least, this was the impression of the brother and sister, who stood listening to him, hand in hand.

All this occurred in a chamber on the first floor, to which the professor had been conducted immediately upon his arrival; and now, half reclining in a large arm-chair, with his injured limb resting upon a stool, he gratefully accepted the kindly attentions of Joel and Hulda. A careful bathing of the wound with cold water was the only remedy he would use, and in fact no other was needed.

"Thanks, my friends, thanks!" he exclaimed, "this is far better than drugs. And now do you know that but for your timely arrival upon the scene of action, I should have become much too well acquainted with the wonders of the Rjukanfos! I should have rolled down into the abyss like a big stone, and have added another legend to those already associated with the Maristien. And there was no excuse for me. My betrothed was not waiting for me upon the opposite bank as in the case of poor Eystein!"

"And what a terrible thing it would have been to Madame Hogg!" exclaimed Hulda. "She would never have got over it."

"Madame Hogg!" repeated the professor. "Oh! Madame Hogg wouldn't have shed a tear—"

"Oh, Mister Sylvius."

"No, I tell you, for the very good reason that there is no Madame Hogg. Nor can I ever imagine what Madame Hogg would be like, stout or thin, tall or short."

"She would, of course, be amiable, intelligent and good, being your wife," replied Hulda, naïvely.

"Do you really think so, mademoiselle? Well, well, I believe you! I believe you!"

"But on hearing of such a calamity, Mister Sylvius," remarked Joel, "your relatives and many friends—"

"I have no relatives to speak of, but I have quite a number of friends, not counting those I have just made in Dame Hansen's house, and you have spared them the trouble of weeping for me. But tell me, children, you can keep me here a few days, can you not?"

"As long as you please, Mister Sylvius," replied Hulda. "This room belongs to you."

"You see, I intended to stop awhile at Dal as all tourists do, and radiate from here all over the Telemark district; but now, whether I shall radiate, or I shall not radiate, remains to be seen."

"Oh, you will be on your feet again before the end of the week, I hope, Mister Sylvius," remarked Joel.

“So do I, my boy.”

“And then I will escort you anywhere in the district that you care to go.”

“We’ll see about that when Richard is himself again. I still have two months leave before me, and even if I should be obliged to spend the whole of it under Dame Hansen’s roof I should have no cause for complaint. Could I not explore that portion of the valley of Vesfjorddal lying between the two lakes, make the ascent of Gousta, and pay another visit to the Rjukanfos? for though I very narrowly escaped falling head foremost into its depths I scarcely got a glimpse of it, and am resolved to see it again.”

“You shall do so, Mister Sylvius,” replied Hulda.

“And we will visit it next time in company with good Dame Hansen if she will be kind enough to go with us. And now I think of it, my friends, I must drop a line to Kate, my old housekeeper, and Fink, my faithful old servant in Christiania. They will be very uneasy if they do not hear from me, and I shall get a terrible scolding. And now I have a confession to make to you. The strawberries and milk were delicious and extremely refreshing, but they scarcely satisfied my hunger, and as I won’t submit to being put upon short allowance may I not ask if it is not nearly your dinner hour?”

“Oh! that makes no difference whatever, Mister Sylvius.”

“On the contrary, it does make a great deal of difference. Do you think that I am going to sit in solitary grandeur at the table, and in my own room, all the time I stay at Dal? No, I want to take my meals with you and your mother if Dame Hansen has no objections.”

Of course Dame Hansen could but assent when she was apprised of the professor’s request, especially as it would be a great honor to her and hers to have a member of the Storthing at her table.

“It is settled, then, that we are to eat together in the living room,” remarked Sylvius Hogg.

“Yes, Mister Sylvius,” replied Joel. “I shall only have to wheel you out in your arm-chair when dinner is ready.”

“Indeed, Mister Joel! Why don’t you propose a kariol? No; with the aid of a friendly arm, I shall be able to reach the table. I haven’t had my leg amputated yet, that I am aware of.”

“As you please, Mister Sylvius,” replied Hulda. “But don’t be guilty of any imprudence, I beg of you, or Joel will have to hurry off in search of a doctor.”

“More threats! Oh, well, I will be as prudent and docile as possible; provided you do not put me on short allowance, you will find me the most tractable of patient. Can it be that you are not hungry, my friends?”

“Give us only a quarter of an hour,” replied Hulda; “and we will set before you a nice trout from the Maan, a grouse that Joel shot in the Hardanger yesterday, and a bottle of French wine.”

“Thank you, my dear child, thank you!”

Hulda left the room to superintend the dinner and set the table, while Joel took the

kariol back to Lengling's stable. Sylvius Hogg was left alone, and his thoughts very naturally reverted to the honest family whose guest and debtor he was. What could he do to repay Hulda and Joel for the inestimable service they had rendered him?

He had not much time for reflection, however, for scarcely ten minutes had elapsed before he was seated in the place of honor at the family table. The dinner was excellent. It corresponded with the reputation of the inn, and the professor ate very heartily.

The rest of the evening was spent in conversation in which Sylvius Hogg took the leading part. As Dame Hanson found it well-nigh impossible to overcome her habitual reserve, Joel and Hulda were obliged to respond to their genial host's advances, and the sincere liking the professor had taken to them from the very first naturally increased.

When night came, he returned to his room with the assistance of Joel and Hulda, gave and received a friendly good-night, and had scarcely stretched himself out upon the big bed before he was sound asleep.

The next morning he woke with the sun, and began to review the situation.

"I really don't know how I shall get out of the scrape," he said to himself. "One can not allow one's self to be saved from death, nursed and cured without any other return than a mere thank you. I am under deep obligations to Hulda and Joel, that is undeniable; but the services they have rendered me are not of a kind that can be repaid with money. On the other hand, these worthy people appear to be perfectly happy, and I can do nothing to add to their happiness! Still, we shall probably have many talks together, and while we are talking, perhaps—"

During the three or four days the professor was obliged to keep his leg upon a stool he and the young Hansens had many pleasant chats together, but unfortunately it was with some reserve on the brother's and sister's part. Neither of them had much to say about their mother, whose cold and preoccupied manner had not escaped Sylvius Hogg's notice, and from a feeling of prudence they hesitated to reveal to their guest the uneasiness excited by Ole Kamp's delay, for might they not impair his good humor by telling him their troubles?

"And yet we perhaps make a great mistake in not confiding in Mister Sylvius," Joel remarked to her sister, one day. "He is a very clever man, and through his influential acquaintances he might perhaps be able to find out whether the Naval Department is making any effort to ascertain what has become of the 'Viking.'"

"You are right, Joel," replied Hulda. "I think we had better tell him all; but let us wait until he has entirely recovered from his hurt."

"That will be very soon," rejoined Joel.

By the end of the week Sylvius Hogg was able to leave his room without assistance, though he still limped a little; and he now began to spend hours on the benches in front of the house, gazing at the snow-clad summit of Gousta, while the Maan dashed merrily along at his feet.

People were continually passing over the road that led from Dal to the Rjukanfos now. Most of them were tourists who stopped an hour or two at Dame Hanson's inn either to

breakfast or dine. There were also students in plenty with knapsacks on their backs, and the little Norwegian cockade in their caps.

Many of them knew the professor, so interminable greetings were exchanged, and cordial salutations, which showed how much Sylvius Hogg was loved by these young people.

“What, you here, Mister Sylvius?” they would exclaim.

“Yes, my friend.”

“You, who are generally supposed to be in the remotest depths of the Hardanger!”

“People are mistaken, then. It was in the remotest depths of the Rjukanfos that I came very near staying.”

“Very well, we shall tell everybody that you are in Dal.”

“Yes, in Dal, with a game leg.”

“Fortunately you are at Dame Hansen’s inn, where you will have the best of food and care.”

“Could one imagine a more comfortable place?”

“Most assuredly not.”

“Or better people?”

“There are none in the world,” responded the young travelers merrily.

Then they would all drink to the health of Hulda and Joel, who were so well known throughout the Telemark.

And then the professor would tell them all about his adventure, frankly admitting his unpardonable imprudence, and telling how his life had been saved, and how grateful he felt to his preservers.

“And I shall remain here until I have paid my debt,” he would add. “My course of lectures on legislation will not be resumed for a long time, I fear, and you can enjoy an extended holiday.”

“Good! good! Mister Sylvius,” cried the light-hearted band. “Oh, you can’t fool us! It is pretty Hulda that keeps you here at Dal.”

“A sweet girl she is, my friends, and as pretty as a picture, besides; and by Saint Olaf! I’m only sixty.”

“Here’s to the health of Mister Sylvius!”

“And to yours, my dear boys. Roam about the country, gather wisdom, and yet be merry. Life is all sunshine at your age. But keep away from the Maristien. Joel and Hulda may not be on hand to rescue such of you as are imprudent enough to venture there.”

Then they would resume their journey, making the whole valley ring with their joyful *God-aften*.

Once or twice Joel was obliged to act as guide to some tourists who wished to make the

ascent of Gousta. Sylvius Hogg was anxious to accompany them. He declared that he was all right again. In fact, the wound on his leg was nearly healed; but Hulda positively forbade him to undertake a trip which would certainly prove too fatiguing for him, and Hulda's word was law.

A wonderful mountain, though, is this Gousta, whose lofty summit traversed by deep snow-covered ravines, rises out of a forest of pines that form a thick green ruff about its snowy throat! And what a superb view one enjoys from its summit. To the east lies the bailiwick of Numedal; On the west, the Hardanger and its magnificent glaciers; down at the base of the mountain, the winding valley of Vesfjorddal between Lakes Tinn and Mjos, Dal, and its miniature houses, and the bright waters of the Maan leaping and dancing merrily along through the verdant meadows to the music of its own voice.

To make the ascent Joel was obliged to leave Dal at five o'clock in the morning. He usually returned about six o'clock in the evening, and Sylvius Hogg and Hulda always went to meet him. As soon as the primitive ferry-boat landed the tourists and their guide a cordial greeting ensued, and the three spent yet another pleasant evening together. The professor still limped a little, but he did not complain. Indeed, one might almost have fancied that he was in no haste to be cured, or rather to leave Dame Hansen's hospitable roof.

The time certainly passed swiftly and pleasantly there. He had written to Christiania that he should probably spend some time at Dal. The story of his adventure at the Rjukanfos was known throughout the country. The newspapers had got hold of it, and embellished the account after their fashion, so a host of letters came to the inn, to say nothing of pamphlets and newspapers. All these had to be read and answered, and the names of Joel and Hulda which were necessarily mentioned in the correspondence, soon became known throughout Norway.

Nevertheless, this sojourn at Dame Hansen's inn could not be prolonged indefinitely, though Sylvius Hogg was still as much in doubt as ever, in regard to the manner in which he should pay his debt of gratitude. Of late, however, he had begun to suspect that this family was not as happy as he had at first supposed. The impatience with which the brother and sister awaited the arrival of the daily mail from Christiania and Bergen, their disappointment and even chagrin on finding no letters for them, all this was only too significant.

It was already the ninth of June, and still no news from the "Viking!" The vessel was now more than a fortnight overdue, and not a single line from Ole! No news to assuage Hulda's anxiety. The poor girl was beginning to despair, and Sylvius Hogg saw that her eyes were red with weeping when he met her in the morning.

"What can be the matter?" he said to himself, more than once. "They seem to be concealing some misfortunes from me. Is it a family secret, I wonder, with which a stranger can not be allowed to meddle? But do they still regard me as a stranger? No. Still, they must think so; but when I announce my departure they will perhaps understand that it is a true friend who is about to leave them."

So that very day he remarked:

"My friends, the hour is fast approaching when, to my great regret, I shall be obliged to

bid you good-bye.”

“So soon, Mister Sylvius, so soon?” exclaimed Joel, with a dismay he could not conceal.

“The time has passed very quickly in your company, but it is now seventeen days since I came to Dal.”

“What! seventeen days!” repeated Hulda.

“Yes, my dear child, and the end of my vacation is approaching. I have only a week at my disposal if I should extend my journey to Drammen and Kongsberg. And though the Storthing is indebted to you for not being obliged to elect another deputy in my place, the Storthing will know no better how to compensate you than I do.”

“Oh! Mister Sylvius,” cried Hulda, placing her little hand upon his lips to silence him.

“Oh, I understand, Hulda. That is a forbidden subject, at least here.”

“Here and everywhere,” replied the girl, gayly.

“So be it! I am not my own master, and I must obey. But you and Joel must come and pay me a visit at Christiania.”

“Pay you a visit?”

“Yes, pay me a visit; spend several weeks at my house in company with your mother, of course.”

“And if we should leave the inn who will attend to things in our absence?” replied Joel.

“But your presence here is not necessary after the excursion season is over, I imagine; so I have fully made up my mind to come for you late in the autumn.”

“It will be impossible, my dear Mister Sylvius, for us to accept—”

“On the contrary, it will be perfectly possible. Don’t say no. I shall not be content with such an answer. Besides, when I get you there in the very best room in my house, in the care of my old Kate and faithful Fink, you will be my own children, and then you can certainly tell me what I can do for you.”

“What you can do for us?” repeated Joel, with a glance at his sister.

“Brother!” exclaimed Hulda, as if divining his intention.

“Speak, my boy, speak!”

“Ah, well, Mister Sylvius, you can do us a great honor.”

“How?”

“By consenting to be present at my sister Hulda’s marriage, if it would not inconvenience you too much.”

“Hulda’s marriage!” exclaimed Sylvius Hogg. “What! my little Hulda is going to be married, and no one has said a word to me about it!”

“Oh, Mister Sylvius!” exclaimed the girl, her eyes filling with tears.

“And when is the marriage to take place?”

“As soon as it pleases God to bring her betrothed, Ole Kamp, back to us,” replied the girl.

Chapter 11

Joel then proceeded to relate Ole Kamp's whole history. Sylvius Hogg, deeply moved, listened to the recital with profound attention. He knew all now. He even read Ole's letter announcing his speedy return. But Ole had not returned, and there had been no tidings from the missing one. What anxiety and anguish the whole Hansen family must have suffered!

"And I thought myself an inmate of a happy home!" he said to himself.

Still, after a little reflection, it seemed to him that the brother and sister were yielding to despair while there was still some room for hope. By counting these May and June days over and over again their imaginations had doubled the number, as it were.

The professor, therefore, concluded to give them his reasons for this belief, not feigned, but really sensible and plausible reasons that would also account for the delay of the "Viking."

Nevertheless his face had become very grave, for the poor girl's evident grief touched him deeply.

"Listen to me, my children," said he. "Sit down here by me, and let us talk the matter over calmly."

"Ah! what can you say to comfort us?" cried Hulda, whose heart was full to overflowing.

"I shall tell you only what I really and truly think," replied the professor. "I have been thinking over all that Joel just told me, and it seems to me that you are more anxious and despondent than you have any real cause to be. I would not arouse any false hopes, but we must view matters as they really are."

"Alas! Mister Sylvius," replied Hulda, "my poor Ole has gone down with the 'Viking,' and I shall never see him again!"

"Sister, sister!" exclaimed Joel, "becalm, I beseech you, and hear what Mister Sylvius has to say."

"Yes, be calm, my children, and let us talk the matter over quietly. It was between the fifteenth and twentieth of May that Ole expected to return to Bergen, was it not?"

"Yes; and it is now the ninth of June."

"So the vessel is only twenty days overdue, if we reckon from the latest date appointed for the return of the 'Viking.' That is enough to excite anxiety, I admit; still, we must not expect the same punctuality from a sailing-vessel as from a steamer."

"I have told Hulda that again and again, and I tell her so yet," interrupted Joel.

"And you are quite right, my boy. Besides, it is very possible that the 'Viking' is an old

vessel, and a slow sailer, like most Newfoundland ships, especially when heavily laden. On the other hand, we have had a great deal of bad weather during the past few weeks, and very possibly the vessel did not sail at the date indicated in Ole's letter. In that case a week's delay in sailing would be sufficient to account for the non-arrival of the 'Viking' and for your failure to receive a letter from your lover. What I say is the result of serious reflection. Besides, how do you know but the instructions given to the captain of the 'Viking' authorize him to take his cargo to some other port, according to the state of the market?"

"In that case, Ole would have written," replied Hulda, who could not even be cheered by this hope.

"What is there to prove that he did not write?" retorted the professor. "If he did, it is not the 'Viking' that is behind time, but the American mail. Suppose, for instance, that Ole's ship touched at some port in the United States, that would explain why none of his letters have yet reached Europe."

"The United States, Mister Sylvius!"

"That sometimes happens, and it is only necessary to miss one mail to leave one's friends without news for a long time. There is, at all events, one very easy thing for us to do; that is to make inquiries of some of the Bergen shipowners. Are you acquainted with any of them?"

"Yes," replied Joel, "Messrs. Help Bros."

"Help Bros., the sons of old Help?"

"Yes."

"Why, I know them, too; at least, the younger brother, Help, Junior, they call him, though he is not far from my own age, and one of my particular friends. He has often dined with me in Christiania. Ah, well, my children, I can soon learn through him all that can be ascertained about the 'Viking.' I'll write him this very day, and if need be I'll go and see him."

"How kind you are, Mister Sylvius!" cried Hulda and Joel in the same breath.

"No thanks, if you please; I won't allow them. Did I ever thank you for what you did for me up there? And now I find an opportunity to do you a good turn, and here you are all in a flutter."

"But you were just talking of returning to Christiania," remarked Joel.

"Well, I shall go to Bergen instead, if I find it necessary to go to Bergen."

"But you were about to leave us, Mister Sylvius," said Hulda.

"Well, I have changed my mind, that is all. I am master of my own actions, I suppose; and I sha'n't go until I see you safely out of this trouble, that is, unless you are disposed to turn me out-of-doors—"

"What can you be thinking of, Mister Sylvius?"

"I have decided to remain in Dal until Ole's return. I want to make the acquaintance of

my little Hulda's betrothed. He must be a brave, honest fellow, of Joel's stamp, I am inclined to think."

"Yes, exactly like him," replied Hulda.

"I was sure of it!" exclaimed the professor, whose cheerfulness had returned, at least apparently.

"Ole is Ole, Mister Sylvius," said Joel, "and that is equivalent to saying that he is the best-hearted fellow in the world."

"I believe you, my dear Joel, and what you say only makes me the more anxious to see him. I sha'n't have to wait long. Something tells me that the 'Viking' will soon come safely into port."

"God grant it!"

"And why should He not hear your prayer? Yes, I shall certainly attend Hulda's wedding, as you have been kind enough to invite me to it. The Storthing will have to do without me a few weeks longer, that is all. It would have been obliged to grant me a much longer leave of absence if you had let me fall into the Rjukanfos as I deserved."

"How kind it is in you to say this, Mister Sylvius, and how happy you make us!"

"Not as happy as I could wish, my friends, as I owe my life to you, and I don't know—"

"Oh! please, please say no more about that trifle."

"Yes, I shall. Come now, who drew me out of the frightful jaws of the Maristien? Who risked their own lives to save me? Who brought me to the inn at Dal, and cared for me, and nursed me without any assistance from the Faculty? Oh! I am as stubborn as an old cart-horse, I assure you, and I have made up my mind to attend the marriage of Hulda to Ole Kamp, and attend it I shall!"

Hopefulness is contagious, and how could any one resist such confidence as Sylvius Hogg displayed? A faint smile crept over poor Hulda's face. She longed to believe him; she only asked to hope.

"But we must recollect that the days are passing very rapidly," continued Sylvius Hogg, "and that it is high time we began our preparations for the wedding."

"They are already begun, Mister Sylvius," replied Hulda. "In fact, they were begun more than three weeks ago."

"So much the better; but in that case, we must take good care not to allow anything to interrupt them."

"Interrupt them!" repeated Joel. "Why, everything is in readiness."

"What, the wedding-dress, the bodice with its silver clasps, the belt and its pendants?"

"Even the pendants."

"And the radiant crown that will make you look like a saint, my little Hulda?"

"Yes"

“And the invitations are written?”

“All written,” replied Joel, “even the one to which we attach most importance, yours.”

“And the bride-maid has been chosen from among the sweetest maidens of the Telemark?”

“And the fairest, Mister Sylvius,” added Joel, “for it is Mademoiselle Siegfrid of Bamble.”

“From the tone in which he uttered those words, and the way in which he blushed as he uttered them, I judge that Mademoiselle Siegfrid Helmboe is destined to become Madame Joel Hansen of Dal,” said the professor, laughing.

“Yes, Mr. Sylvius,” replied Hulda.

“Good! so there is a fair prospect of yet another wedding,” exclaimed Sylvius Hogg. “And as I feel sure that I shall be honored with an invitation, I can do no less than accept it here and now. It certainly looks as if I should be obliged to resign my seat in the Storthing, for I really don’t see how I am to find time to attend its sessions. But never mind, I will be your best man, Joel, after first serving in that capacity at your sister’s wedding. You certainly are making me do just what you like, or rather what I like. Kiss me, little Hulda! Give me your hand, my boy, and now let me write to my friend Help, Junior, of Bergen.”

The brother and sister left the apartment of which the professor had threatened to take permanent possession, and returned to their daily tasks with rather more hopeful hearts.

Sylvius Hogg was left alone.

“Poor child! poor child!” he murmured. “Yes, I have made her forget her sorrow for a few moments. But the delay has been a long one; and the sea is very rough at this season of the year. What if the ‘Viking’ has indeed gone down, and Ole should never return!”

A moment afterward the professor was busily engaged in writing to his Bergen friend. He asked for the fullest possible particulars in regard to everything connected with the “Viking” and her cruise, and inquired if some event, unforeseen or otherwise, had made it necessary to send the vessel to a different port from that for which it was originally destined. He also expressed a strong desire to hear as soon as possible how the shipping merchants and sailors of Bergen explained the delay. In short, he begged his friend Help to give him all possible information in regard to the matter by return mail.

This urgent letter also explained Sylvius Hogg’s interest in the mate of the “Viking,” the invaluable service rendered him by the young man’s betrothed, and the pleasure it would afford him to be able to give some encouragement to Dame Hansen’s children.

As soon as this letter was finished Joel took it to Moel so it would go on the following day. It would reach Bergen on the eleventh, so a reply to it ought to be received on the evening of the twelfth or the morning of the thirteenth at the very latest.

Nearly three days of dreary waiting! How interminable they seemed! Still, by dint of reassuring words and encouraging arguments, the professor contrived to alleviate the painful suspense. Now he knew Hulda’s secret, was there not a topic of conversation ever ready? And what a consolation it was to Joel and his sister to be able to talk of the absent

one!

“I am one of the family now,” Sylvius Hogg repeated again and again. “Yes, I am like an uncle that has just arrived from America or some foreign land.”

And as he was one of the family, they must have no more secrets from him.

Of course he had not failed to notice the children’s constrained manner toward their mother, and he felt satisfied that the reserve the parent displayed had its origin in something besides the uneasiness she felt on Ole Kamp’s account. He thought he might venture to question Joel; but the latter was unable to give any satisfactory reply. The professor than ventured to sound Dame Hansen on the subject, but she was so uncommunicative that he was obliged to abandon all hope of obtaining any knowledge of her secret until some future day.

As Sylvius Hogg had predicted, the letter from Help, Junior, reached Dal on the morning of the thirteenth. Joel started out before daylight to meet the postman, and it was he who brought the letter into the large hall where the professor was sitting with Dame Hansen and her daughter.

There was a moment’s silence. Hulda, who was as pale as death, was unable to utter a word so violent was the throbbing of her heart, but she seized the hand of her brother, who was equally agitated, and held it tightly.

Sylvius Hogg opened the letter and read it aloud.

To his great regret the missive contained only some very vague information; and the professor was unable to conceal his disappointment from the young people who listened to the letter with tears in their eyes.

The “Viking” had left Saint-Pierre-Miquelon on the date mentioned in Ole Kamp’s last letter. This fact had been established by the reports received from other vessels which had reached Bergen since the “Viking’s” departure from Newfoundland. These vessels had seen nothing of the missing ship on their homeward voyage, but they had encountered very bad weather in the neighborhood of Iceland. Still they had managed to weather the gales; so it was possible that the “Viking” had been equally fortunate, and had merely been delayed somewhere, or had put into some port for repairs. The “Viking” was a stanch craft, very substantially built, and commanded by Captain Frikel, of Hammersfest, a thoroughly competent officer. Still, this delay was alarming, and if it continued much longer there would be good reason to fear that the “Viking” had gone down with all on board.

The writer regretted that he had no better news to give the young Hansens, and spoke of Ole Kamp in the most complimentary terms. He concluded his letter by assuring the professor of his sincere friendship, and that of his family, and by promising to send him without delay any intelligence that might be received at any Norwegian port, in relation to the “Viking.”

Poor Hulda sunk half fainting into a chair while Sylvius Hogg was reading this letter, and she was sobbing violently when he concluded its perusal.

Joel, with his arms folded tightly upon his breast, listened in silence, without daring to

glance at his sister.

Dame Hansen, as soon as the reading was concluded, went up to her room. She seemed to have been expecting the blow.

The professor beckoned Hulda and her brother to his side. He wanted to talk with them calmly and sensibly on the subject, and he expressed a confidence that was singular, to say the least, after Help, Junior's letter. They had no reason to despair. Were there not countless examples of protracted delays while navigating the seas that lie between Norway and Newfoundland? Yes, unquestionably. And was not the "Viking" a strong craft, well officered, and manned by an excellent crew, and consequently in a much better condition than many of the vessels that had come safely into port? Most assuredly.

"So let us continue to hope," he added, "and wait. If the 'Viking' had been wrecked between Iceland and Newfoundland the numerous vessels that follow the same route to reach Europe would certainly have seen some trace of the disaster. But no, not a single floating plank or spar did they meet on the whole of this route, which is so much frequented at the conclusion of the fishing season. Still, we must take measures to secure information of a more positive nature. If we receive no further news of the 'Viking' during the coming week, nor any letter from Ole, I shall return to Christiania and ask the Naval Department to make careful inquiries, and I feel sure that the result will prove eminently satisfactory to all concerned."

In spite of the hopeful manner assumed by the professor, Joel and Hulda both felt that he did not speak as confidently as he had spoken before the receipt of the letter from Bergen—a letter whose contents gave them little if any grounds for hope. In fact, Sylvius Hogg no longer dared to venture any allusion to the approaching marriage of Hulda and Ole Kamp, though he said to himself again and again:

"No, no, it is impossible! Ole Kamp never cross the threshold of Dame Hansen's house again? Ole not marry Hulda? Nothing will ever make me believe such a misfortune possible."

He was perfectly sincere in this conviction. It was due to the energy of his character, to a spirit of hopefulness that nothing could crush. But how could he hope to convince others, especially those whom the fate of the "Viking" affected so directly?

A few days were allowed to elapse. Sylvius Hogg, who was now entirely well, took a long walk every day, and persuaded Hulda and her brother to accompany him. One day all three of them went up the valley of Vesfjorddal half-way to the falls of the Rjukan. The next day they went to Moel and Lake Tinn. Once they were even absent twenty-four hours. This time they prolonged their excursion to Bamble, where the professor made the acquaintance of Farmer Helmboe and his daughter Siegfrid. What a cordial welcome the latter gave to her friend Hulda, and what words of tenderness she found to console her!

Here, too, Sylvius Hogg did all in his power to encourage these worthy people. He had written to the Navy Department, and the government was investigating the matter. Ole would certainly return at no distant day. He might drop in upon them, indeed, at any moment. No; the wedding would not have to be postponed more than six weeks! The good man seemed so thoroughly convinced of all this, that his auditors were influenced rather by his firm conviction than by his arguments.

This visit to the Helmboe family did the young Hansens good, and they returned home much calmer than they went away.

At last the fifteenth of June came. The “Viking” was now exactly one month overdue; and as the distance from Newfoundland to the coast of Norway is comparatively short, this delay was beyond all reason, even for a sailing-vessel.

Hulda seemed to have abandoned all hope; and her brother could not find a single word to say by way of encouragement. In the presence of these poor, unhappy creatures, the professor realized the utter futility of any well-meant attempt at consolation. Hulda and Joel crossed the threshold only to stand and gaze in the direction of Moel, or to walk up the road leading to Rjukanfos. Ole Kamp would probably come by the way of Bergen, but he might come by way of Christiania if the destination of the “Viking” had been changed. The sound of an approaching kariol, a hasty cry, the form of a man suddenly rounding a curve in the road made their hearts beat wildly; but all for naught. The good people of Dal were also eagerly watching. Not unfrequently they went half-way to meet the postman. Everybody was deeply interested, for the Hansen family was exceedingly popular in the neighborhood; and poor Ole was almost a child of the Telemark. But no letter came from Bergen or Christiania giving news of the absent one.

Nothing new occurred on the sixteenth. Sylvius Hogg could scarcely restrain his restlessness. He began to understand that he must proceed to act in person, so he announced to his friends that if no news was received on the following day he should go to Christiania and satisfy himself that nothing had been left undone. Of course, it was hard for him to leave Hulda and Joel, but there was no help for it; and he would return as soon as his task was accomplished.

On the seventeenth a greater part of the most wretched day they had ever spent together passed without bringing any new developments. It had rained incessantly since early morning; the wind was blowing a gale, and the rain dashed fiercely against the window on the side of the house nearest the Maan.

Seven o’clock came. They had just finished dinner, which had been eaten in profound silence, as if in a house of mourning. Even Sylvius Hogg had been unable to keep up the conversation. What could he say that he had not already said a hundred times before?

“I shall start for Christiania to-morrow morning,” he remarked at last. “Joel, I wish you would procure a kariol and drive me to Moel.”

“Very well, Mr. Sylvius. But wouldn’t you like me to accompany you further?”

The professor shook his head, with a meaning glance at Hulda, for he did not want to see her separated from her brother.

Just then a sound, which was as yet scarcely audible, was heard on the road in the direction of Moel. They all listened breathlessly. Soon all doubts vanished. It was the sound of an approaching kariol coming swiftly toward Dal. Was the occupant some traveler who intended to spend the night at the inn? This was scarcely probable, as tourists rarely arrived at so late an hour.

Hulda sprung up trembling in every limb. Joel went to the door, opened it and looked out.

The noise grew louder It was certain the clatter of horse's hoofs blended with, the roll of kariol wheels; but the storm without was so violent that Joel was obliged to close the door.

Sylvius Hogg tramped up and down the room in a perfect fever of impatience. Joel and his sister held each other tightly by the hand.

The kariol could not be more than twenty yards from the house now. Would it pause or go by?

The hearts of all three throbbed to suffocation.

The kariol stopped. They heard a voice calling; but it was not the voice of Ole Kamp!

Almost immediately some one rapped at the door.

Joel opened it.

A man stood upon the threshold.

"Is Mr. Sylvius Hogg here?" he asked.

"I am he," replied the professor. "Who are you, my friend?"

"A messenger sent to you by the Secretary of the Navy at Christiania."

"Have you a letter for me?"

"Yes, sir; here it is."

And the messenger handed him a large envelope sealed with the Government seal.

Hulda's limbs tottered under her, and her brother sprung forward and placed her in a chair. Neither of them dared to ask Sylvius Hogg to open the letter.

At last he broke the seal and read the following:

"MR. PROFESSOR,—In reply to your last letter, I inclose a paper picked up at sea on the 3d instant by a Danish vessel. Unfortunately this discovery dispels any lingering doubt as to the fate of the 'Viking'—"

Sylvius Hogg, without taking time to read the rest of the letter, drew the paper from the envelope. He looked at it; he turned it over.

It was a lottery ticket bearing the number 9672.

On the other side of the ticket were the following lines:

"May 3d.

"DEAREST HULDA,—The 'Viking' is going down. I have only this ticket left of all I hoped to bring back to you. I intrust it to God's hands, hoping that it may reach you safely; and as I shall not be there, I beseech you to be present at the drawing. Accept the ticket with my last thought of you. Hulda, do not forget me in your prayers. Farewell, my beloved, farewell!

"OLE KAMP."

Chapter 12

So this was the young man's secret! This was the source from which he expected to derive a fortune for his promised bride—a lottery ticket, purchased before his departure. And as the "Viking" was going down, he inclosed the ticket in a bottle and threw it into the sea with the last farewell for Hulda.

This time Sylvius Hogg was completely disconcerted. He looked at the letter, then at the ticket. He was speechless with dismay. Besides, what could he say? How could any one doubt that the "Viking" had gone down with all on board?

While Sylvius Hogg was reading the letter Hulda had nerved herself to listen, but after the concluding words had been read, she fell back unconscious in Joel's arms, and it became necessary to carry her to her own little chamber, where her mother administered restoratives. After she recovered consciousness she asked to be left alone for awhile, and she was now kneeling by her bedside, praying for Ole Kamp's soul.

Dame Hansen returned to the hall. At first she started toward the professor, as if with the intention of speaking to him, then suddenly turning toward the staircase, she disappeared.

Joel, on returning from his sister's room, had hastily left the house. He experienced a feeling of suffocation in the dwelling over which such a dense cloud of misfortune seemed to be hanging. He longed for the outer air, the fierce blast of the tempest, and spent a part of the night in wandering aimlessly up and down the banks of the Maan.

Sylvius Hogg was therefore left alone. Stunned by the stroke at first, he soon recovered his wonted energy. After tramping up and down the hall two or three times, he paused and listened, in the hope that he might hear a summons from the young girl, but disappointed in this, he finally seated himself at the table, and abandoned himself to his thoughts.

"Can it be possible that Hulda is never to see her betrothed again?" he said to himself. "No; such a misfortune is inconceivable. Everything that is within me revolts at the thought! Even admitting that the 'Viking' has gone to the bottom of the ocean, what conclusive proof have we of Ole's death? I can not believe it. In all cases of shipwreck time alone can determine whether or not any one has survived the catastrophe. Yes; I still have my doubts, and I shall continue to have them, even if Hulda and Joel refuse to share them. If the 'Viking' really foundered, how does it happen that no floating fragments of the wreck have been seen at sea—at least nothing except the bottle in which poor Ole placed his last message, and with it all he had left in the world."

Sylvius Hogg had the ticket still in his hand, and again he looked at it, and turned it over and held it up between him and the waning light—this scrap of paper upon which poor Ole had based his hopes of fortune.

But the professor, wishing to examine it still more carefully, rose, listened again to

satisfy himself that the poor girl upstairs was not calling her mother or brother, and then entered his room.

The ticket proved to be a ticket in the Christiania Schools Lottery—a very popular lottery in Norway at that time. The capital prize was one hundred thousand marks; the total value of the other prizes, ninety thousand marks, and the number of tickets issued, one million, all of which had been sold.

Ole Kamp's ticket bore the number 9672; but whether this number proved lucky or unlucky, whether the young sailor had any secret reason for his confidence in it or not, he would not be present at the drawing, which was to take place on the fifteenth of July, that is to say, in twenty-eight days; but it was his last request that Hulda should take his place on that occasion.

By the light of his candle, Sylvius Hogg carefully reread the lines written upon the back of the ticket, as if with the hope of discovering some hidden meaning.

The lines had been written with ink, and it was evident that Ole's hand had not trembled while tracing them. This showed that the mate of the 'Viking' retained all his presence of mind at the time of the shipwreck, and that he was consequently in a condition to take advantage of any means of escape that might offer, such as a floating spar or plank, in case the raging waters had not swallowed up everything when the vessel foundered.

Very often writings of this kind that are recovered from the sea state the locality in which the catastrophe occurred; but in this neither the latitude nor longitude were mentioned; nor was there anything to indicate the nearest land. Hence one must conclude that no one on board knew where the "Viking" was at the time of the disaster. Driven on, doubtless, by a tempest of resistless power, the vessel must have been carried far out of her course, and the clouded sky making a solar observation impossible, there had been no way of determining the ship's whereabouts for several days; so it was more than probable that no one would ever know whether it was near the shores of North America or of Iceland that the gallant crew had sunk to rise no more.

This was a circumstance calculated to destroy all hope, even in the bosoms of the most sanguine.

With some clew, no matter how vague, a search for the missing vessel would have been possible. A ship or steamer could be dispatched to the scene of the catastrophe and perhaps find some trace of it. Besides, was it not quite possible that one or more survivors had succeeded in reaching some point on the shores of the Arctic continent, and that they were still there, homeless, and destitute, and hopelessly exiled from their native land?

Such was the theory that gradually assumed shape in Sylvius Hogg's mind—a theory that it would scarcely do to advance to Joel and Hulda, so painful would the disappointment prove if it should be without foundation.

"And though the writing gives no clew to the scene of the catastrophe," he said to himself, "we at least know where the bottle was picked up. This letter does not state, but they must know at the Naval Department; and is it not an indication that might be used to advantage? By studying the direction of the currents and of the prevailing winds at the time of the shipwreck might it not be possible? I am certainly going to write again. Search

must be made, no matter how small the chances of success. No; I will never desert poor Hulda! And until I have positive proofs of it I will never credit the death of her betrothed."

Sylvius Hogg reasoned thus; but at the same time he resolved to say nothing about the measures he intended to adopt, or the search he intended to urge on with all his influence. Hulda and her brother must know nothing about his writing to Christiania; moreover, he resolved to postpone indefinitely the departure which had been announced for the next day, or rather he would leave in a few days, but only for a trip to Bergen. There, he could learn from the Messrs. Help all the particulars concerning the "Viking," ask the opinion of the most experienced mariners, and decide upon the way in which search could best be made.

In the meantime, from information furnished by the Navy Department, the press of Christiania, then that of Norway, Sweden, and finally all Europe, gradually got hold of this story of a lottery ticket transformed into an important legal document. There was something very touching about this gift from a shipwrecked mariner to his betrothed.

The oldest of the Norwegian journals, the "Morgen-Blad," was the first to relate the story of the "Viking" and Ole Kamp; and of the thirty-seven other papers published in that country at the time, not one failed to allude to it in touching terms. The illustrated "Nyhedsblad" published an ideal picture of the shipwreck. There was the sinking "Viking," with tattered sails and hull partially destroyed, about to disappear beneath the waves. Ole stood in the bow throwing the bottle containing his last message into the sea, at the same time commending his soul to God. In a luminous cloud in the dim distance a wave deposited the bottle at the feet of his betrothed. The whole picture was upon an enlarged representation of a lottery ticket bearing the number 9672 in bold relief. An unpretending conception, unquestionably, but one that could hardly fail to be regarded as a masterpiece in the land which still clings to legends of the Undines and Valkyries. Then the story was republished and commented upon in France and England, and even in the United States. The story of Hulda and Ole became familiar to every one through the medium of pencil and pen. This young Norwegian girl, without knowing it, held a prominent place in the sympathy and esteem of the public. The poor child little suspected the interest she had aroused, however; besides, nothing could have diverted her mind from the loss that engrossed her every thought.

This being the case, no one will be surprised at the effect produced upon both continents —an effect easily explained when we remember how prone we all are to superstition. A lottery ticket so providentially rescued from the waves could hardly fail to be the winning ticket. Was it not miraculously designated as the winner of the capital prize? Was it not worth a fortune—the fortune upon which Ole Kamp had counted?

Consequently it is not surprising that overtures for the purchase of this ticket came from all parts of the country. At first, the prices offered were small, but they increased from day to day; and it was evident that they would continue to increase in proportion as the day of the drawing approached.

These offers came not only from different parts of Scandinavia, which is a firm believer in the active intervention of supernatural powers in all mundane matters—but also from foreign lands, and even from France.

Even the phlegmatic English grew excited over the matter, and subsequently the Americans, who are not prone to spend their money so unpractically. A host of letters came to Dal, and the newspapers did not fail to make mention of the large sums offered to the Hansen family. A sort of minor stock exchange seemed to have been established, in which values were constantly changing, but always for the better.

Several hundred marks were, in fact, offered for this ticket, which had only one chance in a million of winning the capital prize. This was absurd, unquestionably, but superstitious people do not stop to reason; and as their imaginations became more and more excited, they were likely to bid much higher.

This proved to be the case. One week after the event the papers announced that the amounts offered for the ticket exceeded one thousand, fifteen hundred and even two thousand marks. A resident of Manchester, England, had even offered one hundred pounds sterling, or two thousand five hundred marks; while an American, and a Bostonian at that, announced his willingness to give one thousand dollars for ticket No. 9672 of the Christiania Schools Lottery.

It is needless to say that Hulda troubled herself very little about the matter that was exciting the public to such an extent. She would not even read the letters that were addressed to her on the subject; but the professor insisted that she must not be left in ignorance of these offers, as Ole Kamp had bequeathed his right and title in this ticket to her.

Hulda refused all these offers. This ticket was the last letter of her betrothed.

No one need suppose that this refusal was due to an expectation that the ticket would win one of the prizes in the lottery. No. She saw in it only the last farewell of her shipwrecked lover—a memento she wished to reverently preserve. She cared nothing for a fortune that Ole could not share with her. What could be more touching than this worship of a souvenir?

On apprising her of these different offers, however, neither Sylvius Hogg nor Joel made any attempt to influence Hulda. She was to be guided entirely by her own wishes in the matter. They knew now what her wishes were.

Joel, moreover, approved his sister’s decision unreservedly. Ole Kamp’s ticket must not be sold to any person at any price.

Sylvius Hogg went even further. He not only approved Hulda’s decision, but he congratulated her upon it. Think of seeing this ticket sold and resold, passing from hand to hand, transformed, as it were, into a piece of merchandise, until the time appointed for the drawing arrived, when it would very probably become a worthless scrap of paper?

And Sylvius Hogg went even further. Was it, perhaps, because he was slightly superstitious? No. Still, if Ole Kamp had been there, the professor would probably have said to him:

“Keep your ticket, my boy, keep it! First, your ticket, and then you, yourself, were saved from the wreck. You had better wait and see what will come of it. One never knows; no, one never knows!”

And when Sylvius Hogg, professor of law, and; a member of the Storthing, felt in this way, one can hardly wonder at the infatuation of the public, nor that No. 9672 could be sold at an enormous premium.

So in Dame Hansen's household there was no one who protested against the young girl's decision—at least no one except the mother.

She was often heard to censure it, especially in Hulda's absence, a fact that caused poor Joel not a little mortification and chagrin, for he was very much afraid that she would not always confine herself to covert censure, and that she would urge Hulda to accept one of the offers she had received.

"Five thousand marks for the ticket!" she repeated again and again. "They offer five thousand marks for it!"

It was evident that Dame Hansen saw nothing either pathetic or commendable in her daughter's refusal. She was thinking only of this large sum of five thousand marks. A single word from Hulda would bring it into the family. She had no faith either in the extraordinary value of the ticket, Norwegian though she was; and to sacrifice fire thousand marks for a millionth chance of winning one hundred thousand was an idea too absurd to be entertained far a moment by her cool and practical mind.

All superstition aside, it is undeniable that the sacrifice of a certainty, under such conditions, was not an act of worldly wisdom; but as we said before, the ticket was not a lottery ticket in Hulda's eyes; it was Ole's last farewell, and it would have broken her heart to part with it.

Nevertheless, Dame Hansen certainly disapproved her daughter's resolve. It was evident, too, that her dissatisfaction was constantly increasing, and it seemed more than likely that at no very distant day she would endeavor to make Hulda change her decision. Indeed, she had already intimated as much to Joel, who had promptly taken his sister's part.

Sylvius Hogg was, of course, kept informed of what was going on. Such an attempt on the mother's part would only be another trial added to those Hulda was already obliged to endure, and he was anxious to avert it if possible. Joel mentioned the subject to him sometimes.

"Isn't my sister right in refusing?" he asked. "And am I not justified in upholding her in her refusal?"

"Unquestionably," replied Sylvius Hogg. "And yet, from a mathematical point of view, your mother is a million times right. But the science of mathematics does not govern everything in this world. Calculation has nothing to do with the promptings of the heart."

During the next two weeks they were obliged to watch Hulda very closely, for the state of her health was such as to excite serious anxiety. Fortunately loving care and attention were not wanting. At Sylvius Hogg's request, the celebrated Dr. Bock, a personal friend, came to Dal to see the young invalid. He could only prescribe rest, and quiet of soul, if that were possible; but the only sure means of curing her was Ole's return, and this means God only could provide. Still, Sylvius Hogg was untiring in his efforts to console the young girl. His words were ever words of hope, and strange as it may appear, Sylvius

Hogg did not despair.

Thirteen days had now elapsed since the arrival of the ticket forwarded by the Navy Department. It was now the thirteenth of June. A fortnight more, and the drawing of the lottery would take place with great pomp in the main hall of the University of Christiania.

On the morning of the thirtieth day of June Sylvius Hogg received another letter from the Navy Department. This letter advised him to confer with the maritime authorities of Bergen, and authorized him to immediately organize an expedition to search for the missing “Viking.”

The professor did not want Joel or Hulda to know what he intended to do, so he merely told them that he must leave them for a few days to attend to some business matters.

“Pray do not desert us, Mister Sylvius,” said the poor girl.

“Desert you—you, whom I regard as my own children!” replied Sylvius Hogg.

Joel offered to accompany him, but not wishing him to know that he was going to Bergen, the professor would only allow him to go as far as Moel. Besides, it would not do for Hulda to be left alone with her mother. After being confined to her bed several days, she was now beginning to sit up a little, though she was still very weak and not able to leave her room.

At eleven o’clock the kariol was at the door of the inn, and after bidding Hulda good-bye, the professor took his seat in the vehicle beside Joel. In another minute they had both disappeared behind a large clump of birches at the turn in the road.

That same evening Joel returned to Dal.

Chapter 13

Meanwhile, Sylvius Hogg was hastening toward Bergen. His tenacious nature and energetic character, though daunted for a moment, were now reasserting themselves. He refused to credit Ole's death, nor would he admit that Hulda was doomed never to see her lover again. No, until the fact was established beyond a doubt, he was determined to regard the report as false.

But had he any information which would serve as a basis for the task he was about to undertake in Bergen? Yes, though we must admit that the clew was of a very vague nature.

He knew merely the date on which the bottle had been cast into the sea by Ole Kamp, and the date and locality in which it had been recovered from the waves. He had learned those facts through the letter just received from the Naval Department, the letter which had decided him to leave for Bergen immediately, in order that he might consult with Help Bros., and with the most experienced seamen of that port.

The journey was made as quickly as possible. On reaching Moel, Sylvius Hogg sent his companion back with the kariol, and took passage upon one of the birch-bark canoes that are used in traversing the waters of Lake Finn. Then, at Tinoset, instead of turning his steps toward the south—that is to say, in the direction of Bamble—he hired another kariol, and took the Hardanger route, in order to reach the gulf of that name in the shortest possible time. From there, a little steamer called the "Run" transported him to the mouth of the gulf, and finally, after crossing a network of fiords and inlets, between the islands and islets that stud the Norwegian coast, he landed at Bergen on the morning of the second of July.

This old city, laved by the waters of both the Logne and Hardanger, is delightfully situated in a picturesque region which would bear a striking resemblance to Switzerland if an artificial arm of the sea should ever conduct the waters of the blue Mediterranean to the foot of the Alps.

A magnificent avenue of ash trees leads to the town.

The houses, with their fantastic, pointed gables, are as dazzling in their whiteness as the habitations of Arabian cities, and are all congregated in an irregular triangle that contains a population of about thirty thousand souls. Its churches date from the twelfth century. Its tall cathedral is visible from afar to vessels returning from sea, and it is the capital of commercial Norway, though situated off the regular lines of travel, and a long distance from the two cities which rank first and second in the kingdom, politically—Christiania and Drontheim.

Under any other circumstances the professor would have taken great pleasure in studying this important city, which is Dutch rather than Norwegian in its aspect and manners. It had been one of the cities included in his original route, but since his adventure on the Maristien and his subsequent sojourn at Dal, his plans had undergone

important changes.

Sylvius Hogg was no longer the traveling deputy, anxious to ascertain the exact condition of the country from a commercial as well as a political point of view. He was the guest of the Hansens, the debtor of Joel and Hulda, whose interests now outweighed all else in his estimation—a debtor who was resolved to pay his debt of gratitude at any cost, though he felt that what he was about to attempt for them was but a trifle.

On his arrival in Bergen, Sylvius Hogg landed at the lower end of the town, on the wharf used as a fish-market, but he lost no time in repairing to the part of the town known as the Tyske Bodrone quarter, where Help, Junior, of the house of Help Bros., resided.

It was raining, of course, for rain falls in Bergen on at least three hundred and sixty days of every year; but it would be impossible to find a house better protected against the wind and rain than the hospitable mansion of Help, Junior, and nowhere could Sylvius Hogg have received a warmer and more cordial welcome. His friend took possession of him very much as if he had been some precious bale of merchandise which had been consigned to his care, and which would be delivered up only upon the presentation of a formal order.

Sylvius Hogg immediately made known the object of his visit to Help, Junior. He inquired if any news had yet been received of the “Viking,” and if Bergen mariners were really of the opinion that she had gone down with all on board. He also inquired if this probable shipwreck, which had plunged so many homes into mourning, had not led the maritime authorities to make some search for the missing vessel.

“But where were they to begin?” replied Help, Junior. “They do not even know where the shipwreck occurred.”

“True, my dear Help, and for that very reason they should endeavor to ascertain.”

“But how?”

“Why, though they do not know where the ‘Viking’ foundered, they certainly know where the bottle was picked up by the Danish vessel. So we have one valuable clew which it would be very wrong to ignore.”

“Where was it?”

“Listen, my dear Help, and I will tell you.”

Sylvius Hogg then apprised his friend of the important information which had just been received through the Naval Department, and the full permission given him to utilize it.

The bottle containing Ole Kamp’s lottery-ticket had been picked up on the third of June, about two hundred miles south of Iceland, by the schooner “Christian,” of Elsineur, Captain Mosselman, and the wind was blowing strong from the south-east at the time.

The captain had immediately examined the contents of the bottle, as it was certainly his duty to do, inasmuch as he might-have rendered very effectual aid to the survivors of the “Viking” had he known where the catastrophe occurred; but the lines scrawled upon the back of the lottery-ticket gave no clew, so the “Christian” could not direct her course to the scene of the shipwreck.

This Captain Mosselman was an honest man. Very possibly some less scrupulous

person would have kept the ticket; but he had only one thought—to transmit the ticket to the person to whom it was addressed as soon as he entered port. Hulda Hansen, of Dal, that was enough. It was not necessary to know any more.

But on reaching Copenhagen, Captain Mosselman said to himself that it would perhaps be better to transmit the document through the hands of the Danish authorities, instead of sending it straight to the person for whom it was intended. This would be the safest, as well as the regular way. He did so, and the Naval Department at Copenhagen promptly notified the Naval Department at Christiania.

Sylvius Hogg's letter, asking for information in regard to the "Viking," had already been received, and the deep interest he took in the Hansen family was well known. It was known, too, that he intended to remain in Dal some time longer, so it was there that the ticket found by the Danish sea-captain was sent, to be delivered into Hulda Hansen's hands by the famous deputy.

And ever since that time the public had taken a deep interest in the affair, which had not been forgotten, thanks to the touching details given by the newspapers of both continents.

Sylvius Hogg stated the case briefly to his friend Help, who listened to him with the deepest interest, and without once interrupting him. He concluded his recital by saying:

"There is certainly one point about which there can be no possible doubt: this is, that on the third day of June, about one month after the departure from Saint-Pierre-Miquelon, the ticket was picked up two hundred miles south-west of Iceland."

"And that is all you know?"

"Yes, my dear Help, but by consulting some of the most experienced mariners of Bergen, men who are familiar with that locality, with the general direction of its winds, and, above-all, with its currents, will it not be a comparatively easy matter to decide upon the route followed by the bottle? Then, by calculating its probable speed, and the time that elapsed before it was picked up, it certainly would not be impossible to discover the spot at which it was cast into the sea by Ole Kamp, that is to say, the scene of the shipwreck."

Help, Junior, shook his head with a doubting air. Would not any search that was based upon such vague indications as these be sure to prove a failure? The shipowner, being of a decided, cool and practical turn of mind, certainly thought so, and felt it his duty to say as much to Sylvius Hogg.

"Perhaps it may prove a failure, friend Help," was the prompt rejoinder; "but the fact that we have been able to secure only vague information, is certainly no reason for abandoning the undertaking. I am anxious that nothing shall be left undone for these poor people to whom I am indebted for my life. Yes, if need be, I would not hesitate to sacrifice all I possess to find Ole Kamp, and bring him safely back to his betrothed, Hulda Hansen."

Then Sylvius Hogg proceeded to give a full account of his adventure on the Rjukanfos. He related the intrepid manner in which Joel and his sister had risked their own lives to save him, and how, but for their timely assistance, he would not have had the pleasure of being the guest of his friend Help that day.

His friend Help, as we said before, was an eminently practical man, but he was not

opposed to useless and even impossible efforts when a question “of humanity was involved, and he finally approved what Sylvius Hogg wished to attempt.

“Sylvius,” he said, “I will assist you by every means in my power. Yes, you are right. However small the chance of finding some survivor of the ‘Viking’ may be, and especially of finding this brave Ole whose betrothed saved your life, it must not be neglected.”

“No, Help, no,” interrupted the professor; “not if it were but one chance in a hundred thousand.”

“So this very day, Sylvius, I will assemble all the most experienced seamen of Bergen in my office. I will send for all who have navigated or who are now navigating the ocean between Iceland and Newfoundland, and we will see what they advise us to do.”

“And what they advise us to do we will do,” added Sylvius Hogg, without an instant’s hesitation. “I have the approval of the government. In fact, I am authorized to send one of its dispatch-boats in search of the ‘Viking,’ and I feel sure that no one will hesitate to take part in such a work.”

“I will pay a visit to the marine bureau, and see what I can learn there,” remarked Help, Junior.

“Would you like me to accompany you?”

“It is not necessary, and you must be fatigued.”

“Fatigued! I—at my age?”

“Nevertheless, you had better rest until my return, my dear and ever-young Sylvius.”

That same day there was a large meeting of captains of merchant and whaling vessels, as well as pilots, in the office of Help Bros.—an assemblage of men who were still navigating the seas, as well as of those who had retired from active service.

Sylvius Hogg explained the situation briefly but clearly. He told them the date—May 3d—on which the bottle had been cast into the sea by Ole Kamp, and the date—June 3d—on which it had been picked up by the Danish captain, two hundred miles south-west of Iceland.

The discussion that followed was long and serious. There was not one of these brave men who were not familiar with the currents of that locality, and upon the direction of these currents they must, of course, chiefly depend for a solution of the problem.

But it was an incontestable fact that at the time of the shipwreck, and during the interval that elapsed between the sailing of the “Viking” from Saint-Pierre-Miquelon, and the discovery of the bottle by the Danish vessel, constant gales from the south-east had disturbed that portion of the Atlantic. In fact, it was to one of these tempests that the catastrophe must be attributed. Probably the “Viking,” being unable to carry sail in the teeth of the tempest, had been obliged to scud before the windy and it being at this season of the year that the ice from the polar seas begins to make its way down into the Atlantic, it was more than likely that a collision had taken place, and that the “Viking” had been crushed by a floating iceberg, which it was impossible to avoid.

Still, in that case, was it not more than probable that the whole, or a part, of the ship’s

crew had taken refuge upon one of these ice fields after having placed a quantity of provisions upon it? If they had really done so, the iceberg, having certainly been driven in a north-westerly direction by the winds which were prevailing at the time, it was not unlikely that the survivors had been able to reach some point on the coast of Greenland, so it was in that direction, and in those seas, that search should be made.

This was the unanimous opinion of these experienced mariners, and there could be no doubt that this was the only feasible plan. But would they find aught save a few fragments of the “Viking” in case the vessel had been crushed by some enormous iceberg? Could they hope to effect the rescue of any survivors?

This was more than doubtful, and the professor on putting the question perceived that the more competent could not, or would not, reply. Still, this was no cause for inaction—they were all agreed upon that point—but action must be taken without delay.

There are always several government vessels at Bergen, and one of the three dispatch-boats charged with the surveillance of the western coast of Norway is attached to this port. As good luck would have it, that very boat was now riding at anchor in the bay.

After making a note of the various suggestions advanced by the most experienced seamen who had assembled at the office of Help, Junior, Sylvius Hogg went aboard the dispatch-boat “Telegraph,” and apprised the commander of the special mission intrusted to him by the government.

The commander received him very cordially, and declared his willingness to render all the assistance in his power. He had become familiar with the navigation of the locality specified during several long and dangerous voyages from the Loffoden Islands and Finmark to the Iceland and Newfoundland fisheries; so he would have experience to aid him in the humane work he was about to undertake, as he fully agreed with the seamen already consulted that it was in the waters between Iceland and Greenland that they must look for the survivors, or at least for some trace of the “Viking.” If he did not succeed there, he would, however, explore the neighboring shores, and perhaps the eastern part of Baffin’s Bay.

“I am all ready to start, sir,” he added. “My coal and provisions are on board, my crew has been selected, and I can set sail this very day.”

“Thank you, captain,” replied the professor, “not only for your promptness, but for the very kind reception you have given me. But one question more: Can you tell me how long it will take you to reach the shores of Greenland?”

“My vessel makes about eleven knots an hour, and as the distance from Bergen to Greenland is only about twenty degrees, I can count upon arriving there in less than a week.”

“Make all possible haste, captain,” replied Sylvius Hogg. “If any of the shipwrecked crew did survive the catastrophe, two months have already elapsed since the vessel went down, and they are perhaps in a destitute and even famishing condition upon some desert coast.”

“Yes, there is no time to lose, Monsieur Hogg. I will start this very day, keep my vessel going at the top of her speed, and as soon as I find any trace whatever I will inform the

Naval Department at Christiania by a telegram from Newfoundland."

"God-speed you, captain," replied Sylvius Hogg, "and may you succeed."

That same day the "Telegraph" set sail, followed by the sympathizing cheers of the entire population of Bergen, and it was not without keen emotion that the kind-hearted people watched the vessel make its way down the channel, and finally disappear behind the islands of the fiord.

But Sylvius Hogg did not confine his efforts to the expedition undertaken by the dispatch-boat "Telegraph." On the contrary, he was resolved to multiply the chances of finding some trace of the missing "Viking." Would it not be possible to excite a spirit of emulation in the captains of merchant vessels and fishing-smacks that navigated the waters of Iceland and the Faroe Islands? Unquestionably. So a reward of two thousand marks was promised in the name of the government to any vessel that would furnish any information in regard to the missing "Viking," and one of five thousand marks to any vessel that would bring one of the survivors of the shipwreck back to his native land.

So, during the two days spent in Bergen Sylvius Hogg did everything in his power to insure the success of the enterprise, and he was cheerfully seconded in his efforts by Help, Junior, and all the maritime authorities. M. Help would have been glad to have the worthy deputy as a guest some time longer, but though Sylvius Hogg thanked him cordially he declined to prolong his stay. He was anxious to rejoin Hulda and Joel, being afraid to leave them to themselves too long, but Help, Junior, promised him that any news that might be received should be promptly transmitted to Dal.

So, on the morning of the 4th, after taking leave of his friend Help, Sylvius Hogg re-embarked on the "Run" to cross the fiord of the Hardanger, and if nothing unforeseen occurred he counted on reaching the Telemark by the evening of the 5th.

Chapter 14

The day that Sylvius Hogg left Bergen proved an eventful one at the inn.

After the professor's departure the house seemed deserted. It almost seemed as if the kind friend of the young Hansens had taken away with him, not only the last hope, but the life of the family, and left only a charnel-house behind him.

During the two days that followed no guests presented themselves at the inn. Joel had no occasion to absent himself, consequently, but could remain with Hulda, whom he was very unwilling to leave alone with her own thoughts.

Dame Hansen seemed to become more and more a prey to secret anxiety. She seemed to feel no interest in anything connected with her children, not even in the loss of the "Viking." She lived a life apart, remaining shut up in her own room, and appearing only at meal-time. When she did address a word to Hulda or Joel it was only to reproach them directly or indirectly on the subject of the lottery-ticket, which neither of them felt willing to dispose of at any price. Offers for the ticket continued to pour in from every corner of the globe. A positive mania seemed to have seized certain brains. Such a ticket must certainly be predestined to win the prize of one hundred thousand marks—there could be no doubt of it, so said every one. A person would have supposed there was but one ticket in the lottery, and that the number of it was 9672. The Manchester man and the Bostonian were still at the head of the list. The Englishman had outbid his rival by a few pounds, but he, in turn, was soon distanced by an advance of several hundred dollars. The last bid was one of eight thousand marks—and it could be explained only as the result of positive madness, unless it was a question of national pride on this part of an American and an Englishman.

However this may have been Hulda refused all these offers, and her conduct excited the bitter disapproval of Dame Hansen.

"What if I should order you to sell this ticket? Yes, order you to sell it," she said to her daughter one day.

"I should be very sorry, mother, but I should be obliged to refuse."

"But if it should become absolutely necessary, what then?"

"But how can that be possible?" asked Joel.

Dame Hansen made no reply. She had turned very pale on hearing this straightforward question, and now withdrew, muttering some incoherent words.

"There is certainly something wrong," remarked Joel. "There must be some difficulty between mother and Sandgoist."

"Yes, brother, we must be prepared for some serious complications in the future."

"Have we not suffered enough during the past few weeks, my poor Hulda? What fresh

catastrophe threatens us?”

“How long Monsieur Sylvius stays!” exclaimed Hulda, without paying any apparent heed to the question. “When he is here I feel less despondent.”

“And yet, what can he do for us?” replied Joel.

What could there have been in Dame Hansen’s past that she was unwilling to confide to her children? What foolish pride prevented her from revealing to them the cause of her disquietude? Had she any real cause to reproach herself? And on the other hand, why did she endeavor to influence her daughter in regard to Ole Kamp’s ticket, and the price that was to be set upon it? Why did she seem so eager to dispose of it, or rather, to secure the money that had been offered for it? Hulda and Joel were about to learn.

On the morning of the 4th Joel escorted his sister to the little chapel where she went every morning to pray for the lost one. Her brother always waited for her, and accompanied her back to the house.

That day, on returning, they both perceived Dame Hansen in the distance, walking rapidly in the direction of the inn. She was not alone. A man was walking beside her—a man who seemed to be talking in a loud voice, and whose gestures were vehement and imperious.

Hulda and her brother both paused suddenly.

“Who is that man?” inquired Joel.

Hulda advanced a few steps.

“I know him,” she said at last.

“You know him?”

“Yes, it is Sandgoist.”

“Sandgoist, of Drammen, who came here during my absence?”

“Yes.”

“And who acted in such a lordly way that he would seem to have mother, and us, too, perhaps, in his power?”

“The same, brother; and he has probably come to make us feel his power to-day.”

“What power? This time I will know the object of his visit.”

Joel controlled himself, though not without an evident effort, and followed his sister.

In a few moments Dame Hansen and Sandgoist reached the door of the inn. Sandgoist crossed the threshold first; then the door closed upon Dame Hansen and upon him, and both of them entered the large parlor.

As Joel and Hulda approached the house the threatening voice of Sandgoist became distinctly audible. They paused and listened; Dame Hansen was speaking now, but in entreating tones.

“Let us go in,” remarked Joel.

Hulda entered with a heavy heart; Joel was trembling with suppressed anger and impatience.

Sandgoist sat enthroned in the big arm-chair. He did not even take the trouble to rise on the entrance of the brother and sister. He merely turned his head and stared at them over his spectacles.

“Ah! here is the charming Hulda, if I’m not mistaken,” he exclaimed in a tone that incensed Joel even more deeply.

Dame Hansen was standing in front of the man in an humble almost cringing attitude, but she instantly straightened herself up, and seemed greatly annoyed at the sight of her children.

“And this is her brother, I suppose?” added Sandgoist.

“Yes, her brother,” retorted Joel.

Then, advancing until within a few steps of the arm-chair, he asked, brusquely:

“What do you want here?”

Sandgoist gave him a withering look; then, in a harsh voice, and without rising, he replied:

“You will soon learn, young man. You happen in just at the right time. I was anxious to see you, and if your sister is a sensible girl we shall soon come to an understanding. But sit down, and you, too, young woman, had better do the same.”

Sandgoist seemed to be doing the honors of his own house, and Joel instantly noted the fact.

“Ah, ha! you are displeased! What a touchy young man you seem to be!”

“I am not particularly touchy that I know of, but I don’t feel inclined to accept civilities from those who have no right to offer them.”

“Joel!” cried Dame Hansen.

“Brother, brother!” exclaimed Hulda, with an imploring look.

Joel made a violent effort to control himself, and to prevent himself from yielding to his desire to throw this coarse wretch out of the window, he retired to a corner of the room.

“Can I speak now?” inquired Sandgoist.

An affirmative sign from Dame Hansen was all the answer he obtained, but it seemed to be sufficient.

“What I have to say is this,” he began, “and I would like all three of you to listen attentively, for I don’t fancy being obliged to repeat my words.”

That he spoke like a person who had an indisputable right to his own way was only too evident to each and every member of the party.

“I have learned through the newspapers,” he continued, “of the misfortune which has befallen a certain Ole Kamp—a young seaman of Bergen—and of a lottery-ticket that he

bequeathed to his betrothed, Hulda Hansen, just as his ship, the ‘Viking,’ was going down. I have also learned that the public at large feels convinced that this will prove the fortunate ticket by reason of the peculiar circumstances under which it was found. I have also learned that some very liberal offers for the purchase of this ticket have been received by Hulda Hansen.”

He was silent for a moment, then:

“Is this true?” he added.

He was obliged to wait some time for an answer to this question.

“Yes, it is true,” replied Joel, at last. “And what of it, if you please?”

“These offers are, in my opinion, the result of a most absurd and senseless superstition,” continued Sandgoist, “but for all that, they will continue to be made, and to increase in amount, as the day appointed for the drawing approaches. Now, I am a business man myself, and I have taken it into my head that I should like to have a hand in this little speculation myself, so I left Drammen yesterday to come to Dal to arrange for the transfer of this ticket, and to beg Dame Hansen to give me the preference over all other would-be purchasers.”

Hulda was about to make Sandgoist the same answer she had given to all offers of this kind, though his remarks had not been addressed directly to her, when Joel checked her.

“Before replying, I should like to ask Monsieur Sandgoist if he knows to whom this ticket belongs?” he said haughtily.

“To Hulda Hansen, I suppose.”

“Very well; then it is to Hulda Hansen that this application should be addressed.”

“My son!” hastily interposed Dame Hansen.

“Let me finish, mother,” continued Joel. “This ticket belonged originally to our cousin, Ole Kamp, and had not Ole Kamp a perfect right to bequeath it to his betrothed?”

“Unquestionably,” replied Sandgoist.

“Then it is to Hulda Hanson that you must apply, if you wish to purchase it.”

“So be it, Master Formality,” retorted Sandgoist. “I now ask Hulda to sell me this ticket Number 9672 that Ole Kamp bequeathed to her.”

“Monsieur Sandgoist,” the young girl answered in firm but quiet tones, “I have received a great many offers for this ticket, but they have been made in vain. I shall say to you exactly what I have said to others. If my betrothed sent me this ticket with his last farewell upon it it was because he wished me to keep it, so I will not part with it at any price.”

Having said this Hulda turned, as if to leave the room, evidently supposing that the conversation so far as she was concerned had been terminated by her refusal, but at a gesture from her mother she paused.

An exclamation of annoyance had escaped Dame Hansen, and Sandgoist’s knitted brows and flashing eyes showed that anger was beginning to take possession of him.

“Yes, remain, Hulda,” said he. “This is not your final answer. If I insist it is because I certainly have a right to do so. Besides, I think I must have stated the case badly, or rather you must have misunderstood me. It is certain that the chances of this ticket have not increased because the hand of a shipwrecked seaman placed it in a bottle and it was subsequently recovered; still, the public seldom or never reasons, and there is not the slightest doubt that many persons desire to become the owners of it. They have already offered to purchase it, and other offers are sure to follow. It is simply a business transaction, I repeat, and I have come to propose a good trade to you.”

“You will have some difficulty in coming to an understanding with my sister, sir,” replied Joel, ironically. “When you talk business to her she replies with sentiment.”

“That is all idle talk, young man,” replied Sandgoist. “When my explanation is concluded you will see that however advantageous the transaction may be to me it will be equally so to her. I may also add that it will be equally so to her mother, Dame Hansen, who is personally interested in the matter.”

Joel and Hulda exchanged glances. Were they about to learn the secret Dame Hansen had so long concealed from them?

“I do not ask that this ticket shall be sold to me for what Ole Kamp paid for it,” continued Sandgoist. No! Right or wrong, it has certainly acquired an increased financial value, and I am willing to make a sacrifice to become the owner of it.”

“You have already been told that Hulda has refused much better offers than yours,” replied Joel.

“Indeed!” exclaimed Sandgoist. “Much better offers, you say. How do you know?”

“Whatever your offer may be, my sister refuses it, and I approve of her decision.”

“Ah! am I dealing with Joel or Hulda Hansen, pray?”

“My sister and I are one,” retorted Joel. “It would be well for you to become satisfied of this fact, as you seem to be ignorant of it.”

Sandgoist shrugged his shoulders, but without being at all disconcerted, for like a man who is sure of his arguments, he replied:

“When I spoke of the price I was willing to pay for the ticket, I ought to have told you that I could offer inducements which Hulda Hansen can hardly reject if she takes any interest in the welfare of her family.”

“Indeed?”

“Yes, and it would be well for you, young man, to understand, in your turn, that I did not come to Dal to beg your sister to sell me this ticket. No, a thousand times no.”

“For what, then?”

“I do not ask for it, I demand it. I will have it.”

“And by what right?” exclaimed Joel, “and how dare you, a stranger, speak in this way in my mother’s house?”

“By the right every man has to speak as he pleases, and when he pleases, in his own

house," retorted Sandgoist.

"In his own house?"

Joel, in his indignation, stepped threateningly toward Sandgoist, who, though not easily frightened, sprung hastily out of his arm-chair. But Hulda laid a detaining hand upon her brother's arm, while Dame Hansen, burying her face in her hands, retreated to the other end of the room.

"Brother, look at her!" whispered the young girl.

Joel paused suddenly. A glance at his mother paralyzed him. Her very attitude revealed how entirely Dame Hansen was in this scoundrel's power.

Sandgoist, seeing Joel's hesitation, recovered his self-possession, and resumed his former seat.

"Yes, in his own house," he continued in a still more arrogant voice. "Ever since her husband's death, Dame Hansen has been engaging in unsuccessful speculations. After losing the small fortune your father left at his death, she was obliged to borrow money of a Christiania banker, offering this house as security for a loan of fifteen thousand marks. About a year ago I purchased the mortgage, and this house will consequently become my property—and very speedily—if I am not paid when this mortgage becomes due."

"When is it due?" demanded Joel.

"On the 20th of July, or eighteen days from now," replied Sandgoist. "Then, whether you like it or not, I shall be in my own house here."

"You will not be in your own house here until that date, even if you are not paid at that time," retorted Joel, "and I forbid you to speak as you have been doing in the presence of my mother and sister."

"He forbids me—me!" exclaimed Sandgoist. "But how about his mother—what does she say?"

"Speak, mother!" cried Joel, approaching Dame Hansen, and endeavoring to remove her hands from her face.

"Joel, my brother," exclaimed Hulda. "I entreat you, for my sake, to be calm."

Dame Hansen bowed her head upon her breast, not daring to meet her son's searching eyes. It was only too true that she had been endeavoring to increase her fortune by rash speculations for several years past. The small sum of money at her disposal had soon melted away, and she had been obliged to borrow at a high rate of interest. And now the mortgage had passed into the hands of this Sandgoist—a heartless and unprincipled man—a well-known usurer, who was heartily despised throughout the country. Dame Hansen, however, had seen him for the first time when he came to Dal to satisfy himself in regard to the value of the property.

This was the secret that had weighed so heavily upon her. This, too, explained her reserve, for she had not dared to confide in her children. This was the secret she had sedulously kept from those whose future she had blighted.

Hulda scarcely dared to think of what she had just heard. Yes, Sandgoist was indeed a

master who had the power to enforce his will! The ticket he wished to purchase would probably be worth nothing a fortnight hence, and if she did not consent to relinquish it certain ruin would follow—their house would be sold over their heads, and the Hansen family would be homeless and penniless.

Hulda dared not even glance at Joel, but Joel was too angry to pay any heed to these threats. He could think only of Sandgoist, and if the man continued to talk in this way the impetuous youth felt that he should not be able to control himself much longer.

Sandgoist, seeing that he had once more become master of the situation, grew even more arrogant and imperious in his manner.

“I want that ticket, and I intend to have it,” he repeated. “In exchange for it I offer no fixed price, but I promise to extend the mortgage for one—two, or three years—Fix the date yourself, Hulda.”

Hulda’s heart was so deeply oppressed with anguish that she was unable to reply, but her brother answered for her.

“Ole Kamp’s ticket can not be sold by Hulda Hansen. My sister refuses your offer, in spite of your threats. Now leave the house!”

“Leave the house,” repeated Sandgoist. “I shall do nothing of the kind. If the offer I have made does not satisfy you I will go even further. In exchange for the ticket I offer you—I offer you—”

Sandgoist must certainly have felt an irresistible desire to possess this ticket—or at least he most have been convinced that the purchase would prove a most advantageous one to him, for he seated himself at a table upon which lay pen, ink, and paper, and a moment afterward he added:

“Here is what I offer.”

It was a receipt for the amount of Dame Hansen’s indebtedness—a receipt for the amount of the mortgage on the Dal property.

Dame Hansen cowered in her corner, with hands outstretched, and eyes fixed imploringly on her daughter.

“And now give me the ticket,” cried Sandgoist, “I want it to-day—this very instant. I will not leave Dal without it”

As he spoke he stepped hastily toward the poor girl as if with the intention of searching her pockets, and wresting the ticket from her.

This was more than Joel could endure, especially when he heard Hulda’s startled cry of “Brother! brother!”

“Get out of here!” he shouted, roughly. And seeing that Sandgoist showed no intention of obeying, the young man was about to spring upon him, when Hulda hastily interposed.

“Here is the ticket, mother,” she cried.

Dame Hansen seized it, and as she exchanged it for Sandgoist’s receipt her daughter sunk, almost fainting, into an arm-chair.

“Hulda! Hulda! Oh, what have you done?” cried Joel.

“What has she done,” replied Dame Hansen. “Yes, I am guilty—for my children’s sake I wished to increase the property left by their father, but instead I have reduced them to poverty. But Hulda has saved us all. That is what she has done. Thank you, Hulda, thank you.”

Sandgoist still lingered. Joel perceived the fact.

“You are here still,” he continued, roughly. And springing upon Sandgoist he seized him by the shoulders and hustled him out-of-doors in spite of his protests and resistance.

Chapter 15

Sylvius Hogg reached Dal on the evening of the following day. He did not say a word about his journey, and no one knew that he had been to Bergen. As long as the search was productive of no results he wished the Hansen family to remain in ignorance of it. Every letter or telegram, whether from Bergen or Christiania, was to be addressed to him, at the inn, where he intended to await further developments. Did he still hope? Yes, though it must be admitted that he had some misgivings.

As soon as he returned the professor became satisfied that some important event had occurred in his absence. The altered manner of Joel and Hulda showed conclusively that an explanation must have taken place between their mother and themselves. Had some new misfortunes befallen the Hansen household?

All this of course troubled Sylvius Hogg greatly. He felt such a paternal affection for the brother and sister that he could not have been more fond of them if they had been his own children. How much he had missed them during his short absence.

“They will tell me all by and by,” he said to himself. “They will have to tell me all. Am I not a member of the family?”

Yes; Sylvius Hogg felt now that he had an undoubted right to be consulted in regard to everything connected with the private life of his young friends, and to know why Joel and Hulda seemed even more unhappy than at the time of his departure. The mystery was soon solved.

In fact both the young people were anxious to confide in the excellent man whom they loved with a truly filial devotion, but they were waiting for him to question them. During his absence they had felt lonely and forsaken—the more so from the fact that Sylvius Hogg had not seen fit to tell them where he was going. Never had the hours seemed so long. It never once occurred to them that the journey was in any way connected with a search for the “Viking,” and that Sylvius Hogg had concealed the fact from them in order to spare them additional disappointment in case of failure.

And now how much more necessary his presence seemed to have become to them! How glad they were to see him, to listen to his words of counsel and hear his kind and encouraging voice. But would they ever dare to tell him what had passed between them and the Drammen usurer, and how Dame Hansen had marred the prospects of her children? What would Sylvius Hogg say when he learned that the ticket was no longer in Hulda’s possession, and when he heard that Dame Hansen had used it to free herself from her inexorable creditor?

He was sure to learn these facts, however. Whether it was Sylvius Hogg or Hulda that first broached the subject, it would be hard to say, nor does it matter much. This much is certain, however, the professor soon became thoroughly acquainted with the situation of affairs. He was told of the danger that had threatened Dame Hansen and her children, and

how the usurer would have driven them from their old home in a fortnight if the debt had not been paid by the surrender of the ticket.

Sylvius Hogg listened attentively to this sad story.

“You should not have given up the ticket,” he cried, vehemently; “no, you should not have done it.”

“How could I help it, Monsieur Sylvius?” replied the poor girl, greatly troubled.

“You could not, of course, and yet—Ah, if I had only been here!”

And what would Professor Sylvius Hogg have done had he been there? He did not say, however, but continued:

“Yes, my dear Hulda; yes, Joel, you did the best you could, under the circumstances. But what enrages me almost beyond endurance is the fact that this Sandgoist will profit greatly, no doubt, by this absurd superstition on the part of the public. If poor Ole’s ticket should really prove to be the lucky one this unprincipled scoundrel will reap all the benefit. And yet, to suppose that this number, 9672, will necessarily prove the lucky one, is simply ridiculous and absurd. Still, I would not have given up the ticket, I think. After once refusing to surrender it to Sandgoist Hulda would have done better to turn a deaf ear to her mother’s entreaties.”

The brother and sister could find nothing to say in reply. In giving the ticket to Dame Hansen, Hulda had been prompted by a filial sentiment that was certainly to be commended rather than censured. The sacrifice she had made was not one of more or less probable chance, but of Ole Kamp’s last wishes and of her last memento of her lover.

But it was too late to think of this now. Sandgoist had the ticket. It belonged to him, and he would sell it to the highest bidder. A heartless usurer would thus coin money out of the touching farewell of the shipwrecked mariner. Sylvius Hogg could not bear the thought. It was intolerable to him.

He resolved to have a talk with Dame Hansen on the subject that very day. This conversation could effect no change in the state of affairs, but it had become almost necessary.

“So you think I did wrong, Monsieur Hogg?” she asked, after allowing the professor to say all he had to say on the subject.

“Certainly, Dame Hansen.”

“If you blame me for having engaged in rash speculations, and for endangering the fortune of my children, you are perfectly right; but if you blame me for having resorted to the means I did to free myself, you are wrong. What have you to say in reply?”

“Nothing.”

“But seriously, do you think that I ought to have refused the offer of Sandgoist, who really offered fifteen thousand marks for a ticket that is probably worth nothing; I ask you again, do you think I ought to have refused it?”

“Yes and no, Dame Hansen.”

“It can not be both yes and no, professor; it is no. Under different circumstances, and if the future had appeared less threatening—though that was my own fault, I admit—I should have upheld Hulda in her refusal to part with the ticket she had received from Ole Kamp. But when there was a certainty of being driven in a few days from the house in which my husband died, and in which my children first saw the light, I could not understand such a refusal, and you yourself, Monsieur Hogg, had you been in my place, would certainly have acted as I did.”

“No, Dame Hansen, no!”

“What would you have done, then?”

“I would have done anything rather than sacrifice a ticket my daughter had received under such circumstances.”

“Do these circumstances, in your opinion, enhance the value of the ticket?”

“No one can say.”

“On the contrary, every one does know. This ticket is simply one that has nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine chances of losing against one of winning. Do you consider it any more valuable because it was found in a bottle that was picked up at sea?”

Sylvius Hogg hardly knew what to say in reply to this straightforward question, so he reverted to the sentimental side of the question by remarking:

“The situation now seems to be briefly as follows: Ole Kamp, as the ship went down, bequeathed to Hulda the sole earthly possession left him, with the request that she should present it on the day of the drawing, provided, of course, that the ticket reached her; and now this ticket is no longer in Hulda’s possession.”

“If Ole Kamp had been here, he would not have hesitated to surrender his ticket to Sandgoist,” replied Dame Hansen.

“That is quite possible,” replied Sylvius Hogg; “but certainly no other person had a right to do it, and what will you say to him if he has not perished and if he should return to-morrow, or this very day?”

“Ole will never return,” replied Dame Hansen, gloomily. “Ole is dead, Monsieur Hogg, dead, beyond a doubt.”

“You can not be sure of that, Dame Hansen,” exclaimed the professor. “In fact, you know nothing at all about it. Careful search is being made for some survivor of the shipwreck. It may prove successful; yes, even before the time appointed for the drawing of this lottery. You have no right to say that Ole Kamp is dead, so long as we have no proof that he perished in the catastrophe. The reason I speak with less apparent assurance before your children is that I do not want to arouse hopes that may end in bitter disappointment. But to you, Dame Hansen, I can say what I really think, and I can not, I will not believe that Ole Kamp is dead! No, I will not believe it!”

Finding herself thus worsted, Dame Hansen ceased to argue the question, and this Norwegian, being rather superstitious in her secret heart, hung her head as if Ole Kamp

was indeed about to appear before her.

“At all events, before parting with the ticket,” continued Sylvius Hogg, “there was one very simple thing that you neglected to do.”

“What?”

“You should first have applied to your personal friends or the friends of your family. They would not have refused to assist you, either by purchasing the mortgage of Sandgoist, or by loaning you the money to pay it.”

“I have no friends of whom I could ask such a favor.”

“Yes, you have, Dame Hansen. I know at least one person who would have done it without the slightest hesitation.”

“And who is that, if you please?”

“Sylvius Hogg, member of the Storthing.”

Dame Hansen, too deeply moved to reply in words, bowed her thanks to the professor.

“But what’s done can’t be undone, unfortunately,” added Sylvius Hogg, “and I should be greatly obliged to you, Dame Hansen, if you would refrain from saying anything to your children about this conversation.”

And the two separated.

The professor had resumed his former habits, and his daily walks as well. In company with Joel and Hulda, he spent several hours every day in visiting the points of interest in and about Dal—not going too far, however, for fear of wearying the young girl. Much of his time, too, was devoted to his extensive correspondence. He wrote letter after letter to Bergen and Christiania, stimulating the zeal all who were engaged in the good work of searching for the “Viking.” To find Ole seemed to be his sole aim in life now.

He even felt it his duty to again absent himself for twenty-four hours, doubtless for an object in some way connected with the affair in which Dame Hansen’s family was so deeply interested; but, as before, he maintained absolute silence in regard to what he was doing or having done in this matter.

In the meantime Hulda regained strength but slowly. The poor girl lived only upon the recollection of Ole; and her hope of seeing him again grew fainter from day to day. It is true, she had near her the two beings she loved best in the world; and one of them never ceased to encourage her; but would that suffice? Was it not necessary to divert her mind at any cost? But how was her mind to be diverted from the gloomy thoughts that bound her, as it were, to the shipwrecked “Viking?”

The 12th of July came. The drawing of the Christiania Schools Lottery was to take place in four days.

It is needless to say that Sandgoist’s purchase had come to the knowledge of the public. The papers announced that the famous ticket bearing the number 9672 was now in the possession of M. Sandgoist, of Drammen, and that this ticket would be sold to the highest bidder; so, if M. Sandgoist was now the owner of the aforesaid ticket, he must have purchased it for a round sum of Hulda Hansen.

Of course this announcement lowered the young girl very decidedly in public estimation. What! Hulda Hansen had consented to sell the ticket belonging to her lost lover? She had turned this last memento of him into money?

But a timely paragraph that appeared in the “Morgen-Blad” gave the readers a true account of what had taken place. It described the real nature of Sandgoist’s interference, and how the ticket had come into his hands. And now it was upon the Drammen usurer that public odium fell; upon the heartless creditor who had not hesitated to take advantage of the misfortunes of the Hansen family, and as if by common consent the offers which had been made while Hulda held the ticket were not renewed. The ticket seemed to have lost its supernatural value since it had been defiled by Sandgoist’s touch, so that worthy had made but a bad bargain, after all, and the famous ticket, No. 9672, appeared likely to be left on his hands.

It is needless to say that neither Hulda nor Joel was aware of what had been said, and this was fortunate, for it would have been very painful to them to become publicly mixed up in an affair which had assumed such a purely speculative character since it came into the hands of the usurer.

Late on the afternoon of the 12th of July, a letter arrived, addressed to Professor Sylvius Hogg.

This missive, which came from the Naval Department, contained another which had been mailed at Christiansand, a small town situated at the mouth of the Gulf of Christiania. It could hardly have contained any news, however, for Sylvius Hogg put it in his pocket and said nothing to Joel or his sister about its contents.

But when he bade them good-night on retiring to his chamber, he remarked:

“The drawing of the lottery is to take place in three days as you are, of course, aware, my children. You intend to be present, do you not?”

“What is the use, Monsieur Sylvius?” responded Hulda.

“But Ole wished his betrothed to witness it. In fact, he particularly requested it in the last lines he ever wrote, and I think his wishes should be obeyed.”

“But the ticket is no longer in Hulda’s possession,” remarked Joel, “and we do not even know into whose hands it has passed.”

“Nevertheless, I think you both ought to accompany me to Christiania to attend the drawing,” replied the professor.

“Do you really desire it, Monsieur Sylvius?” asked the young girl.

“It is not I, my dear Hulda, but Ole who desires it, and Ole’s wishes must be respected.”

“Monsieur Sylvius is right, sister,” replied Joel. “Yes; you must go. When do you intend to start, Monsieur Sylvius?”

“To-morrow, at day-break, and may Saint Olaf protect us!”

Chapter 16

The next morning Foreman Lengling's gayly painted kariol bore away Sylvius Hogg and Hulda, seated comfortably side by side. There was not room for Joel, as we know already, so the brave fellow trudged along on foot at the horse's head.

The fourteen kilometers that lay between Dal and Moel had no terrors for this untiring walker.

Their route lay along the left bank of the Maan, down the charming valley of the Vesfjorddal—a narrow, heavily wooded valley, watered by a thousand dashing cataracts. At each turn in the path, too, one saw appearing or disappearing the lofty summit of Gousta, with its two large patches of dazzling snow.

The sky was cloudless, the weather magnificent, the air not too cool, nor the sun too warm.

Strange to say, Sylvius Hogg's face seemed to have become more serene since his departure from the inn, though it is not improbable that his cheerfulness was a trifle forced, so anxious was he that this trip should divert Joel and Hulda from their sorrowful thoughts.

It took them only about two hours and a half to reach Moel, which is situated at the end of Lake Tinn. Here they were obliged to leave the kariol and take a small boat, for at this point a chain of small lakes begins. The kariol paused near the little church, at the foot of a water-fall at least five hundred feet in height. This water-fall, which is visible for only about one fifth of its descent, loses itself in a deep crevasse before being swallowed up by the lake.

Two boatmen were standing on the shore beside a birch-bark canoe, so fragile and unstable that the slightest imprudence on the part of its occupants would inevitably overturn it.

The lake was at its very best this beautiful morning. The sun had absorbed all the mist of the previous night, and no one could not have asked for a more superb summer's day.

"You are not tired, my good Joel?" inquired the professor, as he alighted from the kariol.

"No, Monsieur Sylvius. You forget that I am accustomed to long tramps through the Telemark."

"That is true. Tell me, do you know the most direct route from Moel to Christiania?"

"Perfectly, sir. But I fear when we reach Tinoset, at the further end of the lake, we shall have some difficulty in procuring a kariol, as we have not warned them of our intended arrival, as is customary in this country."

"Have no fears, my boy," replied the professor: "I attended to that. You needn't be

afraid that I have any intention of making you foot it from Dal to Christiania.”

“I could easily do it if necessary,” remarked Joel.

“But it will not be necessary, fortunately. Now suppose we go over our route again.”

“Well, once at Tinoset, Monsieur Sylvius, we for a time follow the shores of Lake Fol, passing through Vik and Bolkesko, so as to reach Mose, and afterward Kongsberg, Hangsund, and Drammen. If we travel both night and day it will be possible for us to reach Christiania to-morrow afternoon.”

“Very well, Joel. I see that you are familiar with the country, and the route you propose is certainly a very pleasant one.”

“It is also the shortest.”

“But I am not at all particular about taking the shortest route,” replied Sylvius Hogg, laughing. “I know another and even more agreeable route that prolongs the journey only a few hours, and you, too, are familiar with it, my boy, though you failed to mention it.”

“What route do you refer to?”

“To the one that passes through Bamble.”

“Through Bamble?”

“Yes, through Bamble. Don’t feign ignorance. Yes, through Bamble, where Farmer Helmboe and his daughter Siegfrid reside.”

“Monsieur Sylvius!”

“Yes, and that is the route we are going to take, following the northern shore of Lake Fol instead of the southern, but finally reaching Kongsberg all the same.”

“Yes, quite as well, and even better,” answered Joel smiling.

“I must thank you in behalf of my brother, Monsieur Sylvius,” said Hulda, archly.

“And for yourself as well, for I am sure that you too will be glad to see your friend Siegfrid.”

The boat being ready, all three seated themselves upon a pile of leaves in the stern, and the vigorous strokes of the boatsmen soon carried the frail bark a long way from the shore.

After passing Hackenoes, a tiny hamlet of two or three houses, built upon a rocky promontory laved by the narrow fiord into which the Maan empties, the lake begins to widen rapidly. At first it is walled in by tall cliffs whose real height one can estimate accurately only when a boat passes their base, appearing no larger than some aquatic bird in comparison; but gradually the mountains retire into the background.

The lake is dotted here and there with small islands, some absolutely devoid of vegetation, others covered with verdure through which peep a few fishermen’s huts. Upon the lake, too, may be seen floating countless logs not yet sold to the saw-mills in the neighborhood.

This sight led Sylvius Hogg to jestingly remark—and he certainly must have been in a mood for jesting:

“If our lakes are the eyes of Norway, as our poets pretend, it must be admitted that poor Norway has more than one beam in her eye, as the Bible says.”

About four o’clock the boat reached Tinoset, one of the most primitive of hamlets. Still that mattered little, as Sylvius Hogg had no intention of remaining there even for an hour. As he had prophesied to Joel, a vehicle was awaiting them on the shore, for having decided upon this journey several weeks before, he had written to Mr. Benett, of Christiania, requesting him to provide the means of making it with the least possible fatigue and delay, which explains the fact that a comfortable carriage was in attendance, with its box well stocked with eatables, thus enabling the party to dispense with the stale eggs and sour milk with which travelers are usually regaled in the hamlets of the Telemark.

Tinoset is situated near the end of Lake Tinn, and here the Maan plunges majestically into the valley below, where it resumes its former course.

The horses being already harnessed to the carriage, our friends immediately started in the direction of Bamble. In those days this was the only mode of travel in vogue throughout Central Norway, and through the Telemark in particular, and perhaps modern railroads have already caused the tourist to think with regret of the national kariol and Mr. Benett’s comfortable carriages.

It is needless to say that Joel was well acquainted with this region, having traversed it repeatedly on his way from Dal to Bamble.

It was eight o’clock in the evening when Sylvius Hogg and his protégées reached the latter village. They were not expected, but Farmer Helmboe received them none the less cordially on that account. Siegfrid tenderly embraced her friend, and the two young girls being left alone together for a few moments, they had an opportunity to discuss the subject that engrossed their every thought.

“Pray do not despair, my dearest Hulda,” said Siegfrid; “I have not ceased to hope, by any means. Why should you abandon all hope of seeing your poor Ole again? We have learned, through the papers, that search is being made for the ‘Viking.’ It will prove successful, I am certain it will, and I am sure Monsieur Sylvius has not given up all hope. Hulda, my darling, I entreat you not to despair.”

Hulda’s tears were her only reply, and Siegfrid pressed her friend fondly to her heart.

Ah! what joy would have reigned in Farmer Helmboe’s household if they could but have heard of the safe return of the absent one, and have felt that they really had a right to be happy.

“So you are going direct to Christiania?” inquired the farmer.

“Yes, Monsieur Helmboe.”

“To be present at the drawing of the great lottery?”

“Certainly.”

“But what good will it do now that Ole’s ticket is in the hands of that wretch, Sandgoist?”

“It was Ole’s wish, and it must be respected,” replied the professor.

“I hear that the usurer has found no purchaser for the ticket for which he paid so dearly.”

“I too have heard so, friend Helmboe.”

“Well, I must say that it serves the rascal right. The man is a scoundrel, professor, a scoundrel, and it serves him right.”

“Yes, friend Helmboe, it does, indeed, serve him right.”

Of course they had to take supper at the farm-house. Neither Siegfrid nor her father would allow their friends to depart without accepting the invitation, but it would not do for them to tarry too long if they wished to make up for the time lost by coming around by the way of Bamble, so at nine o’clock the horses were put to the carriage.

“At my next visit I will spend six hours at the table with you, if you desire it,” said Sylvius Hogg to the farmer; “but to-day I must ask your permission to allow a cordial shake of the hand from you and the loving kiss your charming Siegfrid will give Hulda to take the place of the dessert.”

This done they started.

In this high latitude twilight would still last several hours. The horizon, too, is distinctly visible for a long while after sunset, the atmosphere is so pure.

It is a beautiful and varied drive from Bamble to Kongsberg. The road passes through Hitterdal and to the south of Lake Fol, traversing the southern part of the Telemark, and serving as an outlet to all the small towns and hamlets of that locality.

An hour after their departure they passed the church of Hitterdal, an old and quaint edifice, surmounted with gables and turrets rising one above the other, without the slightest regard to anything like regularity of outline. The structure is of wood—walls, roofs and turrets—and though it strongly resembles a motley collection of pepper-boxes, it is really a venerable and venerated relic of the Scandinavian architecture of the thirteenth century.

Night came on very gradually—one of those nights still impregnated with a dim light which about one o’clock begins to blend with that of early dawn.

Joel, enthroned upon the front seat, was absorbed in his reflections. Hulda sat silent and thoughtful in the interior of the carriage. But few words were exchanged between Sylvius Hogg and the postilion, and these were almost invariably requests to drive faster. No other sound was heard save the bells on the harness, the cracking of the whip, and the rumble of wheels over the stony road. They drove on all night, without once changing horses. It was not necessary to stop at Listhus, a dreary station, situated in a sort of natural amphitheater, surrounded by pine-clad mountains. They passed swiftly by Tiness, too, a picturesque little hamlet, perched on a rocky eminence. Their progress was rapid in spite of the rather dilapidated condition of their vehicle, whose bolts and springs rattled and creaked dolorously, and certainly there was no just cause of complaint against the driver, though he was half asleep most of the time. But for all that, he urged his horses briskly on, whipping his jaded steeds mechanically, but usually aiming his blows at the off horse, for the near

one belonged to him, while the other was the property of a neighbor.

About five o'clock in the morning Sylvius Hogg opened his eyes, stretched out his arms, and drank in huge draughts of the pungent odor of the pines.

They had now reached Kongsberg. The carriage was crossing the bridge over the Laagen, and soon it stopped in front of a house near the church, and not far from the water-fall of the Larbrö.

"If agreeable to you, my friends," remarked Sylvius Hogg, "we will stop here only to change horses, for it is still too early for breakfast. I think it would be much better not to make a real halt until we reach Drammen. There we can obtain a good meal, and so spare Monsieur Benett's stock of provisions."

This being decided the professor and Joel treated themselves to a tiny glass of brandy at the Hotel des Mines, and a quarter of an hour afterward, fresh horses being in readiness, they resumed their journey.

On leaving the city they were obliged to ascend a very steep hill. The road was roughly hewn in the side of the mountain, and from it the tall towers at the mouth of the silver mines of Kongsberg were distinctly visible. Then a dense pine forest suddenly hid everything else from sight—a pine forest through which the sun's rays never penetrate.

The town of Hangsund furnished fresh horses for the carriage. There our friends again found themselves on smooth level roads, frequently obstructed by turnpike gates, where they were obliged to pay a toll of five or six shillings. This was a fertile region, abounding in trees that looked like weeping willows, so heavily did the branches droop under their burden of fruit.

As they neared Drammen, which is situated upon an arm of Christiania Bay, the country became more hilly. About noon they reached the city with its two interminable streets, lined with gayly painted houses, and its wharves where the countless rafts left but a meager space for the vessels that come here to load with the products of the Northland.

The carriage paused in front of the Scandinavian Hotel. The proprietor, a dignified-looking personage, with a long, white beard, and a decidedly professional air, promptly appeared in the door-way of his establishment.

With that keenness of perception that characterizes inn-keepers in every country on the globe, he remarked:

"I should not wonder if these gentlemen and this young lady would like breakfast."

"Yes," replied Sylvius Hogg, "but let us have it as soon as possible."

"It shall be served immediately."

The repast was soon ready, and proved a most tempting one. Mention should especially be made of a certain fish, stuffed with a savory herb, of which the professor partook with evident delight.

At half past one o'clock the carriage, to which fresh horses had been harnessed, was brought to the hotel door, and our friends started down the principal street of Drammen at a brisk trot.

As they passed a small and dingy dwelling that contrasted strongly with the gayly painted houses around it, Joel could not repress a sudden movement of loathing.

“There is Sandgoist?” he exclaimed.

“So that is Sandgoist,” remarked Sylvius Hogg. “He certainly has a bad face.”

It was Sandgoist smoking on his door-step. Did he recognize Joel? It is impossible to say, for the carriage passed swiftly on between the huge piles of lumber and boards.

Next came a long stretch of level road, bordered with mountain ash-trees, laden with coral berries, and then they entered the dense pine forest that skirts a lovely tract of land known as Paradise Valley.

Afterward they found themselves confronted and surrounded by a host of small hills, each of which was crowned with a villa or farm-house. As twilight came on, and the carriage began to descend toward the sea through a series of verdant meadows, the bright red roofs of neat farm-houses peeped out here and there through the trees, and soon our travelers reached Christiania Bay, surrounded by picturesque hills, and with its innumerable creeks, its tiny ports and wooden piers, where the steamers and ferry-boats land.

At nine o’clock in the evening, and while it was still light, the old carriage drove noisily into the city through the already deserted streets.

In obedience to orders previously given by Sylvius Hogg, the vehicle drew up in front of the Hotel du Nord. It was there that Hulda and Joel were to stay, rooms having been engaged for them in advance. After bidding them an affectionate good-night the professor hastened to his own home, where his faithful servants, Kate and Fink, were impatiently awaiting him.

Chapter 17

Christiania, though it is the largest city in Norway, would be considered a small town in either England or France; and were it not for frequent fires, the place would present very much the same appearance that it did in the eleventh century. It was really rebuilt in 1624, by King Christian, however; and its name was then changed from Opsolo, as it had been previously called, to Christiania, in honor of its royal architect.

It is symmetrically laid out with broad, straight streets: and the houses are generally of gray stone or red brick. In the center of a fine garden stands the royal palace, known as the Oscarlot, a large quadrangular building, devoid of beauty, though built in the Ionic style of architecture. There are a few churches, in which the attention of worshipers is not distracted by any marvels of art; several municipal and government buildings, and one immense bazaar, constructed in the form of a rotunda, and stocked with both native and foreign goods.

There is nothing very remarkable about all this, but one thing the traveler can certainly admire without stint, and that is the site of the city, which is encircled by mountains so varied in shape and aspect as to form a most superb frame for Christiania.

Though the city is nearly flat in the new and wealthy quarter, the hilly portions, where the poorer classes live, are covered with brick or wooden huts of gaudy tints that astonish rather than charm the beholder.

Like all cities situated upon the water’s edge, and upon fertile hills, Christiania is extremely picturesque, and it would not be unjust to compare its fiord to the famous Bay of Naples. Its shores, like those of Sorrento and Castellamare, are dotted with chalets and villas, half hidden in the dark, rich verdure of the pines, and enveloped in the light mist that imparts such a wonderful softness to northern landscapes.

Sylvius Hogg had at last returned to Christiania, though under conditions that he little dreamed of at the beginning of his interrupted journey. Oh, well, he would try that again another year! He could think only of Joel and Hulda Hansen now. Had there been time to prepare for them, he would certainly have taken them to his own home, where old Fink and old Kate would have made them heartily welcome; but under the circumstances, the professor had thought it advisable to take them to the Hotel du Nord, where, as protégées of Sylvius Hogg, they were sure of every attention, though he had carefully refrained from giving their names, for there had been so much talk about the brother and sister, and especially about the young girl, that it would be very embarrassing for her if her arrival in Christiania should become known.

It had been decided that Sylvius Hogg should not see them again until breakfast the next day, that is to say, between eleven and twelve o’clock, as he had some business matters to attend to that would engross his attention all the forenoon. He would then rejoin them and remain with them until three o’clock, the hour appointed for the drawing of the lottery.

Joel, as soon as he rose the next morning, tapped at the door of his sister's room, and being anxious to divert her thoughts, which were likely to be more melancholy than ever on such a day, he proposed that they should walk about the town until breakfast-time, and Hulda, to please her brother, consented.

It was Sunday, but though the streets of northern cities are usually quiet and well-nigh deserted on that day, an air of unusual bustle and animation pervaded the scene, for not only had the townspeople refrained from going to the country, as usual, but people from the surrounding towns and country was pouring in in such numbers that the Lake Miosen Railroad had been obliged to run extra trains.

The number of disinterested persons anxious to attend the drawing of the famous lottery was even greater than the number of ticket-holders, consequently the streets were thronged with people. Whole families, and even whole villages, had come to the city, in the hope that their journey would not be in vain. Only to think of it! one million tickets had been sold, and even if they should win a prize of only one or two hundred marks, how many good people would return home rejoicing!

On leaving the hotel, Joel and Hulda first paid a visit to the wharves that line the harbor. Here the crowd was not so great except about the taverns, where huge tankards of beer were being continually called for to moisten throats that seemed to be in a state of constant thirst.

As the brother and sister wandered about among the long rows of barrels and boxes, the vessels which were anchored both near and far from the shore came in for a liberal share of their attention, for might there not be some from the port of Bergen where the "Viking" would never more be seen?

"Ole! my poor Ole!" sighed Hulda, and hearing this pathetic exclamation, Joel led her gently away from the wharves, and up into the city proper.

There, from the crowds that filled the streets and the public squares, they overheard more than one remark in relation to themselves.

"Yes," said one man; "I hear that ten thousand marks have been offered for ticket 9672."

"Ten thousand!" exclaimed another. "Why, I hear that twenty thousand marks, and even more, have been offered."

"Mr. Vanderbilt, of New York, has offered thirty thousand."

"And Messrs. Baring, of London, forty thousand."

"And the Rothschilds, sixty thousand."

So much for public exaggeration. At this rate the prices offered would soon have exceeded the amount of the capital prize.

But if these gossips were not agreed upon the sum offered to Hulda Hansen, they were all of one mind in regard to the usurer of Drammen.

"What an infernal scoundrel Sandgoist must be. That rascal who showed those poor people no mercy."

“Yes; he is despised throughout the Telemark, and this is not the first time he has been guilty of similar acts of rascality.”

“They say that nobody will buy Ole Kamp’s ticket of him, now he has got it.”

“No; nobody wants it now.”

“That is not at all surprising. In Hulda Hansen’s hands the ticket was valuable.”

“And in Sandgoist’s it seems worthless.”

“I’m glad of it. He’ll have it left on his hands, and I hope he’ll lose the fifteen thousand marks it cost him.”

“But what if the scoundrel should win the grand prize?”

“He? Never!”

“He had better not come to the drawing.”

“No. If he does he will be roughly handled. There is no question about that.”

These and many other equally uncomplimentary remarks about the usurer were freely bandied about.

It was evident that he did not intend to be present at the drawing, as he was at his house in Drammen the night before; but feeling his sister’s arm tremble in his, Joel led her swiftly on, without trying to hear any more.

As for Sylvius Hogg, they had hoped to meet him in the street; but in this they were disappointed, though an occasional remark satisfied them that the public was already aware of the professor’s return, for early in the morning he had been seen hurrying toward the wharves, and afterward in the direction of the Naval Department.

Of course, Joel might have asked anybody where Professor Sylvius Hogg lived. Any one would have been only too delighted to point out the house or even to accompany him to it; but he did not ask, for fear of being indiscreet, and as the professor had promised to meet them at the hotel, it would be better to wait until the appointed hour.

After a time Hulda began to feel very tired, and requested her brother to take her back to the hotel, especially as these discussions, in which her name was frequently mentioned, were very trying to her, and on reaching the house she went straight up to her own room to await the arrival of Sylvius Hogg.

Joel remained in the reading-room, on the lower floor, where he spent his time in mechanically looking over the Christiania papers. Suddenly he turned pale, a mist obscured his vision, and the paper fell from his hands.

In the “Morgen-Blad,” under the heading of Maritime Intelligence, he had just seen the following cablegram from Newfoundland:

> “The dispatch-boat ‘Telegraph’ has reached the locality where the ‘Viking’ is supposed to have been lost, but has found no trace of the wreck. The search on the coast of Greenland has been equally unsuccessful, so it may be considered almost certain that none of the unfortunate ship’s crew survived the catastrophe.”

Chapter 18

“Good-morning, Mr. Benett. It is always a great pleasure to me when I have an opportunity to shake hands with you.”

“And for me, professor, it is a great honor.”

“Honor, pleasure—pleasure, honor,” laughed the professor. “One balances the other.”

“I am glad to see that your journey through Central Norway has been safely accomplished.”

“Not accomplished, only concluded, for this year.”

“But tell me, pray, all about those good people you met at Dal.”

“Excellent people they were, friend Benett, in every sense of the word.”

“From what I can learn through the papers they are certainly very much to be pitied.”

“Unquestionably, Mr. Benett. I have never known misfortune to pursue persons so relentlessly.”

“It seems so, indeed, professor; for right after the loss of the ‘Viking’ came that miserable Sandgoist affair.”

“True, Mr. Benett.”

“Still, Mr. Hogg, I think Hulda Hansen did right to give up the ticket under the circumstances.”

“Indeed! and why, if you please?”

“Because it is better to secure fifteen thousand marks than to run a very great risk of gaining nothing at all.”

“You talk like the practical business man and merchant that you are; but if you choose to look at the matter from another point of view, it becomes a matter of sentiment, and money exerts very little influence in such cases.”

“Of course, Mr. Hogg, but permit me to remark that it is more than likely that your protégée has profited greatly by the exchange.”

“Why do you think so?”

“But think of it. What does this ticket represent? One chance in a million of winning.”

“Yes, one chance in a million. That is very small; it is true, Mr. Benett, very small.”

“Yes; and consequently such a reaction has followed the late madness that it is said that this Sandgoist who purchased the ticket to speculate upon it has been unable to find a purchaser.”

“So I have heard.”

“And yet, if that rascally usurer should win the grand prize, what a shame it would be!”

“A shame, most assuredly, Mr. Benett; the word is not too strong—a shame, unquestionably.”

This conversation took place while Sylvius Hogg was walking through the establishment of M. Benett—an establishment well known in Christiania, and indeed throughout Norway. It is difficult to mention an article that can not be found in this bazaar. Traveling-carriages, kariols by the dozen, canned goods, baskets of wine, preserves of every kind, clothing and utensils for tourists, and guides to conduct them to the remotest villages of Finmark, Lapland, or even to the North Pole. Nor is this all. M. Benett likewise offers to lovers of natural history specimens of the different stones and metals found in the earth, as well as of the birds, insects, and reptiles of Norway. It is well, too, to know that one can nowhere find a more complete assortment of the jewelry and bric-à-brac of the country than in his show-cases.

This gentleman is consequently the good angel of all tourists desirous of exploring the Scandinavian peninsula, and a man Christiania could scarcely do without.

“By the way, you found the carriage you had ordered waiting for you at Tinoset, did you not, professor?” he asked.

“Yes. Having ordered it through you, Monsieur Benett, I felt sure that it would, be there at the appointed time.”

“You are a sad flatterer, I fear, Monsieur Hogg. But I judged from your letter that there were to be three of you in the party.”

“There were three of us, as I told you.”

“And the others?”

“They arrived here safe and sound last evening, and are now waiting for me at the Hotel du Nord, where I am soon to join them.”

“And these persons are—?”

“Precisely, Monsieur Benett, precisely; but I must beg you to say nothing about it. I don’t wish their arrival to be noised abroad yet.”

“Poor girl!”

“Yes, she has suffered terribly.”

“And you wish her to be present at the drawing, though the ticket her betrothed bequeathed to her is no longer in her possession?”

“It is not my wish, Monsieur Benett, but that of Ole Kamp, and I say to you as I have said to others, Ole Kamp’s last wishes would be obeyed.”

“Unquestionably. What you do is not only right, but always for the best, professor.”

“You are flattering me now, dear Monsieur Benett.”

“Not at all. But it was a lucky day for them when the Hansen family made your

acquaintance.”

“Nonsense! it was a much more fortunate thing for me that they crossed my path.”

“I see that you have the same kind heart still.”

“Well, as one is obliged to have a heart it is best to have a good one, isn’t it?” retorted the professor, with a genial smile. “But you needn’t suppose that I came here merely in search of compliments,” he continued. “It was for an entirely different object, I assure you.”

“Believe me, I am quite at your service.”

“You are aware, I suppose, that but for the timely intervention of Joel and Hulda Hansen, the Rjukanfos would never have yielded me up alive, and I should not have the pleasure of seeing you to-day?”

“Yes, yes, I know,” replied Mr. Benett. “The papers have published full accounts of your adventure, and those courageous young people really deserve to win the capital prize.”

“That is my opinion,” answered Sylvius Hogg, “but as that is quite out of the question now, I am unwilling for my friend Hulda to return to Dal without some little gift as a sort of memento of her visit to Christiania.”

“That is certainly an excellent idea, Mr. Hogg.”

“So you must assist me in selecting something that would be likely to please a young girl.”

“Very willingly,” responded Mr. Benett. And he forthwith invited the professor to step into the jewelry department, for was not a Norwegian ornament the most charming souvenir that one could take away with one from Christiania and from Mr. Benett’s wonderful establishment?

Such at least was the opinion of Sylvius Hogg when the genial merchant exhibited the contents of his show-cases.

“As I am no connoisseur in such matters I must be guided by your taste, Mr. Benett,” he remarked.

They had before them a very large and complete assortment of native jewelry, which is usually valuable rather by reason of the elaborateness of its workmanship than any costliness of material.

“What is this?” inquired the professor.

“It is a ring with pendants which emit a very pleasant sound.”

“It is certainly very pretty,” replied Sylvius Hogg, trying the bauble on the tip of his little finger. “Lay it aside, Mr. Benett, and let us look at something else.”

“Bracelets or necklaces?”

“At a little of everything, if you please, Mr. Benett—a little of everything. What is this?”

“A set of ornaments for the corsage. Look at that delicate tracery of copper upon a red worsted groundwork. It is all in excellent taste, though not very expensive.”

“The effect is certainly charming, Mr. Benett. Lay the ornaments aside with the ring.”

“But I must call your attention to the fact that these ornaments are reserved for the adornment of youthful brides on their wedding-day, and that—”

“By Saint Olaf! you are right. Mr. Benett, you are quite right. Poor Hulda! Unfortunately it is not Ole who is making her this present, but myself, and it is not to a blushing bride that I am going to offer it.”

“True, true, Mr. Hogg.”

“Let me look then at some jewelry suitable for a young girl. How about this cross, Mr. Benett?”

“It is to be worn as a pendant, and being cut in concave facets it sparkles brilliantly with every movement of the wearer’s throat.”

“It is very pretty, very pretty, indeed, and you can lay it aside with the other articles, Mr. Benett. When we have gone through all the show-cases we will make our selection.”

“Yes, but—”

“What is the matter now?”

“This cross, too, is intended to be worn by Scandinavian brides on their marriage-day.”

“The deuce! friend Benett. I am certainly very unfortunate in my selections.”

“The fact is, professor, my stock is composed principally of bridal jewelry, as that meets with the readiest sale. You can scarcely wonder at that.”

“The fact doesn’t surprise me at all, Mr. Benett, though it places me in a rather embarrassing position.”

“Oh, well, you can still take the ring you asked me to put aside.”

“Yes, but I should like some more showy ornament.”

“Then take this necklace of silver filigree with its four rows of chains which will have such a charming effect upon the neck of a young girl. See! it is studded with gems of every hue, and it is certainly one of the most quaint and curious productions of the Norwegian silversmiths.”

“Yes, yes,” replied Sylvius Hogg. “It is a pretty ornament, though perhaps rather showy for my modest Hulda. Indeed, I much prefer the corsage ornaments you showed me just now, and the pendant. Are they so especially reserved for brides that they can not be presented to a young girl?”

“I think the Storthing has as yet passed no law to that effect,” replied Mr. Benett. “It is an unpardonable oversight, probably, but—”

“Well, well, it shall be attended to immediately, Mr. Benett. In the meantime I will take the cross and corsage ornaments. My little Hulda may marry some day after all. Good and charming as she is she certainly will not want for an opportunity to utilize these

ornaments, so I will buy them and take them away with me."

"Very well, very well, professor."

"Shall we have the pleasure of seeing you at the drawing, friend Benett?"

"Certainly."

"I think it will be a very interesting affair."

"I am sure of it."

"But look here," exclaimed the professor, bending over a show-case, "here are two very pretty rings I did not notice before."

"Oh, they wouldn't suit you, Mr. Hogg. These are the heavily chased rings that the pastor places upon the finger of the bride and the groom during the marriage ceremony."

"Indeed? Ah, well, I will take them all the same. And now I must bid you good-bye, Mr. Benett, though I hope to see you again very soon."

Sylvius Hogg now left the establishment, and walked briskly in the direction of the Hotel du Nord.

On entering the vestibule his eyes fell upon the words *Fiat lux*, which are inscribed upon the hall lamp.

"Ah! these Latin words are certainly very appropriate," he said to himself, "Yes. *Fiat lux! Fiat lux!*"

Hulda was still in her room, sitting by the window. The professor rapped at the door, which was instantly opened.

"Oh. Monsieur Sylvius!" cried the girl, delightedly.

"Yes, here I am, here I am! But never mind about Monsieur Sylvius now; our attention must be devoted to breakfast, which is ready and waiting. I'm as hungry as a wolf. Where is Joel?"

"In the reading-room."

"Well, I will go in search of him. You, my dear child, must come right down and join us."

Sylvius Hogg left the room and went to find Joel, who was also waiting for him, but in a state of mind bordering upon despair. The poor fellow immediately showed the professor the copy of the "Morgen-Blad," containing the discouraging telegram from the commander of the "Telegraph."

"Hulda has not seen it, I hope?" inquired the professor, hastily.

"No, I thought it better to conceal from her as long as possible what she will learn only too soon."

"You did quite right, my boy. Let us go to breakfast."

A moment afterward all three were seated at a table in a private dining-room, and Sylvius Hogg began eating with great zest.

An excellent breakfast it was, equal in fact to any dinner, as you can judge from the *menu*. Cold beer soup, salmon with egg sauce, delicious veal cutlets, rare roast beef, a delicate salad, vanilla ice, raspberry and cherry preserver—the whole moistened with some very fine claret.

“Excellent, excellent!” exclaimed Sylvius Hogg. “Why, we can almost imagine ourselves in Dame Hansen’s inn at Dal.”

And as his mouth was otherwise occupied his eyes smiled as much as it is possible for eyes to smile.

Joel and Hulda endeavored to reply in the same strain, but they could not, and the poor girl tasted scarcely anything. When the repast was concluded:

“My children,” said Sylvius Hogg, “you certainly failed to do justice to a very excellent breakfast. Still, I can not compel you to eat, and if you go without breakfast you are likely to enjoy your dinner all the more, while I very much doubt if I shall be able to compete with you to-night. Now, it is quite time for us to leave the table.”

The professor was already upon his feet, and he was about to take the hat Joel handed him, when Hulda checked him by saying:

“Monsieur Sylvius, do you still insist that I shall accompany you?”

“To witness the drawing? Certainly I do, my dear girl.”

“But it will be a very painful ordeal for me.”

“I admit it, but Ole wished you to be present at the drawing, Hulda, and Ole’s wishes must be obeyed.”

This phrase was certainly becoming a sort of refrain in Sylvius Hogg’s mouth.

Chapter 19

What a crowd filled the large hall of the University of Christiana in which the drawing of the great lottery was to take place—a crowd that overflowed into the very court-yards, as even the immense building was not large enough to accommodate such a throng, and even into the adjoining streets, as the court-yards, too, proved inadequate toward the last.

On that Sunday, the 15th of July, it certainly was not by their calmness and phlegm that one would have recognized these madly excited people as Norwegians. Was this unwonted excitement due solely to the interest excited by this drawing, or was it due, at least, in a measure, to the unusually high temperature of the summer's day?

The drawing was to begin at three o'clock precisely. There were one hundred prizes—divided into three classes: 1st, ninety prizes ranging in value from one hundred to one thousand marks, and amounting in all to forty-five thousand marks; 2d, nine prizes of from one thousand to nine thousand marks, and amounting to forty-five thousand marks, and 3d, one prize of one hundred thousand marks.

Contrary to the rule that is generally observed in lotteries of this kind, the drawing of the grand prize was reserved for the last. It was not to the holder of the first ticket drawn that the grand prize would be given, but to the last, that is to say, the one hundredth. Hence, there would result a series of emotions and heart-throbbings of constantly increasing violence, for it had been decided that no ticket should be entitled to two prizes, but that having gained one prize, the drawing should be considered null and void if the same number were taken from the urns a second time.

All this was known to the public, and there was nothing for people to do but await the appointed hour; but to while away the tedious interval of waiting they all talked, and, chiefly, of the pathetic situation of Hulda Hansen. Unquestionably, if she had still been the possessor of Ole Kamp's ticket each individual present would have wished her the next best luck to himself.

Several persons having seen the dispatch published in the "Morgen-Blad," spoke of it to their neighbors, and the entire crowd soon became aware that the search of the "Telegraph" had proved futile. This being the case all felt that there was no longer any hope of finding even a vestige of the lost "Viking." Not one of the crew could have survived the shipwreck, and Hulda would never see her lover again.

Suddenly another report diverted the minds of the crowd. It was rumored that Sandgoist had decided to leave Drammen, and several persons pretended that they had seen him in the streets of Christiania. Could it be that he had ventured into this hall? If he had the wretch would certainly meet with a most unflattering reception. How audacious in him to think of such a thing as being present at this drawing! It was so improbable that it could not be possible. It must certainly be a false alarm, and nothing more.

About quarter past two quite a commotion was apparent in the crowd.

It was caused by the sudden appearance of Sylvius Hogg at the gate of the University. Every one knew the prominent part he had taken in the whole affair, and how, after having been received by Dame Hansen's children, he had endeavored to repay the obligation, so the crowd instantly divided to make way for him, and there arose from every side a flattering murmur, which Sylvius acknowledged by a series of friendly bows, and this murmur soon changed into hearty applause.

But the professor was not alone. When those nearest him stepped back to make way for him they saw that he had a young girl on his arm, and that a young man was following them.

A young man! a young girl! The discovery had very much the effect of an electric shock. The same thought flashed through every mind like a spark from an electric battery.

"Hulda! Hulda Hansen!"

This was the name that burst from every lip.

Yes, it was Hulda, so deeply agitated that she could hardly walk. Indeed, she certainly would have fallen had it not been for Sylvius Hogg's supporting arm. But it upheld her firmly—her, the modest, heart-broken little heroine of the fête to which Ole Kamp's presence only was wanting. How greatly she would have preferred to remain in her own little room at Dal! How she shrunk from this curiosity on the part of those around her, sympathizing though it was! But Sylvius Hogg had wished her to come, and she had done so.

"Room! room!" was heard on all sides.

And as Sylvius Hogg, and Hulda and Joel walked up the passage-way that had been cleared for them, as if by magic, how many friendly hands were outstretched to grasp theirs, how many kind and cordial words were lavished upon them, and with what delight Sylvius Hogg listened to these expressions of friendly feeling!

"Yes; it is she, my friends, my little Hulda, whom I have brought back with me from Dal," said he. "And this is Joel, her noble brother; but pray, my good friends, do not smother them!"

Though Joel returned every grasp with interest, the less vigorous hands of the professor were fairly benumbed by such constant shaking, but his eyes sparkled with joy, though a tear was stealing down his cheek; but—and the phenomenon was certainly well worthy the attention of ophthalmologists—the tear was a luminous one.

It took them fully a quarter of an hour to cross the court-yard, gain the main hall, and reach the seats that had been reserved for the professor. When this was at last accomplished, not without considerable difficulty, Sylvius Hogg seated himself between Hulda and Joel.

At precisely half past two o'clock, the door at the rear of the platform opened, and the president of the lottery appeared, calm and dignified, and with the commanding mien befitting his exalted position. Two directors followed, bearing themselves with equal dignity. Then came six little blue-eyed girls, decked out in flowers and ribbons, six little girls whose innocent hands were to draw the lottery.

Their entrance was greeted with a burst of loud applause that testified both to the pleasure all experienced on beholding the managers of the Christiania Lottery, and to the impatience with which the crowd was awaiting the beginning of the drawing.

There were six little girls, as we have remarked before, and there were also six urns upon a table that occupied the middle of the platform. Each of these urns contained ten numbers: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 0, representing the units, tens, hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands, and hundreds of thousands of the number one million. There was no seventh urn, for the million column, because it had been agreed that six ciphers drawn simultaneously should represent one million, as in this way the chances of success would be equally divided among all the numbers.

It had also been settled that the numbers should be drawn in succession from the urns, beginning with that to the left of the audience. The winning number would thus be formed under the very eyes of the spectators, first by the figure in the column of hundreds of thousands, then in the columns of tens of thousands, and so on until the column of units was reached, and the reader can judge with what emotion each person watched his chances of success increase with the drawing of each figure.

As the clock struck three, the president waved his hand, and declared the drawing begun.

The prolonged murmur that greeted the announcement lasted several minutes, after which quiet was gradually established.

The president rose, and though evidently much excited, made a short speech suited to the occasion, in which he expressed regret that there was not a prize for each ticket-holder; then he ordered the drawing of the first series of prizes, which consisted, as we have before remarked, of ninety prizes, and which would therefore consume a considerable length of time.

The six little girls began to perform their duties with automaton-like regularity, but the audience did not lose patience for an instant. It is true, however, that as the value of the prizes increased with each drawing, the excitement increased proportionately, and no one thought of leaving his seat, not even those persons whose tickets had been already drawn, and who had consequently nothing more to expect.

This went on for about an hour without producing any incident of particular interest, though people noticed that number 9672 had not been drawn, which would have taken away all chance of its winning the capital prize.

“That is a good omen for Sandgoist!” remarked one of the professor’s neighbors.

“It would certainly be an extraordinary thing if a man like that should meet with such a piece of good luck, even though he has the famous ticket,” remarked another.

“A famous ticket, indeed!” replied Sylvius Hogg; “but don’t ask me why, for I can’t possibly tell you.”

Then began the drawing of the second series of prizes, nine in number. This promised to be very interesting—the ninety-first prize being one of a thousand marks; the ninety-second, one of two thousand marks, and so on, up to the ninety-ninth, which was one of

nine thousand. The third class, the reader must recollect, consisted of the capital prize only.

Number 72,521 won a prize of five thousand marks. This ticket belonged to a worthy seaman of Christiania, who was loudly cheered and who received with great dignity the congratulations lavished upon him.

Another number, 823,752, won a prize of six thousand marks, and how great was Sylvius Hogg's delight when he learned from Joel that it belonged to the charming Siegfrid of Bamble.

An incident that caused no little excitement followed. When the ninety-seventh prize was drawn, the one consisting of seven thousand marks, the audience feared for a moment that Sandgoist was the winner of it. It was won, however, by ticket number 9627, which was within only forty-five points of Ole Kamp's number.

The two drawings that followed were numbers very widely removed from each other: 775 and 76,287.

The second series was now concluded, and the great prize of one hundred thousand marks alone remained to be drawn.

The excitement of the assemblage at that moment beggars all description.

At first there was a long murmur that extended from the large hall into the court-yards and even into the street. In fact, several minutes elapsed before quiet was restored. A profound silence followed, and in this calmness there was a certain amount of stupor—the stupor one experiences on seeing a prisoner appear upon the place of execution. But this time the still unknown victim was only condemned to win a prize of one hundred thousand marks, not to lose his head; that is, unless he lost it from ecstasy.

Joel sat with folded arms, gazing straight ahead of him, being the least moved, probably, in all that large assembly. Hulda, her head bowed upon her breast, was thinking only of her poor Ole. As for Sylvius Hogg—but any attempt to describe the state of mind in which Sylvius Hogg found himself would be worse than useless.

"We will now conclude with the drawing of the one hundred thousand mark prize," announced the president.

What a voice! It seemed to proceed from the inmost depths of this solemn-looking man, probably because he was the owner of several tickets which, not having yet been drawn, might still win the capital prize.

The first little girl drew a number from the left urn, and exhibited it to the audience.

"Zero!" said the president.

The zero did not create much of a sensation, however. The audience somehow seemed to have been expecting it.

"Zero!" said the president, announcing the figure drawn by the second little girl.

Two zeros. The chances were evidently increasing for all numbers between one and nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine, and every one recollected that Ole Kamp's ticket bore the number 9672.

Strange to say, Sylvius Hogg began to move restlessly about in his chair, as if he had suddenly been stricken with palsy.

“Nine,” said the president, stating the number the third little girl had just extracted from the third urn.

Nine! That was the first figure on Ole Kamp’s ticket.

“Six!” said the president.

For the fourth little girl was timidly displaying a six to all the eyes riveted upon her.

The chances of winning were now one out of a hundred for all the numbers from one to ninety-nine, inclusive.

Could it be that this ticket of Ole Kamp’s was to be the means of placing one hundred thousand marks in that villainous Sandgoist’s pocket. Really such a result would almost make one doubt the justice of God!

The fifth little girl plunged her hand into the next urn, and drew out the fifth figure.

“Seven!” said the president, in a voice that trembled so as to be scarcely audible, even to those seated on the first row of benches.

But those who could not hear were able to see for themselves, for the five little girls were now holding up the following figures to the gaze of the audience:

00967.

The winning number consequently must be one between 9670 and 9679, so there was now one chance out of ten for Ole Kamp’s ticket to win the prize.

The suspense was at its height.

Sylvius Hogg had risen to his feet, and seized Hulda Hansen’s hand. Every eye was riveted upon the young girl. In sacrificing this last moment of her betrothed, had she also sacrificed the fortune Ole Kamp had coveted for her and for himself?

The sixth little girl had some difficulty getting her hand into the urn, she was trembling so, poor thing! but at last the figure appeared.

“Two!” exclaimed the president, sinking back in his chair, quite breathless with emotion.

“Nine thousand six hundred and seventy two!” proclaimed one of the directors, in a loud voice.

This was the number of Ole Kamp’s ticket, now in Sandgoist’s possession. Everybody was aware of this fact, and of the manner in which the usurer had obtained it; so there was a profound silence instead of the tumultuous applause that would have filled the hall of the University if the ticket had still been in Hulda Hansen’s hands.

And now was this scoundrel Sandgoist about to step forward, ticket in hand, to claim the prize?

“Number 9672 wins the prize of one hundred thousand marks!” repeated the director. “Who claims it?”

“I do.”

Was it the usurer of Drammen who answered thus?

No. It was a young man—a young man with a pale face, whose features and whole person bore marks of prolonged suffering, but alive, really and truly alive.

On hearing this voice, Hulda sprung to her feet, uttering a cry that penetrated every nook and corner of the large hall; then she fell back fainting.

But the young man had forced his way impetuously through the crowd, and it was he who caught the unconscious girl in his arms.

It was Ole Kamp!

Chapter 20

Yes; it was Ole Kamp! Ole Kamp, who, by a miracle, had survived the shipwreck of the “Viking.” The reason the “Telegraph” had not brought him back to Europe can be easily explained. He was no longer in the region visited by the dispatch-boat, for the very good reason that he was already on his way to Christiania on board the vessel that had rescued him.

This is what Sylvius Hogg was telling. This is what he repeated to all who would listen to him. And what a crowd of listeners he had! This is what he related with the triumphant accents of a conqueror! Those around him repeated it to those who were not fortunate enough to be near him, and the good news flew from group to group until it reached the crowd that filled the court-yard and the neighboring streets.

In a few moments, all Christiania knew that the young mate of the “Viking” had returned, and that he had won the grand prize of the Schools Lottery.

It was a fortunate thing that Sylvius Hogg was acquainted with the whole story, as Ole certainly could not have told it, for Joel nearly smothered him in his embrace while Hulda was regaining consciousness.

“Hulda! dearest Hulda!” said Ole. “Yes, it is I—your betrothed—soon to be your husband!”

“Yes, soon, my children, very soon!” exclaimed Sylvius Hogg. “We will leave this very evening for Dal. And if such a thing was never seen before, it will be seen now. A professor of law, and a member of the Storthing will be seen dancing at a wedding like the wildest youth in the Telemark.”

But how had Sylvius Hogg become acquainted with Ole Kamp’s history? Simply through the last letter that the Naval Department had addressed to him at Dal. In fact this letter—the last he had received, and one whose receipt he had not mentioned to any one—contained another letter, dated from Christiansand. This second letter stated that the Danish brig “Genius” had just reached Christiansand, with several survivors of the “Viking” on board, among them the young mate, Ole Kamp, who would arrive in Christiania three days afterward.

The letter from the Naval Department added that these shipwrecked men had suffered so much that they were still in a very weak condition, and for this reason Sylvius Hogg had decided not to say anything to Hulda about her lover’s return. In his response he had also requested the most profound secrecy in regard to this return—and in compliance with this request the facts had been carefully kept from the public.

The fact that the “Telegraph” had found no traces nor survivors of the “Viking” can also be easily explained.

During a violent tempest the vessel—which had become partially disabled—being

obliged to scud along before the wind in a north-westerly direction, finally found herself about two hundred miles from the southern coast of Iceland. During the nights of the third and fourth of May the worst nights of the gale—it collided with one of those enormous icebergs that drift down from the shores of Greenland. The shock was terrible, so terrible, indeed, that the “Viking” went to pieces five minutes afterward.

It was then that Ole hastily penned his farewell message to his betrothed, and after inclosing it in a bottle, cast it into the sea.

Most of the “Viking’s” crew, including the captain, perished at the time of the catastrophe, but Ole Kamp and four of his comrades succeeded in leaping upon the iceberg, just as the vessel went down; but their death would have been none the less certain if the terrible gale had not driven the mass of ice in a north-westerly direction. Two days afterward, exhausted and nearly dead with hunger, these survivors of the catastrophe were cast upon the southern coast of Greenland—a barren and deserted region—but where they nevertheless managed to keep themselves alive through the mercy of God.

If help had not reached them in a few days, it would have been all over with them, however; for they had not strength to reach the fisheries, or the Danish settlements on the other coast.

Fortunately the brig “Genius,” which had been driven out of her course by the tempest, happened to pass. The shipwrecked men made signals to her. These signals were seen, and the men were saved.

The “Genius,” delayed by head-winds, was a long time in making the comparatively short voyage between Greenland and Norway, and did not reach Christiansand until the 12th of July, nor Christiania until the morning of the 15th.

That very morning Sylvius Hogg went aboard the vessel. There he found Ole, who was still very weak, and told him all that had taken place since the arrival of his last letter, written from Saint-Pierre-Miquelon, after which he took the young sailor home with him, though not without having requested the crew of the “Genius” to keep the secret a few hours longer. The reader knows the rest.

It was then decided that Ole Kamp should attend the drawing of the lottery. But would he be strong enough to do it?

Yes; his strength would be equal to the ordeal, for was not Hulda to be there? But had he still any interest in this drawing? Yes, a hundred times, yes; both on his own account and that of his betrothed, for Sylvius Hogg had succeeded in getting the ticket out of Sandgoist’s hands, having repurchased it from him at the same price the usurer had given for it, for Sandgoist was only too glad to dispose of it at that price now there were no more bidders for it.

“It was not for the sake of an improbable chance of gain that I wished to restore it to Hulda, my brave Ole,” Sylvius Hogg remarked, as he gave him the ticket; “but because it was a last farewell you had addressed to her at the moment when you believed all was lost.”

And now it seemed almost as if Professor Sylvius Hogg had been inspired of Heaven, certainly much more so than Sandgoist, who was strongly tempted to dash his brains out

against the wall when he learned the result of the drawing. And now there was a fortune of one hundred thousand marks in the Hansen family. Yes, one hundred thousand marks, for Sylvius Hogg absolutely refused to take back the money he had paid to secure possession of Ole Kamp’s ticket.

It was a dowry he was only too glad to offer little Hulda on her wedding-day.

Perhaps it will be considered rather astonishing that Ticket No. 9672, which had attracted so much attention from the public, should have happened to be the one that drew the grand prize.

Yes, it was astonishing, we must admit; but it was not impossible, and at all events, such was the fact.

Sylvius Hogg, Joel, and Hulda left Christiania that same evening. They returned to Dal by way of Bamble, as, of course, Siegfrid must be informed of her good fortune. As they passed the little church of Hitterdal, Hulda recollected the gloomy thoughts that beset her two days before, but the sight of Ole, seated beside her, speedily recalled her to the blissful reality.

By Saint Olaf! how beautiful Hulda looked under her bridal crown when she left the little chapel at Dal, four days afterward, leaning on her husband’s arm. The brilliant festivities that followed were the talk of the whole Telemark for days and days afterward. And how happy everybody was! Siegfrid, the pretty bride-maid, her father, Farmer Helmboe, Joel, her affianced husband, and even Dame Hansen, who was no longer haunted by a fear of Sandgoist.

Perhaps the reader will ask whether all these friends and guests—Messrs. Help Bros., and hosts of others—came to witness the happiness of the newly married couple, or to see Sylvius Hogg, professor of law and a member of the Storthing, dance. It is hard to say. At all events he did dance, and very creditably, and after having opened the ball with his beloved Hulda, he closed it with the charming Siegfrid.

The next day, followed by the acclamations of the whole valley of Vesjorddal, he departed, but not without having solemnly promised to return for Joel’s marriage, which was celebrated a few weeks afterward, to the great delight of the contracting parties.

This time the professor opened the ball with the charming Siegfrid, and closed it with his dear Hulda; and he has never given any display of his proficiency in the terpsichorean art since that time.

What happiness now reigned in this household which had been so cruelly tried! It was undoubtedly due in some measure, at least, to the efforts of Sylvius Hogg; but he would not admit it, and always declared:

“No, no; it is I who am still under obligations to Dame Hansen’s children.”

As for the famous ticket, it was returned to Ole Kamp after the drawing; and now, in a neat wooden frame, it occupies the place of honor in the hall of the inn at Dal. But what the visitor sees is not the side of the ticket upon which the famous number 9672 is inscribed, but the last farewell that the shipwrecked sailor, Ole Kamp, addressed to Hulda Hansen, his betrothed.