

Folk-Lore and Legends; Scandinavian eBook

Folk-Lore and Legends; Scandinavian

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Page 1

THE WONDERFUL PLOUGH.

There was once a farmer who was master of one of the little black dwarfs that are the blacksmiths and armourers, and he got him in a very curious way. On the road leading to this farmer's ground there stood a stone cross, and every morning as he went to his work he used to stop and kneel down before this cross, and pray for some minutes.

On one of these occasions he noticed on the cross a pretty, bright insect, of such a brilliant hue that he could not recollect having ever before seen the like in an insect. He wondered greatly at this, but still he did not disturb it. The insect did not remain long quiet, but ran without ceasing backwards and forwards upon the cross, as if it was in pain and wanted to get away.

Next morning the farmer again saw the very same insect, and again it was running to and fro in the same state of uneasiness. The farmer began now to have some suspicions about it, and thought to himself—

“Would this now be one of the little black enchanters? It runs about just like one that has an evil conscience, as one that would, but cannot, get away.”

A variety of thoughts and conjectures passed through his mind, and he remembered what he had often heard from his father and other old people, that when any of the underground people chance to touch anything holy they are held fast and cannot quit the spot, and so they are extremely careful to avoid all such things.

“But,” thought he, “you may even be something else, and I should, perhaps, be committing a sin in taking the little insect away.”

So he let it stay where it was.

When, however, he twice again found it in the same place, and still running about with the same signs of uneasiness, he said—

“No, it is not all right with it, so now, in the name of God.”

He made a grasp at the insect, which resisted and clung fast to the stone; but he held it tight, and tore it away by main force, and lo! then he found he had, by the top of the head, a little ugly black chap, about six inches long, screeching and kicking at a furious rate.

The farmer was greatly astounded at this sudden transformation. Still he held his prize fast, and kept calling to him, while he administered to him a few smart slaps—



“Be quiet, be quiet, my little man! If crying was to do the business, we might look for heroes in swaddling-clothes. We’ll just take you with us a bit, and see what you are good for.”

The little fellow trembled and shook in every limb, and then began to whimper most piteously, and begged of the farmer to let him go.

“No, my lad,” replied the farmer, “I will not let you go till you tell me who you are, and how you came here, and what trade you know that enables you to earn your bread in the world.”



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At this the little man grinned and shook his head, but said not a word in reply, only begging and praying the more to get loose. The farmer thought he must now entreat him if he would coax any information out of him. But it was all to no purpose. He then adopted the contrary method, and whipped and slashed him, but just to as little effect. The little black thing remained as dumb as the grave, for this species is the most malicious and obstinate of all the underground folk.

The farmer now got angry, and said—

“Do but be quiet, my child. I should be a fool to put myself into a passion with such a little brat. Never fear, I shall soon make you tame enough.”

So saying, he ran home with him, and clapped him into a black sooty iron pot, and put the iron lid upon it, and laid on the top of the lid a great heavy stone. Then he set the pot in a dark, cold room, and as he was going out, said to him—

“Stay there, now, and freeze till you are black! I’ll engage that at last you will answer me civilly.”

Twice a week the farmer went regularly into the room and asked his little black captive if he would answer him now, but the little one still obstinately persisted in his silence. The farmer had, without success, pursued this course for six weeks, at the end of which time his prisoner at last gave up. One day, as the farmer was opening the room door, of his own accord he asked him to come and take him out of his dirty, gloomy dungeon, promising that he would now cheerfully do all that was wanted of him.

The farmer first ordered him to tell him his history. The black one replied—

“My dear friend, you know it just as well as I do, or else you never would have had me here. You see I happened by chance to come too near the cross, a thing we little people may not do, and then I was held fast, and obliged instantly to let my body become visible. In order that people might not recognise me, I turned myself into an insect. But you found me out. When we get fastened to holy or consecrated things we can never get away from them unless a man takes us off. That, however, does not happen without plague and annoyance to us; though, indeed, to say the truth, the staying fastened there is not over pleasant. So I struggled against you too, for we have a natural aversion to let ourselves be taken in a man’s hand.”

“Ho, ho! is that the tune with you?” cried the farmer. “You have a natural aversion have you? Believe me, my sooty friend, I have just the same for you, and so you shall be away without a moment’s delay, and we will lose no time in making our bargain with each other. But you must first make me some present.”

“What you will you have only to ask,” said the little one, “silver and gold, and precious stones, and costly furniture—all shall be thine in less than an instant.”



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“Silver and gold, and precious stones, and all such glittering fine things, will I none,” said the farmer. “They have turned the heart and broken the neck of many a one before now, and few are they whose lives they make happy. I know that you are handy smiths, and have many a strange thing with you that other smiths know nothing about. So, come now, swear to me that you will make me an iron plough, such that the smallest foal may be able to draw it without being tired, and then run off with you as fast as your legs will carry you.” So the black swore, and then the farmer cried out—

“Now, in the name of God. There you are at liberty,” and the little one vanished like lightning.

Next morning, before the sun was up, there stood in the farmer’s yard a new iron plough, and he yoked his dog, Water, to it; and though it was of the size of an ordinary plough, Water drew it with ease through the heaviest clayland, and it tore up prodigious furrows. The farmer used this plough for many years, and the smallest foal or the leanest little horse could draw it through the ground, to the amazement of every one who beheld it, without turning a single hair.

This plough made a rich man of the farmer, for it cost him no horse-flesh, and he led a cheerful and contented life by means of it.

Hereby we may see that moderation holds out the longest, and that it is not good to covet too much.

HOW A LAD STOLE THE GIANT’S TREASURE.

Once upon a time there lived a peasant who had three sons. The two elder ones used to go with him to the field and to the forest, and helped him in his work, but the youngest remained at home with his mother, to help her in the house. His brothers despised him for doing this, and whenever they had a chance they used him badly.

At length the father and mother died, and the sons divided the property among them. As might have been looked for, the elder brothers took all that was of any value for themselves, leaving nothing to the youngest but an old cracked kneading-trough, which neither of them thought worth the having.

“The old trough,” said one of the brothers, “will do very well for our young brother, for he is always baking and scrubbing.”

The boy thought this, as was only natural, a poor thing to inherit, but he could do nothing, and he now recognised that it would be no use his remaining at home, so he wished his brothers good-bye, and went off to seek his fortune. On coming to the side of a lake he made his trough water-tight with oakum, and converted it into a little boat. Then he found two sticks, and using these as oars rowed away.



When he had crossed the water, he saw a large palace, and entering it, he asked to speak with the king. The king questioned him respecting his family and the purpose of his visit.

“I,” said the boy, “am the son of a poor peasant, and all I have in the world is an old kneading-trough. I have come here to seek work.”



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The king laughed when he heard this.

“Indeed,” said he, “you have not inherited much, but fortune works many a change.”

He took the lad to be one of his servants, and he became a favourite for his courage and honesty.

Now the king who owned this palace had an only daughter, who was so beautiful and so clever that she was talked of all through the kingdom, and many came from the east and from the west to ask her hand in marriage. The princess, however, rejected them all, saying that none should have her for his wife unless he brought her for a wedding-present four valuable things belonging to a giant who lived on the other side of the lake. These four treasures were a gold sword, three gold hens, a gold lantern, and a gold harp.

Many king’s sons and many good warriors tried to win these treasures, but none of them came back, for the giant caught them all and eat them. The king was very sorrowful, for he feared that at this rate his daughter would never get a husband, and so he would not have a son-in-law to whom to leave his kingdom.

The boy when he heard of this thought that it might be well worth his while to try to win the king’s beautiful daughter. So he went to the king one day, and told him what he meant to do. When the king heard him, he got angry, and said—

“Do you think that you, who are only a servant, can do what great warriors have failed in?”

The boy, however, was not to be dissuaded, and begged him so to let him go that at last the king grew calmer and gave him his permission. “But,” said he, “you will lose your life, and I shall be sorry to miss you.”

With that they parted.

The boy went down to the shore of the lake, and, having found his trough, he looked it over very closely. Then he got into it and rowed across the lake, and coming to the giant’s dwelling he hid himself, and stayed the night there.

Very early in the morning, before it was light, the giant went to his barn, and began to thrash, making such a noise that the mountains all around echoed again. When the boy heard this he collected some stones and put them in his pouch. Then he climbed up on to the roof of the barn and made a little hole so that he could look in. Now the giant had by his side his golden sword, which had the strange property that it clanked whenever the giant was angry. While the giant was busy thrashing at full speed, the boy threw a little stone which hit the sword, and caused it to clank.



“Why do you clank?” said the giant. “I am not angry.”

He went on thrashing, but the next moment the sword clanked again. Once more the giant pursued his work, and the sword clanked a third time. Then the giant got so angry that he undid the belt, and threw the sword out of the barn door.

“Lie there,” said he, “till I have done my thrashing.”

The lad waited no longer, but slipping down from the roof seized on the sword, ran to his boat, and rowed across the water. On reaching the other side he hid his treasure, and was full of glee at the success of his adventure.



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The next day he filled his pouch with corn, put a bundle of bast-twine in his boat, and once more set off to the giant's dwelling. He lay hiding for a time, and then he saw the giant's three golden hens walking about on the shore, and spreading their feathers, which sparkled beautifully in the bright sunshine. He was soon near them, and began to softly lead them on, scattering corn for them out of his pouch. While they were picking the boy gradually led them to the water, till at last he got them into his little boat. Then he jumped in himself, secured the fowl with his twine, pushed out from the shore, and rowed as quickly as he could to the other side of the water.

The third day he put some lumps of salt into his pouch, and again rowed across the lake. As night came on he noticed how the smoke rose from the giant's dwelling, and concluded that the giant's wife was busy getting ready his food. He crept up on to the roof, and, looking down through the hole by which the smoke escaped, saw a large caldron boiling on the fire. Then he took the lumps of salt out of his pouch, and threw them one by one into the pot. Having done this, he crept down from the roof, and waited to see what would follow.

Soon after the giant's wife took the caldron off the fire, poured out the porridge into a bowl, and put it on the table. The giant was hungry, and he fell to at once, but scarcely had he tasted the porridge when he found it too salt. He got very angry, and started from his seat. The old woman made what excuse she could, and said that the porridge must be good; but the giant declared he would eat no more of the stuff, and told her to taste it for herself. She did so, and pulled a terrible face, for she had never in her life tasted such abominable stuff.

There was nothing for it but she must make some new porridge. So she seized a can, took the gold lantern down from the wall, and went as fast as she could to the well to draw some water. She put the lantern down by the side of the well, and was stooping down to get the water, when the boy ran to her, and, laying hold of her by the feet, threw her head over heels into the well. He seized hold of the golden lantern, ran away as fast as he could to his boat, and rowed across the water in safety.

The giant sat for a long time wondering why his wife was away so long. At last he went to look for her, but nothing could he see of her. Then he heard a splashing in the well, and finding she was in the water, he, with a lot of work, got her out.

"Where is my gold lantern?" was the first thing he asked, as the old woman came round a little.

"I don't know," answered she. "Somebody came, caught me by the feet, and threw me into the well."

The giant was very angry at this.



“Three of my treasures,” said he, “have gone, and I have now only my golden harp left. But, whoever the thief may be, he shall not have that; I will keep that safe under twelve locks.”

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While these things occurred at the giant's dwelling, the boy sat on the other side of the water, rejoicing that he had got on so well.

The most difficult task, however, had yet to be done, and for a long time he thought over how he could get the golden harp. At length he determined to row over to the giant's place and see if fortune would favour him.

No sooner said than done. He rowed over and went to a hiding-place. The giant had, however, been on the watch, and had seen him. So he rushed forward in a terrible rage and seized the boy, saying—

“So I have caught you at last, you young rascal. You it was who stole my sword, my three gold hens, and my gold lantern.”

The boy was terribly afraid, for he thought his last hour was come.

“Spare my life, father,” said he humbly, “and I will never come here again.”

“No,” replied the giant, “I will do the same with you as with the others. No one slips alive out of my hands.”

He then shut the boy up in a sty, and fed him with nuts and sweet milk, so as to get him nice and fat preparatory to killing and eating him.

The lad was a prisoner, but he ate and drank and made himself as easy as he could. After some time the giant wanted to find out if he were fat enough to be killed. So he went to the sty, made a little hole in the wall, and told the boy to put his finger through it. The lad knew what he wanted; so instead of putting out his finger he poked out a little peeled alder twig. The giant cut the twig, and the red sap ran out. Then he thought the boy must be yet very lean since his flesh was so hard, so he caused a greater supply of milk and nuts to be given to him.

Some time after, the giant again visited the sty, and ordered the boy to put his finger through the hole in the wall. The lad now poked out a cabbage-stalk, and the giant, having cut it with his knife, concluded that the lad must be fat enough, his flesh seemed so soft.

The next morning the giant said to his wife—

“The boy seems to be fat enough now, mother; take him then to-day, and bake him in the oven, while I go and ask our kinsfolk to the feast.”

The old woman promised to do what her husband told her. So, having heated the oven, she dragged out the boy to bake him.



“Sit on the shovel,” said she.

The boy did so, but when the old woman raised the shovel the boy always fell off. So they went on many times. At last the giantess got angry, and scolded the boy for being so awkward; the lad excused himself, saying that he did not know the way to sit on the shovel.

“Look at me,” said the woman, “I will show you.”

So she sat herself down on the shovel, bending her back and drawing up her knees. No sooner was she seated than the boy, seizing hold of the handle, pushed her into the oven and slammed the door to. Then he took the woman’s fur cloak, stuffed it out with straw, and laid it on the bed. Seizing the giant’s bunch of keys, he opened the twelve locks, snatched up the golden harp, and ran down to his boat, which he had hidden among the flags on the shore.



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The giant soon afterwards came home.

“Where can my wife be?” said he. “No doubt she has lain down to sleep a bit. Ah! I thought so.”

The old woman, however, slept a long while, and the giant could not wake her, though he was now expecting his friends to arrive.

“Wake up, mother,” cried he, but no one replied. He called again, but there was no response. He got angry, and, going to the bed, he gave the fur cloak a good shake. Then he found that it was not his wife, but only a bundle of straw put in her clothes. At this the giant grew alarmed, and he ran off to look after his golden harp. He found his keys gone, the twelve locks undone, and the harp missing. He went to the oven and opened the door to see how the meat for the feast was going on. Behold! there sat his wife, baked, and grinning at him.

Then the giant was almost mad with grief and rage, and he rushed out to seek the lad who had done him all this mischief. He came down to the edge of the water and found him sitting in his boat, playing on the harp. The music came over the water, and the gold strings shone wonderfully in the sunshine. The giant jumped into the water after the boy; but finding that it was too deep, he laid himself down, and began to drink the water in order to make the lake shallower. He drank with all his might, and by this means set up a current which drew the boat nearer and nearer to the shore. Just when he was going to lay hold of it he burst, for he had drunk too much; and there was an end of him.

The giant lay dead on the shore, and the boy moved away across the lake, full of joy and happiness. When he came to land, he combed his golden hair, put on fine clothes, fastened the giant's gold sword by his side, and, taking the gold harp in one hand and the gold lantern in the other, he led the gold fowl after him, and went to the king, who was sitting in the great hall of the palace surrounded by his courtiers. When the king saw the boy he was heartily glad. The lad went to the king's beautiful daughter, saluted her courteously, and laid the giant's treasures before her. Then there was great joy in the palace, that the princess had after all got the giant's treasures and so bold and handsome a bridegroom. The wedding was celebrated soon after with very much splendour and rejoicing; and when the king died the lad succeeded him, ruling over all the land both long and happily.

I know no more respecting them.



TALES OF CATS.

The house of Katholm (Cat-isle) near Grenaac, in Jutland, got its name from the following circumstance.

There was a man in Jutland who had made a good deal of money by improper means. When he died he left his property equally among his three sons. The youngest, when he got his share, thought to himself—



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“What comes with sin goes with sorrow,” and he resolved to submit his money to the water-ordeal, thinking that the ill-got money would sink to the bottom, and what was honestly acquired swim on the top. He accordingly cast all his money into the water, and only one solitary farthing swam. With this he bought a cat, and he went to sea and visited foreign parts. At length he chanced to come to a place where the people were sadly plagued by an enormous number of rats and mice, and as his cat had had kittens by this time, he acquired great wealth by selling them. So he came home to Jutland, and built himself a house, which he called Katholm.

There was one time a poor sailor out of Ribe, who came to a foreign island whose inhabitants were grievously plagued with mice. By good luck he had a cat of his own on board, and the people of the island gave him so much gold for it that he went home as fast as he could to fetch more cats, and by this traffic he in a short time grew so rich that he had no need of any more. Some time after, when he was on his deathbed, he bequeathed a large sum of money for the building of Ribe Cathedral, and a proof of this is still to be seen in a carving over the east door of the church, representing a cat and four mice. The door is called Cat-head Door (Kathoved Dor).

THE MAGICIAN’S DAUGHTER

Just on the Finland frontiers there is situated a high mountain, which, on the Swedish side, is covered with beautiful copsewood, and on the other with dark pine-trees, so closely ranked together, and so luxuriant in shade, that one might almost say the smallest bird could not find its way through the thickets. Below the copsewood there stands a chapel with the image of St. George, as guardian of the land and as a defence against dragons, if there be such, and other monsters of paganism, while, on the other side, on the borders of the dark firwood, are certain cottages inhabited by wicked sorcerers, who have, moreover, a cave cut so deep into the mountain that it joins with the bottomless abyss, whence come all the demons that assist them. The Swedish Christians who dwelt in the neighbourhood of this mountain thought it would be necessary, besides the chapel and statue of St. George, to choose some living protector, and therefore selected an ancient warrior, highly renowned for his prowess in the battle-field, who had, in his old age, become a monk. When this man went to take up his abode upon the mountains, his only son (for he had formerly lived as a married man in the world) would on no account leave him, but lived there also, assisting his father in his duties as watcher, and in the exercises of prayer and penitence, fully equalling the example that was now afforded him as he had formerly done his example as a soldier.

The life led by those two valiant champions is said to have been most admirable and pious.



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Once on a time it happened that the young hero went out to cut wood in the forest. He bore a sharp axe on his shoulders, and was besides girded with a great sword; for as the woods were not only full of wild beasts, but also haunted by wicked men, the pious hermits took the precaution of always going armed. While the good youth was forcing his way through the thickest of the copsewood, and already beheld over it the pointed tops of the fir-trees (for he was close on the Finland frontier), there rushed out against him a great white wolf, so that he had only just time enough to leap to one side, and not being able immediately to draw his sword, he flung his axe at his assailant. The blow was so well aimed that it struck one of the wolf's fore-legs, and the animal, being sorely wounded, limped back, with a yell of anguish, into the wood. The young hermit warrior, however, thought to himself—

“It is not enough that I am rescued, but I must take such measures that no one else may in future be injured, or even terrified by this wild beast.”

So he rushed in as fast as possible among the fir-trees, and inflicted such a vehement blow with his sword on the wolf's head, that the animal, groaning piteously, fell to the ground. Hereupon there came over the young man all at once a strange mood of regret and compassion for his poor victim. Instead of putting it immediately to death, he bound up the wounds as well as he could with moss and twigs of trees, placed it on a sort of canvas sling on which he was in the habit of carrying great fagots, and with much labour brought it home, in hopes that he might be able at last to cure and tame his fallen adversary. He did not find his father in the cottage, and it was not without some fear and anxiety that he laid the wolf on his own bed, which was made of moss and rushes, and over which he had nailed St. George and the Dragon. He then turned to the fire-place of the small hut, in order to prepare a healing salve for the wounds. While he was thus occupied, how much was he astonished to hear the moanings and lamentations of a human voice from the bed on which he had just before deposited the wolf. On returning thither his wonder was inexpressible on perceiving, instead of the frightful wild beast, a most beautiful damsel, on whose head the wound which he had inflicted was bleeding through her fine golden hair, and whose right arm, in all its grace and snow-white luxuriance, was stretched out motionless, for it had been broken by the blow from his axe.

“Pray,” said she, “have pity, and do not kill me outright. The little life that I have still left is, indeed, painful enough, and may not last long; yet, sad as my condition is, it is yet tenfold better than death.”

The young man then sat down weeping beside her, and she explained to him that she was the daughter of a magician, on the other side of the mountain, who had sent her out in the shape of a wolf to collect plants from places which, in her own proper form, she could not have reached. It was but in terror she had made that violent spring which the youth had mistaken for an attack on him, when her only wish had been to pass by him.



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“But you directly broke my right arm,” said she, “though I had no evil design against you.”

How she had now regained her proper shape she could not imagine, but to the youth it was quite clear that the picture of St. George and the Dragon had broken the spell by which the poor girl had been transformed.

While the son was thus occupied, the old man returned home, and soon heard all that had occurred, perceiving, at the same time, that if the young pagan wanderer had been released from the spells by which she had been bound, the youth was, in his turn, enchanted and spellbound by her beauty and amiable behaviour.

From that moment he exerted himself to the utmost for the welfare of her soul, endeavouring to convert her to Christianity, while his son attended to the cure of her wounds; and, as their endeavours were on both sides successful, it was resolved that the lovers should be united in marriage, for the youth had not restricted himself by any monastic vows.

The magician's daughter was now restored to perfect health. A day had been appointed for her baptism and marriage. It happened that one evening the bride and bridegroom went to take a pleasure walk through the woods. The sun was yet high in the west, and shone so fervently through the beech-trees on the green turf that they could never resolve on turning home, but went still deeper and deeper into the forest. Then the bride told him stories of her early life, and sang old songs which she had learned when a child, and which sounded beautifully amid the woodland solitude. Though the words were such that they could not be agreeable to the youth's ears (for she had learned them among her pagan and wicked relations), yet he could not interrupt her, first, because he loved her so dearly, and, secondly, because she sang in a voice so clear and sweet that the whole forest seemed to rejoice in her music. At last, however, the pointed heads of the pine-trees again became visible, and the youth wished to turn back, in order that he might not come again too near the hated Finnish frontier. His bride, however, said to him—

“Dearest Conrad, why should we not walk on a little further? I would gladly see the very place where you so cruelly wounded me on the head and arm, and made me prisoner, all which has, in the end contributed to my happiness. Methinks we are now very near the spot.”

Accordingly they sought about here and there until at last the twilight fell dim and heavy on the dense woods. The sun had long since set. The moon, however, had risen, and, as a light broke forth, the lovers stood on the Finland frontier, or rather they must have gone already some distance beyond it, for the bridegroom was exceedingly terrified when he found his cap lifted from his head, as if by human hand, though he saw only

the branch of a fir-tree. Immediately thereafter the whole air around them was filled with strange and supernatural beings—witches,

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devils, dwarfs, horned-owls, fire-eyed cats, and a thousand other wretches that could not be named and described, whirled around them as if dancing to rapid music. When the bride had looked on for a while, she broke out into loud laughter, and at last began to dance furiously along with them. The poor bridegroom might shout and pray as much and as earnestly as he would, for she never attended to him, but at last transformed herself in a manner so extraordinary that he could not distinguish her from the other dancers. He thought, however, that he had kept his eyes upon her, and seized on one of the dancers; but alas! it was only a horrible spectre which held him fast, and threw its wide waving shroud around him, so that he could not make his escape, while, at the same time, some of the subterraneous black demons pulled at his legs, and wanted to bear him down along with them into their bottomless caves.

Fortunately he happened at that moment to cross himself and call on the name of the Saviour, upon which the whole of this vile assembly fell into confusion. They howled aloud and ran off in all directions, while Conrad in the meantime saved himself by recrossing the frontier, and getting under the protection of the Swedish copsewood. His beautiful bride, however, was completely lost; and by no endeavours could he ever obtain her again, though he often came to the Finland border, called out her name aloud, wept and prayed, but all in vain. Many times, it is true, he saw her floating about through the pine-trees, as if in chase, but she was always accompanied by a train of frightful creatures, and she herself also looked wild and disfigured. For the most part she never noticed Conrad, but if she could not help fixing her eyes upon him, she laughed so immoderately, and in a mood of merriment so strange and unnatural, that he was terrified and made the sign of the cross, whereupon she always fled away, howling, into one of the thickets.

Conrad fell more and more into melancholy abstraction, hardly ever spoke, and though he had given over his vain walks into the forest, yet if one asked him a question, the only answer he returned was—

“Ay, she is gone away beyond the mountains,” so little did he know or remember of any other object in the world but the lost beauty.

At last he died of grief; and according to a request which he had once made, his father prepared a grave for him on the place where the bride was found and lost, though during the fulfilment of this duty he had enough to do—one while in contending with his crucifix against evil spirits, and at another, with his sword against wild beasts, which were no doubt sent thither by the magicians to attack and annoy him. At length, however, he brought his task to an end, and thereafter it seemed as if the bride mourned for the youth's untimely death, for there was heard often a sound of howling and lamentation at the grave. For the most part, indeed, this voice is like the voices of

wolves, yet, at the same time, human accents are to be distinguished, and I myself have often listened thereto on dark winter nights.



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Alas! that the poor maiden should have ventured again so near the accursed paths she had once renounced. A few steps in the backward course, and all is lost!

THE HILL-MAN INVITED TO THE CHRISTENING.

The hill-people are excessively frightened during thunder. When, therefore, they see bad weather coming on, they lose no time in getting to the shelter of their hills. This terror is also the cause of their not being able to endure the beating of a drum. They take it to be the rolling of thunder. It is, therefore, a good recipe for banishing them to beat a drum every day in the neighbourhood of their hills, for they immediately pack up, and depart to some quieter residence.

A farmer lived once in great friendship and concord with a hill-man, whose hill was in his lands. One time when his wife was about to have a child, it gave him great perplexity to think that he could not well avoid inviting the hill-man to the christening, which might, not improbably, bring him into ill repute with the priest and the other people of the village. He was going about pondering deeply, but in vain, how he might get out of this dilemma, when it came into his head to ask the advice of the boy that kept his pigs, who had a great head-piece, and had often helped him before. The pig-boy instantly undertook to arrange the matter with the hill-man in such a manner that he should not only stay away without being offended, but, moreover, give a good christening present.

Accordingly, when it was night, he took a sack on his shoulder, went to the hill-man's hill, knocked, and was admitted. He delivered his message, gave his master's compliments, and requested the honour of his company at the christening. The hill-man thanked him, and said—

“I think it is but right I should give you a christening present.”

With these words he opened his money-chests, bidding the boy hold up his sack while he poured money into it.

“Is there enough now?” said he, when he had put a good quantity into it.

“Many give more, few give less,” replied the boy.

The hill-man once more fell to filling the sack, and again asked—

“Is there enough now?”

The boy lifted the sack a little off the ground to see if he was able to carry any more, and then answered—

“It is about what most people give.”



Upon this the hill-man emptied the whole chest into the bag, and once more asked—

“Is there enough now?”

The guardian of the pigs now saw that there was as much in the sack as he would be able to carry, so he answered—

“No one gives more, most people give less.”

“Come now,” said the hill-man, “let us hear who else is to be at the christening.”

“Ah,” said the boy, “we are to have a great many strangers and great people. First and foremost, we are to have three priests and a bishop.”



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“Hem!” muttered the hill-man; “however, those gentlemen usually look only after the eating and drinking; they will never take any notice of me. Well, who else?”

“Then we have asked St. Peter and St. Paul.”

“Hem! hem! However, there will be a bye-place for me behind the stove. Well, and what then?”

“Then Our Lady herself is coming.”

“Hem! hem! hem! However, guests of such high rank come late and go away early. But tell me, my lad, what sort of music is it you are to have?”

“Music,” said the boy, “why, we are to have drums.”

“Drums!” repeated the troll, quite terrified. “No, no! Thank you. I shall stay at home in that case. Give my best respects to your master, and I thank him for the invitation, but I cannot come. I did but once go out to take a little walk, and some people began to beat a drum. I hurried home, and was but just got to my door when they flung the drum-stick after me, and broke one of my shins. I have been lame of that leg ever since, and I shall take good care in future to avoid that sort of music.”

So saying he helped the boy to put the sack on his back, once more charging him to present his best respects to his master.

THE MEAL OF FROTHI.

Gold is called by the poets the meal of Frothi, and the origin of the term is found in this story.

Odin had a son named Skioldr who settled and reigned in the land which is now called Denmark, but was then called Gotland. Skioldr had a son named Frithleif, who reigned after him. Frithleif’s son was called Frothi, and succeeded him on the throne. At the time that the Emperor Augustus made peace over the whole world, Christ was born, but as Frothi was the most powerful of all the monarchs of the north, that peace, wherever the Danish language was spoken, was imputed to him, and the Northmen called it Frothi’s peace.

At that time no man hurt another, even if he found the murderer of his father or brother, loose or bound. Theft and robbery were then unknown, insomuch that a gold armet lay for a long time untouched in Jalangursheath.

Frothi chanced to go on a friendly visit to a certain king in Sweden, named Fiolnir, and there purchased two female slaves, called Fenia and Menia, equally distinguished for



their stature and strength. In those days there were found in Denmark two quern-stones of such a size, that no one was able to move them, and these mill-stones were endued with such virtue, that the quern in grinding produced whatever the grinder wished for. The quern was called Grotti. He who presented this quern to Frothi was called Hengikiopt (hanging-chops). King Frothi caused these slaves to be brought to the quern, and ordered them to grind gold, peace, and prosperity for Frothi. The king allowed them no longer rest or sleep than while the cuckoo was silent or a verse could be recited. Then they are said to have sung the lay called Grotta-Savngr, and before they ended their song to have ground a hostile army against Frothi, insomuch, that a certain sea-king, called Mysingr, arriving the same night, slew Frothi, taking great spoil. And so ended Frothi's peace.



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Mysingr took with him the quern, Grotti, with Fenia and Menia, and ordered them to grind salt. About midnight they asked Mysingr whether he had salt enough. On his ordering them to go on grinding, they went on a little longer till the ship sank under the weight of the salt. A whirlpool was produced, where the waves are sucked up by the mill-eye, and the waters of the sea have been salt ever since.

THE LOST BELL.

A shepherd's boy, belonging to Patzig, about half a mile from Bergen, where there are great numbers of underground people in the hills, found one morning a little silver bell on the green heath among the giants' graves, and fastened it on him. It happened to be the bell belonging to the cap of one of the little brown ones, who had lost it while he was dancing, and did not immediately miss it or observe that it was no longer tinkling in his cap. He had gone down into the hill without his bell, and, having discovered his loss, was filled with melancholy, for the worst thing that can befall the underground people is to lose their cap, or their shoes; but even to lose the bell from their caps, or the buckle from their belts, is no trifle to them. Whoever loses his bell must pass some sleepless nights, for not a wink of sleep can he get till he has recovered it.

The little fellow was in the greatest trouble, and looked and searched about everywhere. But how could he learn who had the bell? for only on a very few days in the year may they come up to daylight, nor can they then appear in their true form. He had turned himself into every form of birds, beasts, and men, and he had sung and groaned and lamented about his bell, but not the slightest tidings or trace of tidings had he been able to get. Most unfortunately for him, the shepherd's boy had left Patzig the very day he found the little bell, and he was now keeping sheep at Unrich, near Gingst, so that it was not till many a day after, and then by mere chance, that the little underground fellow recovered his bell, and with it his peace of mind.

He had thought it not unlikely that a raven, or a crow, or a jackdaw, or a magpie, had found his bell, and from its thievish disposition, which attracts it to anything bright and shining, had carried it into its nest. With this thought he turned himself into a beautiful little bird, and searched all the nests in the island, and he'd sang before all kinds of birds to see if they had found what he had lost, and could restore to him his sleep. He had, however, been able to learn nothing from the birds. As he now, one evening, was flying over the waters of Ralov and the fields of Unrich, the shepherd's boy, whose name was John Schlagenteufel (Smite-devil), happened to be keeping his sheep there at the very time. Several of the sheep had bells about their necks, and they tinkled merrily when the boy's dog set them trotting. The little bird who was flying over them thought of his bell, and sang in a melancholy tone——



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“Little bell, little bell,
Little ram as well,
You, too, little sheep,
If you’ve my tingle too,
No sheep’s so rich as you,
My rest you keep.”

The boy looked up and listened to this strange song which came out of the sky, and saw the pretty bird, which seemed to him still more strange.

“If one,” said he to himself, “had but that bird that’s singing up there, so plain that one of us could hardly match him! What can he mean by that wonderful song? The whole of it is, it must be a feathered witch. My rams have only pinchbeck bells, he calls them rich cattle; but I have a silver bell, and he sings nothing about me.”

With these words he began to fumble in his pocket, took out his bell, and rang it.

The bird in the air instantly saw what it was, and rejoiced beyond measure. He vanished in a second, flew behind the nearest bush, alighted, and drew off his speckled feather dress, and turned himself into an old woman dressed in tattered clothes. The old dame, well supplied with sighs and groans, tottered across the field to the shepherd-boy, who was still ringing his bell and wondering what was become of the beautiful bird. She cleared her throat, and coughing, bid him a kind good evening, and asked him which was the way to Bergen. Pretending then that she had just seen the little bell, she exclaimed—

“Well now, what a charming pretty little bell! Well, in all my life, I never beheld anything more beautiful. Hark ye, my son, will you sell me that bell? What may be the price of it? I have a little grandson at home, and such a nice plaything as it would make for him!”

“No,” replied the boy, quite short; “the bell is not for sale. It is a bell that there is not such another bell in the whole world. I have only to give it a little tinkle, and my sheep run of themselves wherever I would have them go. And what a delightful sound it has! Only listen, mother,” said he, ringing it; “is there any weariness in the world that can hold out against this bell? I can ring with it away the longest time, so that it will be gone in a second.”

The old woman thought to herself—

“We will see if he can hold out against bright shining money,” and she took out no less than three silver dollars and offered them to him, but he still replied—

“No, I will not sell the bell.”



She then offered him five dollars.

“The bell is still mine,” said he.

She stretched out her hand full of ducats. He replied this third time—

“Gold is dirt, and does not ring.”

The old dame then shifted her ground, and turned the discourse another way. She grew mysterious, and began to entice him by talking of secret arts and of charms by which his cattle might be made to thrive prodigiously, relating to him all kinds of wonders of them. It was then the young shepherd began to long, and he lent a willing ear to her tales.



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The end of the matter was, that she said to him—

“Hark ye, my child, give me your bell; and see, here is a white stick for you,” said she, taking out a little white stick which had Adam and Eve very ingeniously cut upon it as they were feeding their flocks in the Garden, with the fattest sheep and lambs dancing before them. There, too, was the shepherd David, as he stood up with his sling against the giant Goliath. “I will give you,” said the woman, “this stick for the bell, and as long as you drive the cattle with it they will be sure to thrive. With this you will become a rich shepherd. Your wethers will be always fat a month sooner than the wethers of other shepherds, and every one of your sheep will have two pounds of wool more than others, and yet no one will ever be able to see it on them.”

The old woman handed him the stick. So mysterious was her gesture, and so strange and bewitching her smile, that the lad was at once in her power. He grasped eagerly at the stick, gave her his hand, and cried—

“Done! strike hands! The bell for the stick!”

Cheerfully the old woman took the bell for the stick, and departed like a light breeze over the field and the heath. He saw her vanish, and she seemed to float away before his eyes like a mist, and to go off with a slight whiz and whistle that made the shepherd’s hair stand on end.

The underground one, however, who, in the shape of an old woman, had wheedled him out of his bell, had not deceived him. For the underground people dare not lie, but must ever keep their word—a breach of it being followed by their sudden change into the shape of toads, snakes, dunghill beetles, wolves, and apes, forms in which they wander about, objects of fear and aversion, for a long course of years before they are freed. They have, therefore, naturally a great dread of lying. John Schlagenteufel gave close attention and made trial of his new shepherd’s staff, and he soon found that the old woman had told him the truth, for his flocks and his work, and all the labour of his hands, prospered with him, and he had wonderful luck, so that there was not a sheep-owner or head shepherd but was desirous of having him in his employment.

It was not long, however, that he remained an underling. Before he was eighteen years of age he had got his own flocks, and in the course of a few years was the richest sheep-master in the whole island of Bergen. At last he was able to buy a knight’s estate for himself, and that estate was Grabitz, close by Ramin, which now belongs to the Lords of Sunde. My father knew him there, and how from a shepherd’s boy he became a nobleman. He always conducted himself like a prudent, honest, and pious man, who had a good word for every one. He brought up his sons like gentlemen, and his daughters like ladies, some of whom are still alive, and accounted people of great consequence.

Well may people who hear such stories wish that they had met with such an adventure, and had found a little silver bell which the underground people had lost!



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MAIDEN SWANWHITE AND MAIDEN FOXTAIL.

There was once upon a time a wicked woman who had a daughter and a step-daughter. The daughter was ugly and of an evil disposition, but the step-daughter was most beautiful and good, and all who knew her wished her well. When the girl's step-mother and step-sister saw this they hated the poor girl.

One day it chanced that she was sent by her step-mother to the well to draw water. When the girl came there she saw a little hand held out of the water, and a voice said—

“Maiden, beautiful and good, give me your golden apple, and in return for it I will thrice wish you well.”

The girl thought that one who spoke so fairly to her would not do her an ill turn, so she put the apple into the little hand. Then she bent down over the spring, and, taking care not to muddy the water, filled her bucket. As she went home the guardian of the well wished that the girl would become thrice as beautiful as she was, that whenever she laughed a gold ring might fall from her mouth, and that red roses might spring up wherever she trod. The same hour all that he wished came to pass. From that day the girl was called the Maiden Swanwhite, and the fame of her loveliness spread all through the land.

When the wicked step-mother perceived this, she was filled with rage, and she thought how her own daughter might become as beautiful as Swanwhite. With this object she set herself to learn all that had happened, and then she sent her own daughter to fetch water. When the wicked girl had come to the well, she saw a little hand rise up out of the water, and heard a voice which said—

“Maiden, beautiful and good, give me your gold apple and I will thrice wish thee well.”

But the hag's daughter was both wicked and avaricious, and it was not her way to make presents. She therefore made a dash at the little hand, wished the guardian of the well evil, and said pettishly—

“You need not think you'll get a gold apple from me.”

Then she filled her bucket, muddying the water, and away she went in a rage. The guardian of the well was enraged, so he wished her three evil wishes, as a punishment for her wickedness. He wished that she should become three times as ugly as she was, that a dead rat should fall from her mouth whenever she laughed, and that the fox-tail grass might spring up in the footsteps wherever she trod. So it was. From that day the wicked girl was called Maiden Foxtail, and very much talk was there among the folk of her strange looks and her ill-nature. The hag could not bear her step-daughter should



be more beautiful than her own daughter, and poor Swanwhite had to put up with all the ill-usage and suffering that a step-child can meet with.

Swanwhite had a brother whom she loved very much, and he also loved her with all his heart. He had long ago left home, and he was now the servant of a king, far, far off in a strange land. The other servants of the king bore him no good-will because he was liked by his master, and they wished to ruin him if they could find anything against him.



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They watched him closely, and one day, coming to the king, said—

“Lord king, we know well that you do not like evil or vice in your servants. Thence we think it is only right to tell you that the young foreigner, who is in your service, every morning and evening bows the knee to an idol.”

When the king heard that he set it down to envy and ill-will, and did not think there was any truth in it, but the courtiers said that he could easily discover for himself whether what they said was true or not. They led the king to the young man’s rooms, and told him to look through the key-hole. When the king looked in he saw the young man on his knees before a fine picture, and so he could not help believing that what the courtiers had told him was true.

The king was much enraged, and ordered the young man to come before him, when he condemned him to die for his great wickedness.

“My lord king,” said he, “do not imagine that I worship any idol. That is my sister’s picture, whom I commend to the care of God every morning and evening, asking Him to protect her, for she remains in a wicked step-mother’s power.”

The king then wished to see the picture, and he never tired of looking on its beauty.

“If it is true,” said he, “what you tell me, that that is your sister’s picture, she shall be my queen, and you yourself shall go and fetch her; but if you lie, this shall be your punishment,—you shall be cast into the lions’ den.”

The king then commanded that a ship should be fitted out in grand style, having wine and treasure in it. Then he sent away the young man in great state to fetch his beautiful sister to the court.

The young man sailed away over the ocean, and came at length to his land. Here he delivered his master’s message, as became him, and made preparations to return. Then the step-mother and step-sister begged that they might go with him and his sister. The young man had no liking for them, so he said no, and refused their request, but Swanwhite begged for them, and got them what they wanted.

When they had put to sea and were on the wide ocean, a great storm arose so that the sailors expected the vessel and all on her to go to the bottom. The young man was, however, in good spirits, and went up the mast in order to see if he could discover land anywhere. When he had looked out from the mast, he called to Swanwhite, who stood on the deck—

“Dear sister, I see land now.”



It was, however, blowing so hard that the maiden could not hear a word. She asked her step-mother if she knew what her brother said.

“Yes,” said the false hag; “he says we shall never come to God’s land unless you throw your gold casket into the sea.”

When Swanwhite heard that, she did what the hag told her, and cast the gold casket into the deep sea.

A while after her brother once more called to his sister, who stood on the deck—

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“Swanwhite, go and deck yourself as a bride, for we shall soon be there.”

But the maiden could not hear a word for the raging of the sea. She asked her step-mother if she knew what her brother had said.

“Yes,” said the false hag; “he says we shall never come to God’s land unless you cast yourself into the sea.”

While Swanwhite thought of this, the wicked step-mother sprang to her, and thrust her on a sudden overboard. The young girl was carried away by the blue waves, and came to the mermaid who rules over all those who are drowned in the sea.

When the young man came down the mast, and asked whether his sister was attired, the step-mother told him many falsehoods about Swanwhite having fallen into the sea. When the young man heard this he and all the ship-folk were afraid, for they well knew what punishment awaited them for having so ill looked after the king’s bride. The false hag then thought of another deception. She said they had better dress her own daughter as the bride, and then no one need know that Swanwhite had perished. The young man would not agree to this, but the sailors, being in fear of their lives, made him do as the step-mother had suggested. Maiden Foxtail was dressed out in the finest manner with red rings and a gold girdle, but the young man was ill at ease, and could not forget what had happened to his sister.

In the midst of this the vessel came to shore, where was the king with all his court with much splendour awaiting their arrival. Carpets were spread upon the ground, and the king’s bride left the ship in great state. When the king beheld Maiden Foxtail, and was told that that was his bride, he suspected some cheat, and was very angry, and he ordered that the young man should be thrown into the lions’ den. He would not, however, break his kingly word, so he took the ugly maiden for his wife, and she became queen in the place of her step-sister.

Now Maiden Swanwhite had a little dog of which she was very fond, and she called it Snow-white. Now that its mistress was lost, there was no one who cared for it, so it came into the king’s palace and took refuge in the kitchen, where it lay down in front of the fire. When it was night and all had gone to bed, the master-cook saw the kitchen door open of itself and a beautiful little duck, fastened to a chain, came into the kitchen. Wherever the little bird trod the most beautiful roses sprang up. The duck went up to the dog upon the hearth, and said—

“Poor little Snow-white! Once on a time you lay on blue silk cushions. Now you must lie on the grey ashes. Ah! my poor brother, who is in the lions’ den! Shame on Maiden Foxtail! she sleeps in my lord’s arms.”



“Alas, poor me!” continued the duck, “I shall come here only on two more nights. After that I shall see you no more.”

Then it caressed the little dog, and the dog returned its caresses. After a little while the door opened of itself and the little bird went its way.



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The next morning, when it was daylight, the master-cook took the beautiful roses that lay strewn on the floor and with them decorated the dishes for the king's table. The king so much admired the flowers that he ordered the master-cook to be called to him, and asked him where he had found such magnificent roses. The cook told him all that had happened, and what the duck had said to the little dog. When the king heard it he was much perplexed, and he told the cook to let him know as soon as the bird showed itself again.

The next night the little duck again came to the kitchen, and spoke to the dog as before. The cook sent word to the king, and he came just as the bird went out at the door. However he saw the beautiful roses lying all over the kitchen floor, and from them came such a delightful scent that the like had never been known.

The king made up his mind that if the duck came again he would see it, so he lay in wait for it. He waited a long while, when, at midnight, the little bird, as before, came walking up to the dog which lay on the hearth, and said—

“Poor little Snow-white! once on a time you lay on blue silk cushions. Now you must lie on grey ashes. Ah! my poor brother, who is in the lions' den. Shame on Maiden Foxtail! she sleeps in my lord's arms.”

Then it went on—

“Alas! poor me! I shall see thee no more.”

Then it caressed the little dog, and the dog returned its caresses. As the bird was about to go away, the king sprang out and caught it by the foot. Then the bird changed its form and became a horrible dragon, but the king held it fast. It changed itself again, and took the forms of snakes, wolves, and other fierce animals, but the king did not lose his hold. Then the mermaid pulled hard at the chain, but the king held so fast that the chain broke in two with a great snap and rattling. That moment there stood there a beautiful maiden much more beautiful than that in the fine picture. She thanked the king for having saved her from the power of the mermaid. The king was very glad, and took the beautiful maiden in his arms, kissed her, and said—

“I will have no one else in the world for my queen, and now I well see that your brother was guiltless.”

Then he sent off at once to the lions' den to learn if the young man was yet alive. There the young man was safe and sound among the wild beasts, which had done him no injury. Then the king was in a happy mood, and rejoiced that everything had chanced so well. The brother and sister told him all that the step-mother had done.



When it was daylight the king ordered a great feast to be got ready, and asked the foremost people in the country to the palace. As they all sat at table and were very merry, the king told a story of a brother and sister who had been treacherously dealt with by a step-mother, and he related all that had happened from beginning to end. When the tale was ended the king's folk looked at one another, and all agreed that the conduct of the step-mother in the tale was a piece of unexampled wickedness.



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The king turned to his mother-in-law, and said—

“Some one should reward my tale. I should like to know what punishment the taking of such an innocent life deserves.”

The false hag did not know that her own treachery was aimed at, so she said boldly—

“For my part, I certainly think she should be put into boiling lead.”

The king then turned himself to Foxtail, and said—

“I should like to have your opinion; what punishment is merited by one who takes so innocent a life?”

The wicked woman answered at once—

“For my part, I think she deserves to be put into boiling tar.”

Then the king started up from the table in a great rage, and said—

“You have pronounced doom on yourselves. Such punishment shall you suffer!”

He ordered the two women to be taken out to die as they themselves had said, and no one save Swanwhite begged him to have mercy on them.

After that the king was married to the beautiful maiden, and all folk agreed that nowhere could be found a finer queen. The king gave his own sister to the brave young man, and there was great joy in all the king's palace.

There they live prosperous and happy unto this day, for all I know.

TALES OF TREASURE.

There are still to be seen near Flensburg the ruins of a very ancient building. Two soldiers once stood on guard there together, but when one of them was gone to the town, it chanced that a tall white woman came to the other, and spoke to him, and said—

“I am an unhappy spirit, who has wandered here these many hundred years, but never shall I find rest in the grave.”

She then informed him that under the walls of the castle a great treasure was concealed, which only three men in the whole world could take up, and that he was one of the three. The man, who now saw that his fortune was made, promised to follow her



directions in every particular, whereupon she desired him to come to the same place at twelve o'clock the following night.

The other soldier meanwhile had come back from the town just as the appointment was made with his comrade. He said nothing about what, unseen, he had seen and heard, but went early the next evening and concealed himself amongst some bushes. When his fellow-soldier came with his spade and shovel he found the white woman at the appointed place, but when she perceived they were watched she put off the appointed business until the next evening. The man who had lain on the watch to no purpose went home, and suddenly fell ill; and as he thought he should die of that sickness, he sent for his comrade, and told him how he knew all, and conjured him not to have anything to do with witches or with spirits, but rather to seek counsel of the priest, who was a prudent man. The other thought it would be the wisest plan to follow the advice of his comrade, so he went and discovered the whole affair to the priest, who, however, desired him to do as the spirit had bidden him, only he was to make her lay the first hand to the work herself.



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The appointed time was now arrived, and the man was at the place. When the white woman had pointed out to him the spot, and they were just beginning the work, she said to him that when the treasure was taken up one-half of it should be his, but that he must divide the other half equally between the church and the poor. Then the devil entered into the man, and awakened his covetousness, so that he cried out—

“What! shall I not have the whole?”

Scarcely had he spoken when the figure, with a most mournful wail, passed in a blue flame over the moat of the castle, and the man fell sick, and died within three days.

The story soon spread through the country, and a poor scholar who heard it thought he had now an opportunity of making his fortune. He therefore went at midnight to the place, and there he met with the wandering white woman, and he told her why he was come, and offered his services to raise the treasure. She, however, answered that he was not one of the three, one of whom alone could free her, and that the wall in which was the money would still remain so firm that no human being should be able to break it. She also told him that at some future time he should be rewarded for his good inclination; and, it is said, when a long time after he passed by that place, and thought with compassion on the sufferings of the unblest woman, he fell on his face over a great heap of money, which soon put him again on his feet. The wall still remains undisturbed, and as often as any one has attempted to throw it down, whatever is thrown down in the day is replaced again in the night.

* * * * *

Three men went once in the night-time to Klumhoei to try their luck, for a dragon watches there over a great treasure. They dug into the ground, giving each other a strict charge not to utter a word whatever might happen, otherwise all their labour would be in vain. When they had dug pretty deep, their spades struck against a copper chest. They then made signs to one another, and all, with both hands, laid hold of a great copper ring that was on the top of the chest, and pulled up the treasure. When they had just got it into their possession, one of them forgot the necessity of silence, and shouted out—

“One pull more, and we have it!”

That very instant the chest flew away out of their hands to the lake Stoeierup, but as they all held hard on the ring it remained in their grasp. They went and fastened the ring on the door of St. Olaf’s church, and there it remains to this very day.

* * * * *



Near Dangstrup there is a hill which is called Dangbjerg Dons. Of this hill it is related that it is at all times covered with a blue mist, and that under it there lies a large copper kettle full of money. One night two men went there to dig after this treasure, and they had got so far as to lay hold of the handle of the kettle. All sorts of wonderful things began then to appear to disturb them at their work. One time a coach, drawn by four black horses, drove by them. Then they saw a black dog with a fiery tongue. Then there came a cock drawing a load of hay. Still the men persisted in not letting themselves speak, and still dug on without stopping. At last a fellow came limping up to them and said—



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“See, Dangstrup is on fire!”

When the men looked towards the town, it appeared exactly as if the whole place were in a bright flame. Then at length one of the men forgot to keep silence, and the moment he uttered an exclamation the treasure sank deeper and deeper, and as often since as any attempt has been made to get it up, the trolls have, by their spells and artifices, prevented its success.

HOLGER DANSKE.

The Danish peasantry of the present day relate many wonderful things of an ancient hero whom they name Holger Danske, *i.e.* Danish Holger, and to whom they ascribe wonderful strength and dimensions.

Holger Danske came one time to a town named Bagsvoer, in the isle of Zealand, where, being in want of a new suit of clothes, he sent for twelve tailors to make them. He was so tall that they were obliged to set ladders to his back and shoulders to take his measure. They measured and measured away, but unluckily a man, who was on the top of one of the ladders, happened, as he was cutting a mark in the measure, to give Holger's ear a clip with the scissors. Holger, forgetting what was going on, thinking that he was being bitten by a flea, put up his hand and crushed the unlucky tailor to death between his fingers.

It is also said that a witch one time gave him a pair of spectacles which would enable him to see through the ground. He lay down at a place not far from Copenhagen to make a trial of their powers, and as he put his face close to the ground, he left in it the mark of his spectacles, which mark is to be seen at this very day, and the size of it proves what a goodly pair they must have been.

Tradition does not say at what time it was that this mighty hero honoured the isles of the Baltic with his actual presence, but, in return, it informs us that Holger, like so many other heroes of renown, “is not dead, but sleepeth.” The clang of arms, we are told, was frequently heard under the castle of Cronberg, but in all Denmark no one could be found hardy enough to penetrate the subterranean recesses and ascertain the cause. At length a slave, who had been condemned to death, was offered his life and a pardon if he would go down, proceed through the subterranean passage as far as it went, and bring an account of what he should meet there. He accordingly descended, and went along till he came to a great iron door, which opened of itself the instant he knocked at it, and he beheld before him a deep vault. From the roof in the centre hung a lamp whose flame was nearly extinct, and beneath was a huge great stone table, around which sat steel-clad warriors, bowed down over it, each with his head on his crossed arms. He who was seated at the head of the board then raised himself up. This was

Holger Danske. When he had lifted his head up from off his arms, the stone table split throughout, for his beard was grown into it.



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“Give me thy hand,” said he to the intruder.

The slave feared to trust his hand in the grasp of the ancient warrior, and he reached him the end of an iron bar which he had brought with him. Holger squeezed it so hard, that the mark of his hand remained in it. He let it go at last, saying—

“Well! I am glad to find there are still men in Denmark.”

TALES FROM THE PROSE EDDA

THE GODS AND THE WOLF.

Among the AEsir, or gods, is reckoned one named Loki or Loptur. By many he is called the reviler of the gods, the author of all fraud and mischief, and the shame of gods and men alike. He is the son of the giant Farbauti, his mother being Laufey or Nal, and his brothers Byleist and Helblindi. He is of a goodly appearance and elegant form, but his mood is changeable, and he is inclined to all wickedness. In cunning and perfidy he excels every one, and many a time has he placed the gods in great danger, and often has he saved them again by his cunning. He has a wife named Siguna, and their son is called Nari.

Loki had three children by Angurbodi, a giantess of Jotunheim (the giants' home). The first of these was Fenris, the wolf; the second was Joermungand, the Midgard serpent; and the third was Hela, death. Very soon did the gods become aware of this evil progeny which was being reared in Jotunheim, and by divination they discovered that they must receive great injury from them. That they had such a mother spoke bad for them, but their coming of such a sire was a still worse presage. All-father therefore despatched certain of the gods to bring the children to him, and when they were brought before him he cast the serpent down into the ocean which surrounds the world. There the monster waxed so large that he wound himself round the whole globe, and that with such ease that he can with his mouth lay hold of his tail. Hela All-father cast into Niflheim, where she rules over nine worlds. Into these she distributes all those who are sent to her,—that is to say, all who die through sickness or old age. She has there an abode with very thick walls, and fenced with strong gates. Her hall is Elvidnir; her table is Hunger; her knife, Starvation; her man-servant, Delay; her maid-servant, Sloth; her threshold, Precipice; her bed, Care; and her curtains, Anguish of Soul. The one half of her body is livid, the other half is flesh-colour. She has a terrible look, so that she can be easily known.

As to the wolf, Fenris, the gods let him grow up among themselves, Tyr being the only one of them who dare give him his food. When, however, they perceived how he every day increased prodigiously in size, and that the oracles warned them that he would one day prove fatal to them, they determined to make very strong iron fetters for him which



they called Loeding. These they presented to the wolf, and desired him to put them on to show his strength by endeavouring to break them. The wolf saw that it would not be difficult for him to burst them, so he let the gods put the fetters on him, then violently stretching himself he broke the fetters asunder, and set himself free.

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Having seen this, the gods went to work, and prepared a second set of fetters, called Dromi, half as strong again as the former, and these they persuaded the wolf to put on, assuring him that if he broke them he would then furnish them with an undeniable proof of his power. The wolf saw well enough that it would not be easy to break this set, but he considered that he had himself increased in strength since he broke the others, and he knew that without running some risk he could never become celebrated. He therefore allowed the gods to place the fetters on him. Then Fenris shook himself, stretched his limbs, rolled on the ground, and at length burst the fetters, which he made fly in all directions. Thus did he free himself the second time from his chains, and from this has arisen the saying, "To get free from Loeding, or to burst from Dromi," meaning to perform something by strong exertion.

The gods now despaired of ever being able to secure the wolf with any chain of their own making. All-father, however, sent Skirnir, the messenger of the god Frey, into the country of the Black Elves, to the dwarfs, to ask them to make a chain to bind Fenris with. This chain was composed of six things—the noise made by the fall of a cat's foot, the hair of a woman's beard, the roots of stones, the nerves of bears, the breath of fish, and the spittle of birds.

The fetters were as smooth and as soft as silk, and yet, as you will presently see, of great strength. The gods were very thankful for them when they were brought to them, and returned many thanks to him who brought them. Then they took the wolf with them on to the island Lyngvi, which is in the lake Amsvartnir, and there they showed him the chain, desiring him to try his strength in breaking it. At the same time they told him that it was a good deal stronger than it looked. They took it in their own hands and pulled at it, attempting in vain to break it, and then they said to Fenris—

"No one else but you, Fenris, can break it."

"I don't see," replied the wolf, "that I shall gain any glory by breaking such a slight string, but if any artifice has been employed in the making of it, you may be sure, though it looks so fragile, it shall never touch foot of mine."

The gods told him he would easily break so slight a bandage, since he had already broken asunder shackles of iron of the most solid make.

"But," said they, "if you should not be able to break the chain, you are too feeble to cause us any anxiety, and we shall not hesitate to loose you again."

"I very much fear," replied the wolf, "that if you once tie me up so fast that I cannot release myself, you will be in no haste to unloose me. I am, therefore, unwilling to have this cord wound around me; but to show you I am no coward, I will agree to it, but one of you must put his hand in my mouth, as a pledge that you intend me no deceit."

The gods looked on one another wistfully, for they found themselves in an embarrassing position.



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Then Tyr stepped forward and bravely put his right hand in the monster's mouth. The gods then tied up the wolf, who forcibly stretched himself, as he had formerly done, and exerted all his powers to disengage himself; but the more efforts he made the tighter he drew the chain about him, and then all the gods, except Tyr, who lost his hand, burst out into laughter at the sight. Seeing that he was so fast tied that he would never be able to get loose again, they took one end of the chain, which was called Gelgja, and having drilled a hole for it, drew it through the middle of a large broad rock, which they sank very deep in the earth. Afterwards, to make all still more secure, they tied the end of the chain, which came through the rock to a great stone called Keviti, which they sank still deeper. The wolf used his utmost power to free himself, and, opening his mouth, tried to bite them. When the gods saw that they took a sword and thrust it into his mouth, so that it entered his under jaw right up to the hilt, and the point reached his palate. He howled in the most terrible manner, and since then the foam has poured from his mouth in such abundance that it forms the river called Von. So the wolf must remain until Ragnarok.

Such a wicked race has Loki begot. The gods would not put the wolf to death because they respected the sanctity of the place, which forbade blood being shed there.

THE STRANGE BUILDER.

Once upon a time, when the gods were building their abodes, a certain builder came and offered to erect them, in the space of three half-years, a city so well fortified that they should be quite safe in it from the incursions of the forest-giants and the giants of the mountains, even although these foes should have already penetrated within the enclosure Midgard. He asked, however, for his reward, the goddess Freyja, together with the sun and moon. The gods thought over the matter a long while, and at length agreed to his terms, on the understanding that he would finish the whole work himself without any one's assistance, and that all was to be finished within the space of one single winter. If anything remained to be done when the first day of summer came, the builder was to entirely forfeit the reward agreed on. When the builder was told this he asked that he might be allowed the use of his horse, Svadilfari, and to this the gods, by the advice of Loki, agreed.

On the first day of winter the builder set to work, and during the night he caused his horse to draw stones for the building. The gods beheld with astonishment the extraordinary size of these, and marked with wonder that the horse did much more work than his master. The contract between them and the giant had, however, been confirmed with many oaths and in the presence of many witnesses, for without such a precaution a giant would not have trusted himself among the gods, especially at a time when Thor was returning from an expedition he had made into the east against the giants.

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The winter was far advanced, and towards its end the city had been built so strongly and so lofty as to be almost secure. The time was nearly expired, only three days remaining, and nothing was wanted to complete the work save the gates, which were not yet put up. The gods then began to deliberate, and to ask one another who it was that had advised that Freyja should be given to one who dwelt in Jotunheim, and that they should plunge the heavens in darkness by allowing one to carry away with him the sun and moon. They all agreed that only Loki could have given such bad counsel, and that it would be only just to either make him contrive some way or other to prevent the builder accomplishing his work and having a right to claim his reward, or to put him to death. They at once laid hands on Loki, who, in his fright, promised upon oath to do what they desired, let it cost him what it might.

That very night, while the builder was employing his horse to convey stones, a mare suddenly ran out of a neighbouring forest and commenced to neigh. The horse broke loose and ran after the mare into the forest, and the builder ran after his horse.

Between one thing and another the whole night was lost, so that when day broke the work was not completed.

The builder, recognising that he could by no means finish his task, took again his giant form; and the gods, seeing that it was a mountain-giant with whom they had to deal, feeling that their oath did not bind them, called on Thor. He at once ran to them, and paid the builder his fee with a blow of his hammer which shattered his skull to pieces and threw him down headlong into Niflhel.

The horse Sleipner comes of the horse Svadilfari, and it excels all others possessed by gods or men.

THOR'S JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF GIANTS.

One day the god Thor set out with Loki in his chariot drawn by two he-goats. Night coming on they were obliged to put up at a peasant's cottage, when Thor slew his goats, and having skinned them, had them put into the pot. When this had been done he sat down to supper and invited the peasant and his children to take part in the feast. The peasant had a son named Thjalfi, and a daughter, Roeska. Thor told them to throw the bones into the goatskins, which were spread out near the hearth, but young Thjalfi, in order to get at the marrow, broke one of the shank bones with his knife. Having passed the night in this place, Thor rose early in the morning, and having dressed himself, held up his hammer, Mjolnir, and thus consecrating the goatskins; he had no sooner done it than the two goats took again their usual form, only one of them was now lame in one of its hind-legs. When Thor saw this he at once knew that the peasant or one of his family had handled the bones of the goat too roughly, for one was broken.

They were terribly afraid when Thor knit his brows, rolled his eyes, seized his hammer, and grasped it



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with such force that the very joints of his fingers were white again. The peasant, trembling, and fearful that he would be struck down by the looks of the god, begged with his family for pardon, offering whatever they possessed to repair the damage they might have done. Thor allowed them to appease him, and contented himself with taking with him Thjalfi and Roeska, who became his servants, and have since followed him.

Leaving his goats at that place, Thor set out to the east, to the country of the giants. At length they came to the shore of a wide and deep sea which Thor, with Loki, Thjalfi, and Roeska passed over. Then they came to a strange country, and entered an immense forest in which they journeyed all day. Thjalfi was unexcelled by any man as a runner, and he carried Thor's bag, but in the forest they could find nothing eatable to put in it. As night came on they searched on all sides for a place where they might sleep, and at last they came to what appeared to be a large hall, the gate of which was so large that it took up the whole of one side of the building. Here they lay down to sleep, but about the middle of the night they were alarmed by what seemed to be an earthquake which shook the whole of the building. Thor, rising, called his companions to seek with him some safer place. Leaving the apartment they were in, they found on their right hand an adjoining chamber into which they entered, but while the others, trembling with fear, crept to the farthest corner of their retreat, Thor, armed with his mace, remained at the entrance ready to defend himself, happen what might. Throughout the night they heard a terrible groaning, and when the morning came, Thor, going out, observed a man of enormous size, lying near, asleep and snoring heavily. Then Thor knew that this was the noise he had heard during the night. He immediately girded on his belt of prowess which had the virtue of increasing his strength. The giant awoke and stood up, and it is said that for once Thor was too frightened to use his hammer, and he therefore contented himself with inquiring the giant's name.

"My name," replied the giant, "is Skrymir. As for you it is not necessary I should ask your name. You are the god Thor. Tell me, what have you done with my glove?"

Then Skrymir stretched out his hand and took it up, and Thor saw that what he and his companions had taken for a hall in which they had passed the night, was the giant's glove, the chamber into which they had retreated being only the thumb.

Skrymir asked whether they might not be friends, and Thor agreeing, the giant opened his bag and took out something to eat. Thor and his companions also made their morning meal, but eat in another place. Then Skrymir, proposing that they should put their provisions together, and Thor assenting to it, put all into one bag, and laying it on his shoulder marched before them, with huge strides, during the whole day. At night he found a place where Thor and his companions might rest under an oak. There, he said, he would lie down and sleep.

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“You take the bag,” said he, “and make your supper.”

He was soon asleep, and, strange as it may seem, when Thor tried to open the bag he could not untie a single knot nor loose the string. Enraged at this he seized his hammer, swayed it in both his hands, took a step forward, and hurled it at the giant's head. This awoke the giant, who asked him if a leaf had not fallen on his head, and whether they had finished their supper. Thor said they were just about to lie down to sleep, and went to lie under another oak-tree. About midnight, observing that Skrymir was snoring so loudly that the forest re-echoed the din, Thor grasped his hammer and hurled it with such force at him that it sank up to the handle in his head.

“What is the matter?” asked he, awakening. “Did an acorn fall on my head? How are you going on, Thor?”

Thor departed at once, saying that it was only midnight and that he hoped to get some more sleep yet. He resolved, however, to have a third blow at the giant, hoping that with this he might settle everything. Seizing his hammer, he, with all his force, threw it at the giant's cheek, into which it buried itself up to the handle. Skrymir, awaking, put his hand to his cheek, and said—

“Are there any birds perched on this tree? I thought some moss fell upon me. How! art thou awake, Thor? It is time, is it not, for us to get up and dress ourselves? You have not far, however, to go before you arrive at the city Utgard. I have heard you whispering together that I am a very tall fellow, but there you will see many larger than me. Let me advise you then when you get there not to take too much upon yourselves, for the men of Utgard-Loki will not bear much from such little folk as you. I believe your best way would even be to turn back again, but if you are determined to proceed take the road that goes towards the east, as for me mine now lies to the north.”

After he had said this, he put his bag upon his shoulder and turned away into a forest; and I could never hear that Thor wished him a good journey.

Proceeding on his way with his companions, Thor saw towards noon a city situated in the middle of a vast plain. The wall of the city was so lofty that one could not look up to the top of it without throwing one's head quite back upon the shoulder. On coming to the wall, they found the gate-way closed with bars, which Thor never could have opened, but he and his companions crept in between them, and thus entered the place. Before them was a large palace, and as the door of it was open, they entered and found a number of men of enormous size, seated on benches. Going on they came into the presence of the king, Utgard-Loki, whom they saluted with great respect, but he, looking upon them for a time, at length cast a scornful glance at them, and burst into laughter.

“It would take up too much time,” said he, “to ask you concerning the long journey you have made, but if I am not mistaken that little man there is Aku-Thor. You may,” said he



to Thor, “be bigger than you seem to be. What are you and your companions skilled in that we may see what they can do, for no one may remain here unless he understands some art and excels in it all other men?”



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“I,” said Loki, “can eat quicker than any one else, and of that I am ready to give proof if there is here any one who will compete with me.”

“It must, indeed, be owned,” replied the king, “that you are not wanting in dexterity, if you are able to do what you say. Come, let us test it.”

Then he ordered one of his followers who was sitting at the further end of the bench, and whose name was Logi (Flame) to come forward, and try his skill with Loki. A great tub or trough full of flesh meat was placed in the hall, and Loki having placed himself at one end of the trough, and Logi having set himself at the other end, the two commenced to eat. Presently they met in the middle of the trough, but Loki had only devoured the flesh of his portion, whereas the other had devoured both flesh and bones. All the company therefore decided that Loki was beaten.

Then Utgard-Loki asked what the young man could do who accompanied Thor. Thjalfi said that in running he would compete with any one. The king admitted that skill in running was something very good, but he thought Thjalfi must exert himself to the utmost to win in the contest. He rose and, accompanied by all the company, went to a plain where there was a good place for the match, and then calling a young man named Hugi (Spirit or Thought), he ordered him to run with Thjalfi. In the first race Hugi ran so fast away from Thjalfi that on his returning to the starting-place he met him not far from it. Then said the king—

“If you are to win, Thjalfi, you must run faster, though I must own no man has ever come here who was swifter of foot.”

In the second trial, Thjalfi was a full bow-shot from the boundary when Hugi arrived at it.

“Very well do you run, Thjalfi,” said Utgard-Loki; “but I do not think you will gain the prize. However, the third trial will decide.”

They ran a third time, but Hugi had already reached the goal before Thjalfi had got half-way. Then all present cried out that there had been a sufficient trial of skill in that exercise.

Then Utgard-Loki asked Thor in what manner he would choose to give them a proof of the dexterity for which he was so famous. Thor replied that he would contest the prize for drinking with any one in the court. Utgard-Loki consented to the match, and going into the palace, ordered his cup-bearer to bring the large horn out of which his followers were obliged to drink when they had trespassed in any way against the customs of the court. The cup-bearer presented this to Thor, and Utgard-Loki said—

“Whoever is a good drinker will empty that horn at a draught. Some men make two draughts of it, but the most puny drinker of all can empty it in three.”



Thor looked at the horn, which seemed very long, but was otherwise of no extraordinary size. He put it to his mouth, and, without drawing breath, pulled as long and as deeply as he could, that he might not be obliged to make a second draught of it. When, however, he set the horn down and looked in it he could scarcely perceive that any of the liquor was gone.



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“You have drunk well,” said Utgard-Loki; “but you need not boast. Had it been told me that Asu-Thor could only drink so little, I should not have credited it. No doubt you will do better at the second pull.”

Without a word, Thor again set the horn to his lips and exerted himself to the utmost. When he looked in it seemed to him that he had not drunk quite so much as before, but the horn could now be carried without danger of spilling the liquor. Then Utgard-Loki said—

“Well, Thor, you should not spare yourself more than befits you in such drinking. If now you mean to drink off the horn the third time it seems to me you must drink more than you have done. You will never be reckoned so great a man amongst us as the AEsir make you out to be if you cannot do better in other games than it appears to me you will do in this.”

Thor, angry, put the horn to his mouth and drank the best he could and as long as he was able, but when he looked into the horn the liquor was only a little lower. Then he gave the horn to the cup-bearer, and would drink no more.

Then said Utgard-Loki—

“It is plain that you are not so mighty as we imagined. Will you try another game? It seems to me there is little chance of your taking a prize hence.”

“I will try more contests yet,” answered Thor. “Such draughts as I have drunk would not have seemed small to the AEsir. But what new game have you?”

Utgard-Loki answered—

“The lads here do a thing which is not much. They lift my cat up from the ground. I should not have thought of proposing such a feat to Asu-Thor, had I not first seen that he is less by far than we took him to be.”

As he spoke there sprang upon the hall floor a very large grey cat. Thor went up to it and put his hand under its middle and tried to lift it from the floor. The cat bent its back as Thor raised his hands, and when Thor had exerted himself to the utmost the cat had only one foot off the floor. Then Thor would make no further trial.

“I thought this game would go so,” said Utgard-Loki. “The cat is large and Thor is little when compared with our men.”

“Little as you call me,” answered Thor, “let any one come here and wrestle with me, for now I am angry.”

Utgard-Loki looked along the benches, and said—



“I see no man here who would not think it absurd to wrestle with you, but let some one call here the old woman, my nurse, Elli, and let Thor wrestle with her, if he will. She has cast to the ground many a man who seemed to me to be as strong as Thor.”

Then came into the hall a toothless old woman, and Utgard-Loki told her to wrestle with Asu-Thor. The story is not a long one. The harder Thor tightened his hold, the firmer the old woman stood. Then she began to exert herself, Thor tottered, and at last, after a violent tussle, he fell on one knee. On this Utgard-Loki told them to stop, adding that Thor could not desire any one else to wrestle with him in the hall, and the night had closed in. He showed Thor and his companions to seats, and they passed the night, faring well.



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At daybreak the next morning, Thor and his companions rose, dressed themselves, and prepared to leave at once. Then Utgard-Loki came to them and ordered a table to be set for them having on it plenty of meat and drink. Afterwards he led them out of the city, and on parting asked Thor how he thought his journey had prospered, and whether he had met with any stronger than himself. Thor said he must own he had been much shamed.

“And,” said he, “I know you will call me a man of little might, and I can badly bear that.”

“Shall I tell you the truth?” said Utgard-Loki. “We are now out of the city, and while I live and have my own way, you will never again enter it. By my word you had never come in had I known before you had been so strong and would bring us so near to great misfortune. I have deluded thee with vain shows; first in the forest, where I met you, and where you were unable to untie the wallet because I had bound it with iron-thread so that you could not discover where the knot could be loosened. After that you gave me three blows with your hammer. The first blow, though the lightest, would have killed me had it fallen on me, but I put a rock in my place which you did not see. In that rocky mountain you will find three dales, one of which is very deep, those are the dints made by your hammer. In the other games, I have deceived you with illusions. The first one was the match with Loki. He was hungry and eat fast, but Logi was Flame, and he consumed not only the flesh but the trough with it. When Thjalfi contended with Hugi in running, Hugi was my thought, and it was not possible for Thjalfi to excel that in swiftness. When you drank of the horn and the liquor seemed to get lower so slowly, you did, indeed, so well that had I not seen it, I should never have believed it. You did not see that one end of the horn was in the sea, but when you come to the shore you will see how much the sea has shrunk in consequence of your draughts, which have caused what is called the ebb. Nor did you do a less wondrous thing when you lifted up the cat, and I can assure you all were afraid when you raised one of its paws off the ground. The cat was the great Midgard serpent which lies stretched round the whole earth, and when you raised it so high then did its length barely suffice to enclose the earth between its head and tail. Your wrestling match with Elli was, too, a great feat, for no one has there been yet, and no one shall there be whom old age does not come and trip up, if he but await her coming. Now we must part, and let me say that it will be better for both of us if you never more come to seek me, for I shall always defend my city with tricks, so that you will never overcome me.”

When Thor heard that he grasped his mace in a rage, and raised it to hurl it at Utgard-Loki, but he had disappeared. Then Thor wanted to return to the city, but he could see nothing but a wide fair plain. So he turned, and went on his way till he came to Thrudvang, resolving if he had an opportunity to attack the Midgard serpent.



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HOW THOR WENT A-FISHING.

Thor had not been long at home before he left it so hastily that he did not take his car, his goats, or any follower with him. He left Midgard disguised as a young man, and when night was coming on, arrived at the house of a giant, called Hymir. Thor stayed there as a guest for the night, and when he saw in the morning that the giant rose, dressed himself, and prepared to go out to sea-fishing in his boat, he begged him to let him go also. Hymir said he was too little and young to be of much use.

“And besides,” added he, “you will die of cold, if I go so far out and sit so long as I am accustomed.”

Thor said he would row as far out as ever Hymir wanted, and he thought he might not be the first to want to row back. While he said this he was in such a rage that he had much to do to keep himself from throwing the hammer at once at the giant's head, but he calmed himself thinking that he might soon try his strength elsewhere. He asked Hymir what bait he should use, but Hymir told him to look out for himself. Then Thor went up to a herd of oxen belonging to Hymir, and capturing the largest bull, called Himinbrjot, he wrung off its head, and went with it to the sea-shore. Hymir launched the skiff, and Thor, sitting down in the after-part, rowed with two oars so that Hymir, who rowed in the fore-part, wondered to see how fast the boat went on. At length he said they had arrived at the place where he was accustomed to fish for flat fish, but Thor told him they had better go on further. So they rowed till Hymir cried out that if they proceeded further they might be in danger from the Midgard serpent. In spite of this, Thor said he would row further, and so he rowed on, disregarding Hymir's words. When he laid down his oars, he took out a very strong fishing line to which was a no less strong hook. On this he fixed the bull's head and cast it over into the sea. The bait soon reached the ground, and then truly Thor deceived the Midgard serpent no less than Utgard-Loki deceived Thor when he gave him the serpent to lift in his hand. The Midgard serpent gaped wide at the bait, and the hook stuck fast in his mouth. When the worm felt this he tugged at the hook so that Thor's hands were dashed against the side of the boat. Then Thor got angry, and, collecting to himself all his divine strength, he pulled so hard that his feet went through the bottom of the boat and down to the sea's bottom. Then he drew the serpent up on board. No one can be said to have seen an ugly sight who did not see that. Thor threw wrathful looks on the serpent, and the monster staring at him from below cast out venom at him. The giant Hymir, it is said, turned pale when he saw the serpent, quaked, and, seeing that the sea ran in and out of the skiff, just as Thor raised aloft his mace, took out his knife and cut the line so that the serpent at once sank under the water. Thor cast his mace at the serpent, and some say it cut off its head at the bottom, but it is more true that the Midgard serpent is yet alive lying at the bottom of the ocean. With his fist Thor struck Hymir such a blow over the ear that the giant tumbled headlong into the water, and Thor then waded to land.



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THE DEATH OF BALDUR.

Baldur the Good had dreams which forewarned him that his life was in danger, and he told the gods of them. The gods took counsel together what should be done, and it was agreed that they should conjure away all danger that might threaten him. Frigga took an oath of fire, water, iron, and all other metals, stones, earth, trees, sicknesses, beasts, birds, poisons, and worms, that these would none of them hurt Baldur. When this had been done the gods used to divert themselves, Baldur standing up in the assembly, and all the others throwing at him, hewing at him, and smiting him with stones, for, do all they would, he received no hurt, and in this sport all enjoyed themselves.

Loki, however, looked on with envy when he saw that Baldur was not hurt. So he assumed the form of a woman, and set out to Fensalir to Frigga. Frigga asked if the stranger knew what the gods did when they met. He answered that they all shot at Baldur and he was not hurt.

“No weapon, nor tree may hurt Baldur,” answers Frigga, “I have taken an oath of them all not to do so.”

“What,” said the pretended woman, “have all things then sworn to spare Baldur?”

“There is only one little twig which grows to the east of Valhalla, which is called the mistletoe. Of that I took no oath, for it seemed to me too young and feeble to do any hurt.”

Then the strange woman departed, and Loki having found the mistletoe, cut it off, and went to the assembly. There he found Hodur standing apart by himself, for he was blind. Then said Loki to him—

“Why do you not throw at Baldur?”

“Because,” said he, “I am blind and cannot see him, and besides I have nothing to throw.”

“Do as the others,” said Loki, “and honour Baldur as the rest do. I will direct your aim. Throw this shaft at him.”

Hodur took the mistletoe and, Loki directing him, aimed at Baldur. The aim was good. The shaft pierced him through, and Baldur fell dead upon the earth. Surely never was there a greater misfortune either among gods or men.

When the gods saw that Baldur was dead then they were silent, aghast, and stood motionless. They looked on one another, and were all agreed as to what he deserved who had done the deed, but out of respect to the place none dared avenge Baldur's



death. They broke the silence at length with wailing, words failing them with which to express their sorrow. Odin, as was right, was more sorrowful than any of the others, for he best knew what a loss the gods had sustained.

At last when the gods had recovered themselves, Frigga asked—

“Who is there among the gods who will win my love and good-will? That shall he have if he will ride to Hel, and seek Baldur, and offer Hela a reward if she will let Baldur come home to Asgard.”

Hermod the nimble, Odin’s lad, said he would make the journey. So he mounted Odin’s horse, Sleipner, and went his way.



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The gods took Baldur's body down to the sea-shore, where stood Hringhorn, Baldur's vessel, the biggest in the world. When the gods tried to launch it into the water, in order to make on it a funeral fire for Baldur, the ship would not stir. Then they despatched one to Jotunheim for the sorceress called Hyrrokin, who came riding on a wolf with twisted serpents by way of reins. Odin called for four Berserkir to hold the horse, but they could not secure it till they had thrown it to the ground. Then Hyrrokin went to the stem of the ship, and set it afloat with a single touch, the vessel going so fast that fire sprang from the rollers, and the earth trembled. Then Thor was so angry that he took his hammer and wanted to cast it at the woman's head, but the gods pleaded for her and appeased him. The body of Baldur being placed on the ship, Nanna, the daughter of Nep, Baldur's wife, seeing it, died of a broken heart, so she was borne to the pile and thrown into the fire.

Thor stood up and consecrated the pile with Mjolnir. A little dwarf, called Litur, ran before his feet, and Thor gave him a push, and threw him into the fire, and he was burnt. Many kinds of people came to this ceremony. With Odin came Frigga and the Valkyrjor with his ravens. Frey drove in a car drawn by the boar, Gullinbursti or Slidrugtanni. Heimdall rode the horse Gulltopp, and Freyja drove her cats. There were also many of the forest-giants and mountain-giants there. On the pile Odin laid the gold ring called Draupnir, giving it the property that every ninth night it produces eight rings of equal weight. In the same pile was also consumed Baldur's horse.

For nine nights and days Hermod rode through deep valleys, so dark that he could see nothing. Then he came to the river Gjoell which he crossed by the bridge which is covered with shining gold. The maid who keeps the bridge is called Modgudur. She asked Hermod his name and family, and told him that on the former day there had ridden over the bridge five bands of dead men.

"They did not make my bridge ring as you do, and you have not the hue of the dead. Why ride you thus on the way to Hel?"

He said—

"I ride to Hel to find Baldur. Have you seen him on his way to that place?"

"Baldur," answered she, "has passed over the bridge, but the way to Hel is below to the north."

Hermod rode on till he came to the entrance of Hel, which was guarded by a grate. He dismounted, looked to the girths of his saddle, mounted, and clapping his spurs into the horse, cleared the grate easily. Then he rode on to the hall and, dismounting, entered it. There he saw his brother, Baldur, seated in the first place, and there Hermod stopped the night.



In the morning he saw Hela, and begged her to let Baldur ride home with him, telling her how much the gods had sorrowed over his death. Hela told him she would test whether it were true that Baldur was so much loved.



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“If,” said she, “all things weep for him, then he shall return to the gods, but if any speak against him or refuse to weep, then he shall remain in Hel.”

Then Hermod rose to go, and Baldur, leading him out of the hall, gave him the ring, Draupnir, which he wished Odin to have as a keepsake. Nanna also sent Frigga a present, and a ring to Fulla.

Hermod rode back, and coming to Asgard related all he had seen and heard. Then the gods sent messengers over all the world seeking to get Baldur brought back again by weeping. All wept, men and living things, earth, stones, trees, and metals, all weeping as they do when they are subjected to heat after frost. Then the messengers came back again, thinking they had done their errand well. On their way they came to a cave wherein sat a hag named Thaukt. The messengers prayed her to assist in weeping Baldur out of Hel.

“I will weep dry tears,” answered she, “over Baldur’s pyre. What gain I by the son of man, be he live or dead? Let Hela hold what she has.”

It was thought that this must have been Loki, Laufey’s son, he who has ever wrought such harm to the gods.

THE PUNISHMENT OF LOKI.

The gods were so angry with Loki that he had to run away and hide himself in the mountains, and there he built a house which had four doors, so that he could see around him on every side. He would often in the day-time change himself into a salmon and hide in the water called Franangursfors, and he thought over what trick the gods might devise to capture him there. One day while he sat in his house, he took flax and yarn, and with it made meshes like those of a net, a fire burning in front of him. Then he became aware that the gods were near at hand, for Odin had seen out of Hlidskjalf where he was. Loki sprang up, threw his work into the fire, and went to the river. When the gods came to the house, the first that entered was Kvasir, who was the most acute of them all. In the hot embers he saw the ashes of a net, such as is used in fishing, and he told the gods of it, and they made a net like that which they saw in the ashes. When it was ready they went to the river and cast the net in, Thor holding one end and the rest of the gods the other, and so they drew it. Loki travelled in front of it and lay down between two stones so that the net went over him, but the gods felt that something living had been against the net. Then they cast the net a second time, binding up in it a weight so that nothing could pass under it. Loki travelled before it till he saw the sea in front of him. Then he leapt over the top of the net and again made his way up the stream. The gods saw this, so they once more dragged the stream, while Thor waded in the middle of it. So they went to the sea.



Then Loki saw in what a dangerous situation he was. He must risk his life if he swam out to sea. The only other alternative was to leap over the net. That he did, jumping as quickly as he could over the top cord.



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Thor snatched at him, and tried to hold him, but he slipped through his hand, and would have escaped, but for his tail, and this is the reason why salmon have their tails so thin.

Loki being captured, they took him to a certain cavern, and they took three rocks, through each of which they bored a hole. Then they took Loki's sons Vali and Nari, and having changed Vali into a wolf, he tore his brother Nari into pieces. Then the gods took his intestines and bound Loki with them to the three stones, and they changed the cord into bands of iron. Skadi then took a serpent and suspended it over Loki's head so that the venom drops from it on to his face. Siguna, Loki's wife, stands near him, and holds a dish receiving the venom as it falls, and when the dish is full she goes out and pours its contents away. While she is doing this, however, the venom falls on Loki, and causes him such intense pain that he writhes so that the earth is shaken as if by an earthquake.

There he lies till Ragnarok (the twilight of the gods).

ORIGIN OF TIIS LAKE.

A troll had once taken up his abode near the village of Kund, in the high bank on which the church now stands, but when the people about there had become pious, and went constantly to church, the troll was dreadfully annoyed by their almost incessant ringing of bells in the steeple of the church. He was at last obliged, in consequence of it, to take his departure, for nothing has more contributed to the emigration of the troll-folk out of the country, than the increasing piety of the people, and their taking to bell-ringing. The troll of Kund accordingly quitted the country, and went over to Funen, where he lived for some time in peace and quiet. Now it chanced that a man who had lately settled in the town of Kund, coming to Funen on business, met this same troll on the road.

"Where do you live?" asked the troll.

Now there was nothing whatever about the troll unlike a man, so he answered him, as was the truth—

"I am from the town of Kund."

"So?" said the troll, "I don't know you then. And yet I think I know every man in Kund. Will you, however," said he, "be so kind as to take a letter for me back with you to Kund?"

The man, of course, said he had no objection.



The troll put a letter into his pocket and charged him strictly not to take it out until he came to Kund church. Then he was to throw it over the churchyard wall, and the person for whom it was intended would get it.

The troll then went away in great haste, and with him the letter went entirely out of the man's mind. But when he was come back to Zealand he sat down by the meadow where Tiis lake now is, and suddenly recollected the troll's letter. He felt a great desire to look at it at least, so he took it out of his pocket and sat a while with it in his hands, when suddenly there began to dribble a little water out of the seal. The letter now unfolded itself and the water came out faster and faster, and it was with the utmost difficulty the poor man was able to save his life, for the malicious troll had enclosed a whole lake in the letter.



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The troll, it is plain, had thought to avenge himself on Kund church by destroying it in this manner, but God ordered it so that the lake chanced to run out in the great meadow where it now stands.

THERE ARE SUCH WOMEN.

There was once upon a time a man and his wife, and they wanted to sow their fields, but they had neither seed nor money to buy it with. However, they had one cow, and so they decided that the man should drive it to the town and sell it, so that they might buy seed with the money. When the time came, however, the woman was afraid to let her husband take the cow, fearing he would spend the money in drink. So she set off herself with the cow, and took a hen with her also.

When she was near the town she met a butcher, who said—

“Do you want to sell the cow, mother?”

“Yes,” answered she, “I do.”

“How much do you want for it?”

“I want a mark for the cow, and you shall have the hen for sixty marks.”

“Well,” said he, “I have no need of the hen. You can get rid of that when you come to the town, but I will give you a mark for the cow.”

She sold him the cow and got the mark for it, but when she came to the town she could find no one who would give her sixty marks for a tough lean hen. So she went back to the butcher and said—

“I cannot get this hen off, master, so you had better take it also with the cow.”

“We will see about it,” said the butcher. So he gave her something to eat, and gave her so much brandy that she became tipsy and lost her senses, and fell asleep.

When he saw that, the butcher dipped her in a barrel of tar, and then laid her on a heap of feathers.

When she awoke she found herself feathered all over, and wondered at herself.

“Is it me or some one else?” said she. “No, it cannot be me. It must be a strange bird. How shall I find out whether it is me or not? Oh, I know. When I get home, if the calves lick me, and the dog does not bark at me, then it is me myself.”



The dog had no sooner seen her than he began to bark, as if there were thieves and robbers in the yard.

“Now,” said she, “I see it is not me.”

She went to the cow-house but the calves would not lick her, for they smelt the strong tar.

“No,” said she, “I see it cannot be me. It must be some strange bird.”

So she crept up to the top of the barn, and began to flap her arms as if they had been wings, and tried to fly. Her husband saw her, so he came out with his gun and took aim.

“Don’t shoot, don’t shoot,” called his wife. “It is me.”

“Is it you?” said the man. “Then don’t stand there like a goat. Come down and tell me what account you can give of yourself.”

She crept down again; but she had not a shilling, for she had lost the mark the butcher had given her while she was drunk.



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When the man heard that he was very angry, and declared he would leave her, and never come back again until he had found three women as big fools as his wife.

So he set off, and when he had gone a little way he saw a woman who ran in and out of a newly built wood hut with an empty sieve. Every time she ran in she threw her apron over the sieve, as if she had something in it.

“Why do you do that, mother?” asked he.

“Why, I am only carrying in a little sun,” said she, “but I don’t understand how it is, when I am outside I get the sunshine in the sieve, but when I get in I have somehow lost it. When I was in my old hut I had plenty of sunshine, though I never carried it in. I wish I knew some one who would give me sunshine. I would give him three hundred dollars.”

“Have you an axe?” asked the man. “If so I will get you sunshine.”

She gave him an axe and he cut some windows in the hut, for the carpenter had forgotten them. Then the sun shone in, and the woman gave him three hundred dollars.

“That’s one,” said the man, and he set out once more.

Some time after he came to a house in which he heard a terrible noise and bellowing. He went in and saw a woman who was beating her husband across the head with a stick with all her might. Over the man’s head there was a shirt in which there was no hole for his head to go through.

“Mother,” said he, “will you kill your husband?”

“No,” said she, “I only want a hole for his head in the shirt.”

The man called out and, struggling, cried—

“Heaven preserve and comfort all such as have new shirts! If any one would only teach my wife some new way to make a head-hole in them I would gladly give him three hundred dollars.”

“That shall soon be done. Give me a pair of scissors,” said the other.

The woman gave him the scissors, and he cut a hole in the shirt for the man’s head to go through, and took the three hundred dollars.

“That is number two,” said he to himself.

After some time he came to a farm-house, where he thought he would rest a while. When he went in the woman said—



“Where do you come from, father?”

“I am from Ringerige (Paradise),” said he.

“Ah! dear, dear! Are you from Himmerige (Heaven)?” said she. “Then you will know my second husband, Peter; happy may he be!”

The woman had had three husbands. The first and third had been bad and had used her ill, but the second had used her well, so she counted him as safe.

“Yes,” said the man, “I know him well.”

“How does he get on there?” asked the woman.

“Only pretty well,” said the man. “He goes about begging from one house to another, and has but little food, or clothes on his back. As to money he has nothing.”

“Heaven have mercy on him!” cried the woman. “He ought not to go about in such a miserable state when he left so much behind. There is a cupboard full of clothes which belonged to him, and there is a big box full of money, too. If you will take the things with you, you can have a horse and cart to carry them. He can keep the horse, and he can sit in the cart as he goes from house to house, for so he ought to go.”



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The man from Ringerige got a whole cart-load of clothes and a box full of bright silver money, with meat and drink, as much as he wanted. When he had got all he wished, he got into the cart, and once more set out.

“That is the third,” said he to himself.

Now the woman’s third husband was ploughing in a field, and when he saw a man he did not know come out of his yard with his horse and cart, he went home and asked his wife, who it was that was going off with the black horse.

“Oh,” said the woman, “that is a man from Himmerige (Heaven). He told me that things went so miserably with my second Peter, my poor husband, that he had to go begging from house to house and had no money or clothes. I have therefore sent him the old clothes he left behind, and the old money box with the money in it.”

The man saw how matters were, so he saddled a horse and went out of the yard at full speed. It was not long before he came up to the man who sat and drove the cart. When the other saw him he drove the horse and cart into a wood, pulled a handful of hair out of the horse’s tail, and ran up a little hill, where he tied the hair fast to a birch-tree. Then he lay down under the tree and began to look and stare at the sky.

“Well, well,” said he, as if talking to himself, when Peter the third came near. “Well! never before have I seen anything to match it.”

Peter stood still for a time and looked at him, and wondered what was come to him. At last he said—

“Why do you lie there and stare so?”

“I never saw anything like it,” said the other. “A man has gone up to heaven on a black horse. Here in the birch-tree is some of the horse’s tail hanging, and there in the sky you may see the black horse.”

Peter stared first at the man and then at the sky, and said—

“For my part, I see nothing but some hair out of a horse’s tail in the birch-tree.”

“Yes,” said the other, “you cannot see it where you stand, but come here and lie down, and look up, and take care not to take your eyes off the sky.”

Peter the third lay down and stared up at the sky till the tears ran from his eyes. The man from Ringerige took his horse, mounted it, and galloped away with it and the horse and cart. When he heard the noise on the road, Peter the third sprang up, but when he found the man had gone off with his horse he was so astonished that he did not think of going after him till it was too late.



He was very down-faced when he went home to his wife, and when she asked him what he had done with the horse, he said—

“I gave it to Peter the second, for I didn’t think it was right he should sit in a cart and jolt about from house to house in Himmerige. Now then he can sell the cart, and buy himself a coach, and drive about.”

“Heaven bless you for that,” said the woman. “I never thought you were so kind-hearted a man.”



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When the Ringerige man reached home with his six hundred dollars, his cart-load of clothes, and the money, he saw that all his fields were ploughed and sown. The first question he put to his wife was how she had got the seed.

“Well,” said she, “I always heard that what a man sowed he reaped, so I sowed the salt the North-people left here, and if we only have rain I don’t doubt but that it will come up nicely.”

“You are silly,” said the man, “and silly you must remain, but that does not much matter, for the others are as silly as yourself.”

TALES OF THE NISSES.

The Nis is the same being that is called Kobold in Germany, and Brownie in Scotland. He is in Denmark and Norway also called Nisse god Dreng (Nisse good lad), and in Sweden, Tomtegubbe (the old man of the house).

He is of the dwarf family, and resembles them in appearance, and, like them, has the command of money, and the same dislike to noise and tumult.

His usual dress is grey, with a pointed red cap, but on Michaelmas-day he wears a round hat like those of the peasants.

No farm-house goes on well without there is a Nis in it, and well is it for the maids and the men when they are in favour with him. They may go to their beds and give themselves no trouble about their work, and yet in the morning the maids will find the kitchen swept up, and water brought in; and the men will find the horses in the stable well cleaned and curried, and perhaps a supply of corn cribbed for them from the neighbours’ barns.

There was a Nis in a house in Jutland. He every evening got his groute at the regular time, and he, in return, used to help both the men and the maids, and looked to the interest of the master of the house in every respect.

There came one time a mischievous boy to live at service in this house, and his great delight was, whenever he got an opportunity, to give the Nis all the annoyance in his power.

Late one evening, when everything was quiet in the house, the Nis took his little wooden dish, and was just going to eat his supper, when he perceived that the boy had put the butter at the bottom and had concealed it, in hopes that he might eat the groute first, and then find the butter when all the groute was gone. He accordingly set about thinking how he might repay the boy in kind. After pondering a little he went up into the



loft where a man and the boy were lying asleep in the same bed. The Nis whisked off the bed clothes, and when he saw the little boy by the tall man, he said—

“Short and long don’t match,” and with this word he took the boy by the legs and dragged him down to the man’s feet. He then went up to the head of the bed, and—

“Short and long don’t match,” said he again, and then he dragged the boy up to the man’s head. Do what he would he could not succeed in making the boy as long as the man, but persisted in dragging him up and down in the bed, and continued at this work the whole night long till it was broad daylight.



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By this time he was well tired, so he crept up on the window stool, and sat with his legs dangling down into the yard. The house-dog—for all dogs have a great enmity to the Nis—as soon as he saw him began to bark at him, which afforded him much amusement, as the dog could not get up to him. So he put down first one leg and then the other, and teased the dog, saying—

“Look at my little leg. Look at my little leg!”

In the meantime the boy had awoke, and had stolen up behind him, and, while the Nis was least thinking of it, and was going on with his, “Look at my little leg,” the boy tumbled him down into the yard to the dog, crying out at the same time—

“Look at the whole of him now!”

* * * * *

There lived a man in Thyrsting, in Jutland, who had a Nis in his barn. This Nis used to attend to his cattle, and at night he would steal fodder for them from the neighbours, so that this farmer had the best fed and most thriving cattle in the country.

One time the boy went along with the Nis to Fugleriis to steal corn. The Nis took as much as he thought he could well carry, but the boy was more covetous, and said—

“Oh! take more. Sure, we can rest now and then!”

“Rest!” said the Nis. “Rest! and what is rest?”

“Do what I tell you,” replied the boy. “Take more, and we shall find rest when we get out of this.”

The Nis took more, and they went away with it, but when they came to the lands of Thyrsting, the Nis grew tired, and then the boy said to him—

“Here now is rest!” and they both sat down on the side of a little hill.

“If I had known,” said the Nis, as they sat. “If I had known that rest was so good, I’d have carried off all that was in the barn.”

It happened, some time after, that the boy and the Nis were no longer friends, and as the Nis was sitting one day in the granary-window with his legs hanging out into the yard, the boy ran at him and tumbled him back into the granary. The Nis was revenged on him that very night, for when the boy was gone to bed he stole down to where he was lying and carried him as he was into the yard. Then he laid two pieces of wood across the well and put him lying on them, expecting that when he awoke he would fall,



from the fright, into the well and be drowned. He was, however, disappointed, for the boy came off without injury.

* * * * *

There was a man who lived in the town of Tirup who had a very handsome white mare. This mare had for many years belonged to the same family, and there was a Nis attached to her who brought luck to the place.

This Nis was so fond of the mare that he could hardly endure to let them put her to any kind of work, and he used to come himself every night and feed her of the best; and as for this purpose he usually brought a superfluity of corn, both thrashed and in the straw, from the neighbours' barns, all the rest of the cattle enjoyed the advantage, and they were all kept in exceedingly good condition.



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It happened at last that the farm-house passed into the hands of a new owner, who refused to put any faith in what they told him about the mare, so the luck speedily left the place, and went after the mare to a poor neighbour who had bought her. Within five days after his purchase, the poor farmer began to find his circumstances gradually improving, while the income of the other, day after day, fell away and diminished at such a rate that he was hard set to make both ends meet.

If now the man who had got the mare had only known how to be quiet and enjoy the good times that were come upon him, he and his children and his children's children after him would have been in flourishing circumstances till this very day. But when he saw the quantity of corn that came every night to his barn, he could not resist his desire to get a sight of the Nis. So he concealed himself one evening at nightfall in the stable, and as soon as it was midnight he saw how the Nis came from his neighbour's barn and brought a sack full of corn with him. It was now unavoidable that the Nis should get a sight of the man who was watching, so he, with evident marks of grief, gave the mare her food for the last time, cleaned and dressed her to the best of his ability, and when he had done, turned round to where the man was lying, and bid him farewell.

From that day forward the circumstances of both the neighbours were on an equality, for each now kept his own.

THE DWARFS' BANQUET.

There lived in Norway, not far from the city of Drontheim, a powerful man who was blessed with all the goods of fortune. A part of the surrounding country was his property, numerous herds fed on his pastures, and a great retinue and a crowd of servants adorned his mansion. He had an only daughter, called Aslog, the fame of whose beauty spread far and wide. The greatest men of the country sought her, but all were alike unsuccessful in their suit, and he who had come full of confidence and joy, rode away home silent and melancholy. Her father, who thought his daughter delayed her choice only to select, forbore to interfere, and exulted in her prudence, but when at length the richest and noblest tried their fortune with as little success as the rest, he grew angry and called his daughter, and said to her—

“Hitherto I have left you to your free choice, but since I see that you reject all without any distinction, and the very best of your suitors seems not good enough for you, I will keep measures no longer with you. What! shall my family become extinct, and my inheritance pass away into the hands of strangers? I will break your stubborn spirit. I give you now till the festival of the great winter-night. Make your choice by that time, or prepare to accept him whom I shall fix on.”

Aslog loved a youth named Orm, handsome as he was brave and noble. She loved him with her whole soul, and she would sooner die than bestow her hand on another. But



Orm was poor, and poverty compelled him to serve in the mansion of her father. Aslog's partiality for him was kept a secret, for her father's pride of power and wealth was such that he would never have given his consent to a union with so humble a man.



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When Aslog saw the darkness of his countenance, and heard his angry words, she turned pale as death, for she knew his temper, and doubted not that he would put his threats into execution. Without uttering a word in reply, she retired to her chamber, and thought deeply but in vain how to avert the dark storm that hung over her. The great festival approached nearer and nearer, and her anguish increased every day.

At last the lovers resolved on flight.

“I know,” said Orm, “a secure place where we may remain undiscovered until we find an opportunity of quitting the country.”

At night, when all were asleep, Orm led the trembling Aslog over the snow and ice-fields away to the mountains. The moon and the stars, sparkling still brighter in the cold winter’s night, lighted them on their way. They had under their arms a few articles of dress and some skins of animals, which were all they could carry. They ascended the mountains the whole night long till they reached a lonely spot enclosed with lofty rocks. Here Orm conducted the weary Aslog into a cave, the low and narrow entrance to which was hardly perceptible, but it soon enlarged to a great hall, reaching deep into the mountain. He kindled a fire, and they now, reposing on their skins, sat in the deepest solitude far away from all the world.

Orm was the first who had discovered this cave, which is shown to this very day, and as no one knew anything of it, they were safe from the pursuit of Aslog’s father. They passed the whole winter in this retirement. Orm used to go a-hunting, and Aslog stayed at home in the cave, minded the fire, and prepared the necessary food. Frequently did she mount the points of the rocks, but her eyes wandered as far as they could reach only over glittering snow-fields.

The spring now came on: the woods were green, the meadows pat on their various colours, and Aslog could but rarely, and with circumspection, venture to leave the cave. One evening Orm came in with the intelligence that he had recognised her father’s servants in the distance, and that he could hardly have been unobserved by them whose eyes were as good as his own.

“They will surround this place,” continued he, “and never rest till they have found us. We must quit our retreat then without a minute’s delay.”

They accordingly descended on the other side of the mountain, and reached the strand, where they fortunately found a boat. Orm shoved off, and the boat drove into the open sea. They had escaped their pursuers, but they were now exposed to dangers of another kind. Whither should they turn themselves? They could not venture to land, for Aslog’s father was lord of the whole coast, and they would infallibly fall into his hands. Nothing then remained for them but to commit their bark to the wind and waves. They drove along the entire night. At break of day the coast had disappeared, and they saw



nothing but the sky above, the sea beneath, and the waves that rose and fell. They had not brought one morsel of food with them, and thirst and hunger began now to torment them. Three days did they toss about in this state of misery, and Aslog, faint and exhausted, saw nothing but certain death before her.



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At length, on the evening of the third day, they discovered an island of tolerable magnitude, and surrounded by a number of smaller ones. Orm immediately steered for it, but just as he came near to it there suddenly arose a violent wind, and the sea rolled higher and higher against him. He turned about with a view of approaching it on another side, but with no better success. His vessel, as often as he approached the island, was driven back as if by an invisible power.

“Lord God!” cried he, and blessed himself and looked on poor Aslog, who seemed to be dying of weakness before his eyes.

Scarcely had the exclamation passed his lips when the storm ceased, the waves subsided, and the vessel came to the shore without encountering any hindrance. Orm jumped out on the beach. Some mussels that he found upon the strand strengthened and revived the exhausted Aslog so that she was soon able to leave the boat.

The island was overgrown with low dwarf shrubs, and seemed to be uninhabited; but when they had got about the middle of it, they discovered a house reaching but a little above the ground, and appearing to be half under the surface of the earth. In the hope of meeting human beings and assistance, the wanderers approached it. They listened if they could hear any noise, but the most perfect silence reigned there. Orm at length opened the door, and with his companion walked in; but what was their surprise to find everything regulated and arranged as if for inhabitants, yet not a single living creature visible. The fire was burning on the hearth in the middle of the room, and a kettle with fish hung on it, apparently only waiting for some one to take it off and eat. The beds were made and ready to receive their weary tenants. Orm and Aslog stood for some time dubious, and looked on with a certain degree of awe, but at last, overcome with hunger, they took up the food and ate. When they had satisfied their appetites, and still in the last beams of the setting sun, which now streamed over the island far and wide, discovered no human being, they gave way to weariness, and laid themselves in the beds to which they had been so long strangers.

They had expected to be awakened in the night by the owners of the house on their return home, but their expectation was not fulfilled. They slept undisturbed till the morning sun shone in upon them. No one appeared on any of the following days, and it seemed as if some invisible power had made ready the house for their reception. They spent the whole summer in perfect happiness. They were, to be sure, solitary, yet they did not miss mankind. The wild birds' eggs and the fish they caught yielded them provisions in abundance.

When autumn came, Aslog presented Orm with a son. In the midst of their joy at his appearance they were surprised by a wonderful apparition. The door opened on a sudden, and an old woman stepped in. She had on her a handsome blue dress. There was something proud, but at the same time strange and surprising in her appearance.



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“Do not be afraid,” said she, “at my unexpected appearance. I am the owner of this house, and I thank you for the clean and neat state in which you have kept it, and for the good order in which I find everything with you. I would willingly have come sooner, but I had no power to do so, till this little heathen (pointing to the new-born babe) was come to the light. Now I have free access. Only, fetch no priest from the mainland to christen it, or I must depart again. If you will in this matter comply with my wishes, you may not only continue to live here, but all the good that ever you can wish for I will cause you. Whatever you take in hand shall prosper. Good luck shall follow you wherever you go; but break this condition, and depend upon it that misfortune after misfortune will come on you, and even on this child will I avenge myself. If you want anything, or are in danger, you have only to pronounce my name three times, and I will appear and lend you assistance. I am of the race of the old giants, and my name is Guru. But beware of uttering in my presence the name of him whom no giant may hear of, and never venture to make the sign of the cross, or to cut it on beam or on board of the house. You may dwell in this house the whole year long, only be so good as to give it up to me on Yule evening, when the sun is at the lowest, as then we celebrate our great festival, and then only are we permitted to be merry. At least, if you should not be willing to go out of the house, keep yourselves up in the loft as quiet as possible the whole day long, and, as you value your lives, do not look down into the room until midnight is past. After that you may take possession of everything again.”

When the old woman had thus spoken she vanished, and Aslog and Orm, now at ease respecting their situation, lived, without any disturbance, content and happy. Orm never made a cast of his net without getting a plentiful draught. He never shot an arrow from his bow that missed its aim. In short, whatever they took in hand, were it ever so trifling, evidently prospered.

When Christmas came, they cleaned up the house in the best manner, set everything in order, kindled a fire on the hearth, and, as the twilight approached, they went up to the loft, where they remained quiet and still. At length it grew dark. They thought they heard a sound of flying and labouring in the air, such as the swans make in the winter-time. There was a hole in the roof over the fire-place which might be opened or shut either to let in the light from above or to afford a free passage for the smoke. Orm lifted up the lid, which was covered with a skin, and put out his head, but what a wonderful sight then presented itself to his eyes! The little islands around were all lit up with countless blue lights, which moved about without ceasing, jumped up and down, then skipped down to the shore, assembled together, and now came nearer and nearer to the large island

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where Orm and Aslog lived. At last they reached it and arranged themselves in a circle around a large stone not far from the shore, and which Orm well knew. What was his surprise when he saw that the stone had now completely assumed the form of a man, though of a monstrous and gigantic one! He could clearly perceive that the little blue lights were borne by dwarfs, whose pale clay-coloured faces, with their huge noses and red eyes, disfigured, too, by birds' bills and owls' eyes, were supported by misshapen bodies. They tottered and wobbled about here and there, so that they seemed to be, at the same time, merry and in pain. Suddenly the circle opened, the little ones retired on each side, and Guru, who was now much enlarged and of as immense a size as the stone, advanced with gigantic steps. She threw both her arms about the stone image, which immediately began to receive life and motion. As soon as the first sign of motion showed itself the little ones began, with wonderful capers and grimaces, a song, or, to speak more properly, a howl, with which the whole island resounded and seemed to tremble. Orm, quite terrified, drew in his head, and he and Aslog remained in the dark, so still that they hardly ventured to draw their breath.

The procession moved on towards the house, as might be clearly perceived by the nearer approach of the shouting and crying. They were now all come in, and, light and active, the dwarfs jumped about on the benches, and heavy and loud sounded, at intervals, the steps of the giants. Orm and his wife heard them covering the table, and the clattering of the plates, and the shouts of joy with which they celebrated their banquet. When it was over, and it drew near to midnight, they began to dance to that ravishing fairy air which charms the mind into such sweet confusion, and which some have heard in the rocky glens, and learned by listening to the underground musicians. As soon as Aslog caught the sound of the air she felt an irresistible longing to see the dance, nor was Orm able to keep her back.

"Let me look," said she, "or my heart will burst."

She took her child and placed herself at the extreme end of the loft whence, without being observed, she could see all that passed. Long did she gaze, without taking off her eyes for an instant, on the dance, on the bold and wonderful springs of the little creatures who seemed to float in the air and not so much as to touch the ground, while the ravishing melody of the elves filled her whole soul. The child, meanwhile, which lay in her arms, grew sleepy and drew its breath heavily, and without ever thinking of the promise she had given to the old woman, she made, as is usual, the sign of the cross over the mouth of the child, and said—

"Christ bless you, my babe!"

The instant she had spoken the word there was raised a horrible, piercing cry. The spirits tumbled head over heels out at the door, with terrible crushing and crowding, their



lights went out, and in a few minutes the whole house was clear of them and left desolate. Orm and Aslog, frightened to death, hid themselves in the most retired nook in the house. They did not venture to stir till daybreak, and not till the sun shone through the hole in the roof down on the fire-place did they feel courage enough to descend from the loft.



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The table remained still covered as the underground people had left it. All their vessels, which were of silver, and manufactured in the most beautiful manner, were upon it. In the middle of the room there stood upon the ground a huge copper kettle half-full of sweet mead, and, by the side of it, a drinking-horn of pure gold. In the corner lay against the wall a stringed instrument not unlike a dulcimer, which, as people believe, the giantesses used to play on. They gazed on what was before them full of admiration, but without venturing to lay their hands on anything; but great and fearful was their amazement when, on turning about, they saw sitting at the table an immense figure, which Orm instantly recognised as the giant whom Guru had animated by her embrace. He was now a cold and hard stone. While they were standing gazing on it, Guru herself entered the room in her giant form. She wept so bitterly that the tears trickled down on the ground. It was long ere her sobbing permitted her to utter a single word. At length she spoke—

“Great affliction have you brought on me, and henceforth must I weep while I live. I know you have not done this with evil intentions, and therefore I forgive you, though it were a trifle for me to crush the whole house like an egg-shell over your heads.”

“Alas!” cried she, “my husband, whom I love more than myself, there he sits petrified for ever. Never again will he open his eyes! Three hundred years lived I with my father on the island of Kunnan, happy in the innocence of youth, as the fairest among the giant maidens. Mighty heroes sued for my hand. The sea around that island is still filled with the rocky fragments which they hurled against each other in their combats. Andfind won the victory, and I plighted myself to him; but ere I was married came the detestable Odin into the country, who overcame my father, and drove us all from the island. My father and sisters fled to the mountains, and since that time my eyes have beheld them no more. Andfind and I saved ourselves on this island, where we for a long time lived in peace and quiet, and thought it would never be interrupted. Destiny, which no one escapes, had determined it otherwise. Oluf came from Britain. They called him the Holy, and Andfind instantly found that his voyage would be inauspicious to the giants. When he heard how Oluf’s ship rushed through the waves, he went down to the strand and blew the sea against him with all his strength. The waves swelled up like mountains, but Oluf was still more mighty than he. His ship flew unchecked through the billows like an arrow from a bow. He steered direct for our island. When the ship was so near that Andfind thought he could reach it with his hands, he grasped at the forepart with his right hand, and was about to drag it down to the bottom, as he had often done with other ships. Then Oluf, the terrible Oluf, stepped forward, and, crossing his hands over each other, he cried with a loud voice—”



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“Stand there as a stone till the last day!” and in the same instant my unhappy husband became a mass of rock. The ship went on unimpeded, and ran direct against the mountain, which it cut through, separating from it the little island which lies yonder.”

“Ever since my happiness has been annihilated, and lonely and melancholy have I passed my life. On Yule eve alone can petrified giants receive back their life, for the space of seven hours, if one of their race embraces them, and is, at the same time, willing to sacrifice a hundred years of his own life. Seldom does a giant do that. I loved my husband too well not to bring him back cheerfully to life, every time that I could do it, even at the highest price, and never would I reckon how often I had done it that I might not know when the time came when I myself should share his fate, and, at the moment I threw my arms around him, become the same as he. Alas! now even this comfort is taken from me. I can never more by any embrace awake him, since he has heard the name which I dare not utter, and never again will he see the light till the dawn of the last day shall bring it.”

“Now I go hence! You will never again behold me! All that is here in the house I give you! My dulcimer alone will I keep. Let no one venture to fix his habitation on the little islands which lie around here. There dwell the little underground ones whom you saw at the festival, and I will protect them as long as I live.”

With these words Guru vanished. The next spring Orm took the golden horn and the silver ware to Drontheim where no one knew him. The value of the things was so great that he was able to purchase everything a wealthy man desires. He loaded his ship with his purchases, and returned to the island, where he spent many years in unalloyed happiness, and Aslog’s father was soon reconciled to his wealthy son-in-law.

The stone image remained sitting in the house. No human power was able to move it. So hard was the stone that hammer and axe flew in pieces without making the slightest impression upon it. The giant sat there till a holy man came to the island, who, with one single word, removed him back to his former station, where he stands to this hour. The copper kettle, which the underground people left behind them, was preserved as a memorial upon the island, which bears the name of House Island to the present day.

THE ICELANDIC SORCERESSES.

“Tell me,” said Katla, a handsome and lively widow, to Gunlaugar, an accomplished and gallant young warrior, “tell me why thou goest so oft to Mahfahlida? Is it to caress an old woman?”

“Thine own age, Katla,” answered the youth inconsiderately, “might prevent thy making that of Geirrida a subject of reproach.”

“I little deemed,” replied the offended matron, “that we were on an equality in that particular—but thou, who supposest that Geirrida is the sole source of knowledge, mayst find that there are others who equal her in science.”



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It happened in the course of the following winter that Gunlaugar, in company with Oddo, the son of Katla, had renewed one of those visits to Geirrida with which Katla had upbraided him.

“Thou shalt not depart to-night,” said the sage matron; “evil spirits are abroad, and thy bad destiny predominates.”

“We are two in company,” answered Gunlaugar, “and have therefore nothing to fear.”

“Oddo,” replied Geirrida, “will be of no aid to thee; but go, since thou wilt go, and pay the penalty of thy own rashness.”

In their way they visited the rival matron, and Gunlaugar was invited to remain in her house that night. This he declined, and, passing forward alone, was next morning found lying before the gate of his father Thorbiorn, severely wounded and deprived of his judgment. Various causes were assigned for this disaster; but Oddo, asserting that they had parted in anger that evening from Geirrida, insisted that his companion must have sustained the injury through her sorcery. Geirrida was accordingly cited to the popular assembly and accused of witchcraft. But twelve witnesses, or compurgators, having asserted upon their oath the innocence of the accused party, Geirrida was honourably freed from the accusation brought against her. Her acquittal did not terminate the rivalry between the two sorceresses, for, Geirrida belonging to the family of Kiliakan, and Katla to that of the pontiff Snorro, the animosity which still subsisted between these septs became awakened by the quarrel.

It chanced that Thorbiorn, called Digri (or the corpulent), one of the family of Snorro, had some horses which fed in the mountain pastures, near to those of Thorarin, called the Black, the son of the enchantress Geirrida. But when autumn arrived, and the horses were to be withdrawn from the mountains and housed for the winter, those of Thorbiorn could nowhere be found, and Oddo, the son of Katla, being sent to consult a wizard, brought back a dubious answer, which seemed to indicate that they had been stolen by Thorarin. Thorbiorn, with Oddo and a party of armed followers, immediately set forth for Mahfahlida, the dwelling of Geirrida and her son Thorarin. Arrived before the gate, they demanded permission to search for the horses which were missing. This Thorarin refused, alleging that neither was the search demanded duly authorised by law, nor were the proper witnesses cited to be present, nor did Thorbiorn offer any sufficient pledge of security when claiming the exercise of so hazardous a privilege. Thorbiorn replied, that as Thorarin declined to permit a search, he must be held as admitting his guilt; and constituting for that purpose a temporary court of justice, by choosing out six judges, he formally accused Thorarin of theft before the gate of his own house. At this the patience of Geirrida forsook her.

“Well,” said she to her son Thorarin, “is it said of thee that thou art more a woman than a man, or thou wouldst not bear these intolerable affronts.”



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Thorarin, fired at the reproach, rushed forth with his servants and guests; a skirmish soon disturbed the legal process which had been instituted, and one or two of both parties were wounded and slain before the wife of Thorarin and the female attendants could separate the fray by flinging their mantles over the weapons of the combatants.

Thorbiorn and his party retreating, Thorarin proceeded to examine the field of battle. Alas! among the reliques of the fight was a bloody hand too slight and fair to belong to any of the combatants. It was that of his wife Ada, who had met this misfortune in her attempts to separate the foes. Incensed to the uttermost, Thorarin threw aside his constitutional moderation, and, mounting on horseback, with his allies and followers, pursued the hostile party, and overtook them in a hay-field, where they had halted to repose their horses, and to exult over the damage they had done to Thorarin. At this moment he assailed them with such fury that he slew Thorbiorn upon the spot, and killed several of his attendants, although Oddo, the son of Katla, escaped free from wounds, having been dressed by his mother in an invulnerable garment. After this action, more blood being shed than usual in an Icelandic engagement, Thorarin returned to Mahfahlida, and, being questioned by his mother concerning the events of the skirmish, he answered in the improvisatory and enigmatical poetry of his age and country—

“From me the foul reproach be far,
With which a female waked the war,
From me, who shunned not in the fray
Through foemen fierce to hew my way
(Since meet it is the eagle’s brood
On the fresh corpse should find their food);
Then spared I not, in fighting field,
With stalwart hand my sword to wield;
And well may claim at Odin’s shrine
The praise that waits this deed of mine.”

To which effusion Geirrida answered—

“Do these verses imply the death of Thorbiorn?”

And Thorarin, alluding to the legal process which Thorbiorn had instituted against him, resumed his song—

“Sharp bit the sword beneath the hood
Of him whose zeal the cause pursued,
And ruddy flowed the stream of death,
Ere the grim brand resumed the sheath;
Now on the buckler of the slain
The raven sits, his draught to drain,



For gore-drenched is his visage bold,
That hither came his courts to hold.”

As the consequence of this slaughter was likely to be a prosecution at the instance of the pontiff Snorro, Thorarin had now recourse to his allies and kindred, of whom the most powerful were Arkill, his maternal uncle, and Verimond, who readily premised their aid both in the field and in the Comitia, or popular meeting, in spring, before which it was to be presumed Snorro would indict Thorarin for the slaughter of his kinsman. Arkill could not, however, forbear asking his nephew how he had so far lost his usual command of temper. He replied in verse—



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“Till then, the master of my mood,
Men called me gentle, mild, and good;
But yon fierce dame’s sharp tongue might wake
In wintry den the frozen snake.”

While Thorarin spent the winter with his uncle Arnkill, he received information from his mother Geirrida that Oddo, son of her old rival Katla, was the person who had cut off the hand of his wife Ada, and that he gloried in the fact. Thorarin and Arnkill determined on instant vengeance, and, travelling rapidly, surprised the house of Katla. The undismayed sorceress, on hearing them approach, commanded her son to sit close beside her, and when the assailants entered they only beheld Katla, spinning coarse yarn from what seemed a large distaff, with her female domestics seated around her.

“My son,” she said, “is absent on a journey;” and Thorarin and Arnkill, having searched the house in vain, were obliged to depart with this answer. They had not, however, gone far before the well-known skill of Katla, in optical delusion occurred to them, and they resolved on a second and stricter search. Upon their return they found Katla in the outer apartment, who seemed to be shearing the hair of a tame kid, but was in reality cutting the locks of her son Oddo. Entering the inner room, they found the large distaff flung carelessly upon a bench. They returned yet a third time, and a third delusion was prepared for them; for Katla had given her son the appearance of a hog, which seemed to grovel upon the heap of ashes. Arnkill now seized and split the distaff, which he had at first suspected, upon which Katla tauntingly observed, that if their visits had been frequent that evening, they could not be said to be altogether ineffectual, since they had destroyed a distaff. They were accordingly returning completely baffled, when Geirrida met them, and upbraided them with carelessness in searching for their enemy.

“Return yet again,” she said, “and I will accompany you.”

Katla’s maidens, still upon the watch, announced to her the return of the hostile party, their number augmented by one who wore a blue mantle.

“Alas!” cried Katla, “it is the sorceress Geirrida, against whom spells will be of no avail.”

Immediately rising from the raised and boarded seat which she occupied, she concealed Oddo beneath it, and covered it with cushions as before, on which she stretched herself complaining of indisposition. Upon the entrance of the hostile party, Geirrida, without speaking a word, flung aside her mantle, took out a piece of sealskin, in which she wrapped up Katla’s head, and commanded that she should be held by some of the attendants, while the others broke open the boarded space, beneath which Oddo lay concealed, seized upon him, bound him, and led him away captive with his mother. Next morning Oddo was hanged, and Katla stoned to death; but not until she had confessed that, through her sorcery, she had occasioned the disaster of Gunlaugar, which first led the way to these feuds.



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THE THREE DOGS.

Once upon a time there was a king who travelled to a strange country, where he married a queen. When they had been married some time the queen had a daughter, which gave rise to much joy through the whole land, for all people liked the king, he was so kind and just. As the child was born there came an old woman into the room. She was of a strange appearance, and nobody could guess where she came from, or to what place she was going. This old woman declared that the royal child must not be taken out under the sky until it was fifteen years old. If she was she would be in danger of being carried away by the giants of the mountains.

The king, when he was told what the woman had said, heeded her words, and set a guard to see that the princess did not come out into the open air.

In a short time the queen bore another daughter, and there was again much joy in the land. The old woman once more made her appearance, and she said that the king must not let the young princess go out under the sky before she was fifteen.

The queen had a third daughter, and the third time the old woman came, warning the king respecting this child as she had done regarding the two former. The king was much distressed, for he loved his children more than anything else in the world. So he gave strict orders that the three princesses should be always kept indoors, and he commanded that every one should respect his edict.

A considerable time passed by, and the princesses grew up to be the most beautiful girls that could be seen far or near. Then a war began, and the king had to leave his home.

One day, while he was away at the seat of war, the three princesses sat at a window looking at how the sun shone on the flowers in the garden. They felt that they would like very much to go and play among the flowers, and they begged the guards to let them out for a little while to walk in the garden. The guards refused, for they were afraid of the king, but the girls begged of them so prettily and so earnestly that they could not long refuse them, so they let them do as they wished. The princesses were delighted, and ran out into the garden, but their pleasure was short-lived. Scarcely had they got into the open air when a cloud came down and carried them off, and no one could find them again, though they searched the wide world over.

The whole of the people mourned, and the king, as you may imagine, was very much grieved when, on his return home, he learned what had happened. However, there is an old saying, "What's done cannot be undone," so the king had to let matters remain as they were. As no one could advise him how to recover his daughters, the king caused proclamation to be made throughout the land that whoever should bring them

back to him from the power of the mountain-giants should have one of them for his wife,
and half the



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kingdom as a wedding present. As soon as this proclamation was made in the neighbouring countries many young warriors went out, with servants and horses, to look for the three princesses. There were at the king's court at that time two foreign princes and they started off too, to see how fortunate they might be. They put on fine armour, and took costly weapons, and they boasted of what they would do, and how they would never come back until they had accomplished their purpose.

We will leave these two princes to wander here and there in their search, and look at what was passing in another place. Deep down in the heart of a wild wood there dwelt at that time an old woman who had an only son, who used daily to attend to his mother's three hogs. As the lad roamed through the forest, he one day cut a little pipe to play on. He found much pleasure in the music, and he played so well that the notes charmed all who heard him. The boy was well built, of an honest heart, and feared nothing.

One day it chanced that, as he was sitting in the wood playing on his pipe, while his three hogs grubbed among the roots of the pine-trees, a very old man came along. He had a beard so long that it reached to his waist, and a large dog accompanied him. When the lad saw the dog he said to himself—

"I wish I had a dog like that as a companion here in the wood. Then there would be no danger."

The old man knew what the boy thought, and he said—

"I have come to ask you to let me give you my dog for one of your hogs."

The lad was ready to close the bargain, and gave a gray hog in exchange for the big dog. As he was going the old man said—

"I think you will be satisfied with your bargain. The dog is not like other dogs. His name is Hold-fast, and if you tell him to hold, hold he will whatever it may be, were it even the fiercest giant."

Then he departed, and the lad thought that for once, at all events, fortune had been kind to him.

When evening had come, the lad called his dog, and drove the hogs to his home in the forest. When the old woman learnt how her son had given away the gray hog for a dog, she flew into a great rage, and gave him a good beating. The lad begged her to be quiet, but it was of no use, for she only seemed to get the more angry. When the boy saw that it was no good pleading, he called to the dog—



“Hold fast.”

The dog at once rushed forward, and, seizing the old woman, held her so firmly that she could not move; but he did her no harm. The old woman now had to promise that she would agree to what her son had done; but she could not help thinking that she had suffered a great misfortune in losing her fat gray hog.

The next day the boy went once more to the forest with his dog and the two hogs. When he arrived there he sat down and played upon his pipe as usual, and the dog danced to the music in such a wonderful manner that it was quite amazing. While he thus sat, the old man with the gray beard came up to him out of the forest. He was accompanied by a dog as large as the former one. When the boy saw the fine animal, he said to himself—



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“I wish I had that dog as a companion in this wood. Then there would be no danger.”

The old man knew what he thought, and said—

“I have come to ask you to let me give you my dog for one of your hogs.”

The boy did not hesitate long, but agreed to the bargain. He got the big dog, and the man took the hog in exchange. As he went, the old man said—

“I think you will be satisfied with your bargain. The dog is not like other dogs. He is called Tear, and if you tell him to tear, tear he will in pieces whatever it be, even the fiercest mountain giant.”

Then he departed, and the boy was glad at heart, thinking he had made a good bargain, though he well knew his old mother would not be much pleased at it.

Towards evening he went home, and his mother was not a bit less angry than she had been on the previous day. She dared not beat her son, however, for his big dogs made her afraid. It usually happens that when women have scolded enough they at last give in. So it was now. The boy and his mother became friends once more; but the old woman thought she had sustained such a loss as could never again be made good.

The boy went to the forest again with the hog and the two dogs. He was very happy, and, sitting down on the trunk of a tree he played, as usual, on his pipe; and the dogs danced in such fine fashion that it was a treat to look at them. While the boy thus sat amusing himself, the old man with the gray beard again appeared out of the forest. He had with him a third dog as large as either of the others. When the boy saw it, he said to himself—

“I wish I had that dog as a companion in this wood. Then there would be no danger.”

The old man said—

“I came because I wished you to see my dog, for I well know you would like to have him.”

The lad was ready enough, and the bargain was made. So he got the big dog, giving his last hog for it. The old man then departed, saying—

“I think you will be satisfied with your bargain. The dog is not like other dogs. He is called Quick-ear, and so quick does he hear, that he knows all that takes place, be it ever so many miles away. Why, he hears even the trees and the grass growing in the fields!”



Then the old man went off, and the lad felt very happy, for he thought he had nothing now to be afraid of.

As evening came on the boy went home, and his mother was sorely grieved when she found her son had parted with her all; but he told her to bid farewell to sorrow, saying that he would see she had no loss. The lad spoke so well that the old woman was quite pleased. At daybreak the lad went out a-hunting with his two dogs, and in the evening he came back with as much game as he could carry. He hunted till his mother's larder was well stocked, then he bade her farewell, telling her he was going to travel to see what fortune had in store for him, and called his dogs to him.



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He travelled on over hills, and along gloomy roads, till he got deep in a dark forest. There the old man with the gray beard met him. The lad was very glad to fall in with him again, and said to him—

“Good-day, father. I thank you for our last meeting.”

“Good-day,” answered the old man. “Where are you going?”

“I am going into the world,” said the boy, “to see what fortune I shall have.”

“Go on,” said the old man, “and you will come to a royal palace; there you will have a change of fortune.”

With that they parted; but the lad paid good heed to the old man’s words, and kept on his way. When he came to a house, he played on his pipe while his dogs danced, and so he got food and shelter, and whatever he wanted.

Having travelled for some days, he at last entered a large city, through the streets of which great crowds of people were passing. The lad wondered what was the cause of all this. At last he came to where proclamation was being made, that whoever should rescue the three princesses from the hands of the mountain giants should have one of them for his wife and half the kingdom with her. Then the lad remembered what the old man had told him, and understood what he meant. He called his dogs to him, and went on till he came to the palace. There, from the time that the princesses disappeared, the place had been filled with sorrow and mourning, and the king and the queen grieved more than all the others. The boy entered the palace, and begged to be allowed to play to the king and show him his dogs. The people of the palace were much pleased at this, for they thought it might do something to make the king forget his grief. So they let him go in and show what he could do. When the king heard how he played, and saw how wonderfully his dogs danced, he was so merry that no one had seen him so during the seven long years that had passed since he lost his daughters. When the dancing was finished, the king asked the boy what he should give him as a return for the amusement he had given them.

“My lord king,” said the boy, “I am not come here for silver, goods, or gold! I ask one thing of you, that you will give me leave to go and seek the three princesses who are now in the hands of the mountain giants.” When the king heard this he knit his brow—
“So you think,” said he, “that you can restore my daughters. The task is a dangerous one, and men who were better than you have suffered in it. If, however, any one save the princesses I will never break my word.”

The lad thought these words kingly and honest. He bade farewell to the king and set out, determined that he would not rest till he had found what he wanted.



He travelled through many great countries without any extraordinary adventure, and wherever he went his dogs went with him. Quick-ear ran and heard what there was to hear in the place; Hold-fast carried the bag; and on Tear, who was the strongest of the three, the lad rode when he was tired. One day Quick-ear came running fast to his master to tell him that he had been near a high mountain, and had heard one of the princesses spinning within it. The giant, Quick-ear said, was not at home. At this the boy felt very glad, and he made haste to the mountain with his dogs. When they were come to it, Quick-ear said—



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“We have no time to lose. The giant is only ten miles away, and I can hear his horse’s golden shoes beating on the stones.”

The lad at once ordered his dogs to break in the door of the mountain, which they did. He entered, and saw a beautiful maiden who sat spinning gold thread on a spindle of gold. He stepped forward and spoke to her. She was much astonished, and said—
“Who are you, that dare to come into the giant’s hall? For seven long years have I lived here, and never during that time have I looked on a human being. Run away, for Heaven’s sake, before the giant comes, or you will lose your life.”

The boy told her his errand, and said he would await the troll’s coming. While they were talking, the giant came, riding on his gold-shod horse, and stopped outside the mountain. When he saw that the door was open he was very angry, and called out, in such a voice that the whole mountain shook to its base, “Who has broken open my door?” The boy boldly answered—

“I did it, and now I will break you too. Hold-fast, hold him fast; Tear and Quick-ear, tear him into a thousand pieces!”

Hardly had he spoken the words when the three dogs rushed forward, threw themselves on the giant, and tore him into numberless pieces. The princess was very glad, and said—

“Heaven be thanked! Now I am free.” She threw herself on the lad’s neck and kissed him. The lad would not stop in the place, so he saddled the giant’s horses, put on them all the goods and gold he found, and set off with the beautiful young princess. They travelled together for a long time, the lad waiting on the maiden with that respect and attention that such a noble lady deserved.

It chanced one day that Quick-ear, who had gone before to obtain news, came running fast to his master and informed him that he had been to a high mountain, and had heard another of the king’s daughters sitting within it spinning gold thread. The giant, he said, was not at home. The lad was well pleased to hear this, and hastened to the mountain with his three dogs. When they arrived there, Quick-ear said—

“We have no time to waste. The giant is but eight miles off. I can hear the sound of his horse’s gold shoes on the stones!”

The lad ordered the dogs to break in the door, and when they had done so he entered and found a beautiful maiden sitting in the hall, winding gold thread. The lad stepped forward and spoke to her. She was much surprised, and said—



“Who are you, who dare to come into the giant’s dwelling? Seven long years have I lived here, and never during that time have I looked on a human being. Run away, for Heaven’s sake, before the giant comes, or you will lose your life.”

The lad told her why he had come, and said he would wait for the giant’s return home.

In the midst of their talk the giant came, riding on his gold-shod horse, and stopped outside the mountain. When he saw the door was open he was in a great rage, and called out with such a voice that the mountain shook to its base.



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“Who,” said he, “has broken open my door?” The lad answered boldly—

“I did it, and now I will break you. Hold-fast, hold him fast; Tear and Quick-ear, tear him into a thousand pieces!” The dogs straightway sprang forward and threw themselves on the giant, and tore him into pieces as numberless as are the leaves which fall in the autumn. Then the princess was very glad, and said—

“Heaven be thanked! Now I am free!” She threw herself on the lad’s neck and kissed him. He led her to her sister, and one can well imagine how glad they were to meet. The lad took all the treasures that the giant’s dwelling contained, put them on the gold-shod horses, and set out with the two princesses.

They again travelled a great distance, and the youth waited on the princesses with the respect and care they deserved.

It chanced one day that Quick-ear, who went before to get news, came running fast to his master, and told him he had been near a high mountain, and had heard the third princess sitting within, spinning cloth of gold. The giant himself was not in. The youth was well pleased to hear this, and he hurried to the mountain accompanied by his dogs. When they came there, Quick-ear said—

“There is no time to be lost. The giant is not more than five miles off. I well know it. I hear the sound of his horse’s gold shoes on the stones.”

The lad told his dogs to break in the door, and they did so. When he entered the mountain he saw there a maiden, sitting and weaving cloth of gold. She was so beautiful that the lad thought another such could not be found in the world. He advanced and spoke to her. The young princess was much astonished, and said—

“Who are you, who dare to come into the giant’s hall? For seven long years have I lived here, and never during that time have I looked on a human being. For Heaven’s sake,” added she, “run away before the giant comes, or he will kill you!”

The lad, however, was brave, and said that he would lay down his life for the beautiful princess.

In the middle of their talk home came the giant, riding on his horse with the golden shoes, and stopped at the mountain. When he came in and saw what unwelcome visitors were there he was very much afraid, for he knew what had happened to his brethren. He thought it best to be careful and cunning, for he dared not act openly. He began therefore with fine words, and was very smooth and amiable. He told the princess to dress meat, so that he might entertain the guest, and behaved in such a friendly manner that the lad was perfectly deceived, and forgot to be on his guard. He



sat down at the table with the giant. The princess wept in secret, and the dogs were very uneasy, but no one noticed it.

When the giant and his guest had finished the meal, the youth said—

“I am no longer hungry. Give me something to drink.”

“There is,” said the giant, “a spring up in the mountain which runs with sparkling wine, but I have no one to fetch of it.”



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“If that is all,” said the lad, “one of my dogs can go up there.”

The giant laughed in his false heart when he heard that, for what he wanted was that the lad should send away his dogs. The lad told Hold-fast to go for the wine, and the giant gave him a large jug. The dog went, but one might see that he did so very unwillingly.

Time went on and on, but the dog did not come back. After some time the giant said—

“I wonder why the dog is so long away. It might, perhaps, be as well to let another dog go to help him. He has to go a long distance, and the jug is a heavy one to carry.”

The lad, suspecting no trickery, fell in with the giant’s suggestion, and told Tear to go and see why Hold-fast did not come. The dog wagged his tail and did not want to leave his master, but he noticed it, and drove him off to the spring. The giant laughed to himself, and the princess wept, but the lad did not mark it, being very merry, jested with his entertainer, and did not dream of any danger.

A long time passed, but neither the wine nor the dogs appeared.

“I can well see,” said the giant, “that your dogs do not do what you tell them, or we should not sit here thirsty. It seems to me it would be best to send Quick-ear to ascertain why they don’t come back.”

The lad was nettled at that, and ordered his third dog to go in haste to the spring. Quick-ear did not want to go, but whined and crept to his master’s feet. Then the lad became angry, and drove him away. The dog had to obey, so away he set in great haste to the top of the mountain. When he reached it, it happened to him as it had to the others. There arose a high wall around him, and he was made a prisoner by the giant’s sorcery.

When all the three dogs were gone, the giant stood up, put on a different look, and gripped his bright sword which hung upon the wall.

“Now will I avenge my brethren,” said he, “and you shall die this instant, for you are in my hands.”

The lad was frightened, and repented that he had parted with his dogs.

“I will not ask my life,” said he, “for I must die some day. I only ask one thing, that I may say my *Paternoster* and play a psalm on my pipe. That is the custom in my country.”

The giant granted him his wish, but said he would not wait long. The lad knelt down, and devoutly said his *Paternoster*, and began to play upon his pipe so that it was heard over hill and dale. That instant the magic lost its power, and the dogs were once more



set free. They came down like a blast of wind, and rushed into the mountain. Then the lad sprang up and cried—

“Hold-fast, hold him; Tear and Quick-ear, tear him into a thousand pieces.”

The dogs flew on the giant, and tore him into countless shreds. Then the lad took all the treasures in the mountain, harnessed the giant’s horses to a golden chariot, and made haste to be gone.



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As may well be imagined, the young princesses were very glad at being thus saved, and they thanked the lad for having delivered them from the power of mountain giants. He himself fell deep in love with the youngest princess, and they vowed to be true and faithful. So they travelled, with mirth and jest and great gladness, and the lad waited on the princesses with the respect and care they deserved. As they went on, the princesses played with the lad's hair, and each one hung her finger-ring in his long locks as a keepsake.

One day as they were journeying, they came up with two wanderers who were going the same way. They had on tattered clothes, their feet were sore, and altogether one would have thought they had come a long distance. The lad stopped his chariot and asked them who they were and where they came from. The strangers said they were two princes who had gone out to look for the three maidens who had been carried off to the mountains. They had, however, searched in vain, so they had now to go home more like beggars than princes.

When the lad heard that, he had pity on the two wanderers, and he asked them to go with him in the beautiful chariot. The princes gave him many thanks for the favour. So they travelled on together till they came to the land over which the father of the princesses ruled.

Now when the princes heard how the poor lad had rescued the princesses, they were filled with envy, thinking how they themselves had wandered to no purpose. They considered how they could get rid of him, and obtain the honour and rewards for themselves. So one day they suddenly set on him, seized him by the throat, and nearly strangled him. Then they threatened to kill the princesses unless they took an oath not to reveal what they had done, and they, being in the princes' power, did not dare to refuse. However, they were very sorry for the youth who had risked his life for them, and the youngest princess mourned him with all her heart, and would not be comforted.

After having done this, the princes went on to the king's demesnes, and one can well imagine how glad the king was to once more see his three daughters.

Meanwhile the poor lad lay in the forest as if he were dead. He was not, however, forsaken, for the three dogs lay down by him, kept him warm, and licked his wounds. They attended to him till he got his breath again, and came once more to life. When he had regained life and strength, he began his journey, and came, after having endured many hardships, to the king's demesnes, where the princesses lived.

When he went into the palace, he marked that the whole place was filled with mirth and joy, and in the royal hall he heard dancing and the sound of harps. The lad was much astonished, and asked what it all meant.

“You have surely come from a distance,” said the servant, “not to know that the king has got back his daughters from the mountain giants. The two elder princesses are married to-day.”

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The lad asked about the youngest princess, whether she was to be married. The servant said she would have no one, but wept continually, and no one could find out the reason for her sorrow. Then the lad was glad, for he well knew that his love was faithful and true to him.

He went up into the guard-room, and sent a message to the king that a guest had come who prayed that he might add to the wedding mirth by exhibiting his dogs. The king was pleased, and ordered that the stranger should be well received. When the lad came into the hall, the wedding guests much admired his smartness and his manly form, and they all thought they had never before seen so brave a young man. When the three princesses saw him they knew him at once, rose from the table, and ran into his arms. Then the princes thought they had better not stay there, for the princesses told how the lad had saved them, and how all had befallen. As a proof of the truth of what they said, they showed their rings in the lad's hair.

When the king knew how the two foreign princes had acted so treacherously and basely he was much enraged, and ordered that they should be driven off his demesnes with disgrace.

The brave youth was welcomed with great honour, as, indeed, he deserved, and he was, the same day, married to the youngest princess. When the king died, the youth was chosen ruler over the land, and made a brave king. There he yet lives with his beautiful queen, and there he governs prosperously to this day.

I know no more about him.

THE LEGEND OF THORGUNNA.

A ship from Iceland chanced to winter in a haven near Helgafels. Among the passengers was a woman named Thorgunna, a native of the Hebrides, who was reported by the sailors to possess garments and household furniture of a fashion far surpassing those used in Iceland. Thurida, sister of the pontiff Snorro, and wife of Thorodd, a woman of a vain and covetous disposition, attracted by these reports, made a visit to the stranger, but could not prevail upon her to display her treasures. Persisting, however, in her inquiries, she pressed Thorgunna to take up her abode at the house of Thorodd. The Hebridean reluctantly assented, but added, that as she could labour at every usual kind of domestic industry, she trusted in that manner to discharge the obligation she might lie under to the family, without giving any part of her property in recompense of her lodging. As Thurida continued to urge her request, Thorgunna accompanied her to Froda, the house of Thorodd, where the seamen deposited a huge chest and cabinet, containing the property of her new guest, which Thurida viewed with curious and covetous eyes. So soon as they had pointed out to Thorgunna the place assigned for her bed, she opened the chest, and took forth such

an embroidered bed coverlid, and such a splendid and complete set of tapestry hangings, and bed furniture of English linen, interwoven with silk, as had never been seen in Iceland.



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“Sell to me,” said the covetous matron, “this fair bed furniture.”

“Believe me,” answered Thorgunna, “I will not lie upon straw in order to feed thy pomp and vanity;” an answer which so greatly displeased Thurida that she never again repeated her request. Thorgunna, to whose character subsequent events added something of a mystical solemnity, is described as being a woman of a tall and stately appearance, of a dark complexion, and having a profusion of black hair. She was advanced in age; assiduous in the labours of the field and of the loom; a faithful attendant upon divine worship; grave, silent, and solemn in domestic society. She had little intercourse with the household of Thorodd, and showed particular dislike to two of its inmates. These were Thorer, who, having lost a leg in the skirmish between Thorbiorn and Thorarin the Black, was called Thorer-Widlegr (wooden-leg), from the substitute he had adopted; and his wife, Thorgrima, called Galldra-Kinna (wicked sorceress), from her supposed skill in enchantments. Kiartan, the son of Thurida, a boy of excellent promise, was the only person of the household to whom Thorgunna showed much affection; and she was much vexed at times when the childish petulance of the boy made an indifferent return to her kindness.

After this mysterious stranger had dwelt at Froda for some time, and while she was labouring in the hay-field with other members of the family, a sudden cloud from the northern mountain led Thorodd to anticipate a heavy shower. He instantly commanded the hay-workers to pile up in ricks the quantity which each had been engaged in turning to the wind. It was afterwards remembered that Thorgunna did not pile up her portion, but left it spread on the field. The cloud approached with great celerity, and sank so heavily around the farm, that it was scarce possible to see beyond the limits of the field. A heavy shower next descended, and so soon as the clouds broke away and the sun shone forth it was observed that it had rained blood. That which fell upon the ricks of the other labourers soon dried up, but what Thorgunna had wrought upon remained wet with gore. The unfortunate Hebridean, appalled at the omen, betook herself to her bed, and was seized with a mortal illness. On the approach of death she summoned Thorodd, her landlord, and intrusted to him the disposition of her property and effects.

“Let my body,” said she, “be transported to Skalholt, for my mind presages that in that place shall be founded the most distinguished church in this island. Let my golden ring be given to the priests who shall celebrate my obsequies, and do thou indemnify thyself for the funeral charges out of my remaining effects. To thy wife I bequeath my purple mantle, in order that, by this sacrifice to her avarice, I may secure the right of disposing of the rest of my effects at my own pleasure. But for my bed, with its coverings, hangings, and furniture, I entreat they may be all consigned to the flames. I do not desire this because I envy any one the possession of these things after my death, but because I wish those evils to be avoided which I plainly foresee will happen if my will be altered in the slightest particular.”



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Thorodd promised faithfully to execute this extraordinary testament in the most exact manner. Accordingly, so soon as Thorgunna was dead, her faithful executor prepared a pile for burning her splendid bed. Thurida entered, and learned with anger and astonishment the purpose of these preparations. To the remonstrances of her husband she answered that the menaces of future danger were only caused by Thorgunna's selfish envy, who did not wish any one should enjoy her treasures after her decease. Then, finding Thorodd inaccessible to argument, she had recourse to caresses and blandishments, and at length extorted permission to separate from the rest of the bed-furniture the tapestried curtains and coverlid; the rest was consigned to the flames, in obedience to the will of the testator. The body of Thorgunna, being wrapped in new linen and placed in a coffin, was next to be transported through the precipices and morasses of Iceland to the distant district she had assigned for her place of sepulture. A remarkable incident occurred on the way. The transporters of the body arrived at evening, late, weary, and drenched with rain, in a house called Nether-Ness, where the niggard hospitality of the proprietor only afforded them house-room, without any supply of food or fuel. But, so soon as they entered, an unwonted noise was heard in the kitchen of the mansion, and the figure of a woman, soon recognised to be the deceased Thorgunna, was seen busily employed in preparing victuals. Their inhospitable landlord, being made acquainted with this frightful circumstance, readily agreed to supply every refreshment which was necessary, on which the vision instantly disappeared. The apparition having become public, they had no reason to ask twice for hospitality as they proceeded on their journey, and they came to Skalholt, where Thorgunna, with all due ceremonies of religion, was deposited quietly in the grave. But the consequences of the breach of her testament were felt severely at Froda.

The dwelling at Froda was a simple and patriarchal structure, built according to the fashion used by the wealthy among the Icelanders. The apartments were very large, and a part boarded off contained the beds of the family. On either side was a sort of store-room, one of which contained meal, the other dried fish. Every evening large fires were lighted in this apartment for dressing the victuals; and the domestics of the family usually sat around them for a considerable time, until supper was prepared. On the night when the conductors of Thorgunna's funeral returned to Froda, there appeared, visible to all who were present, a meteor, or spectral appearance, resembling a half-moon, which glided around the boarded walls of the mansion in an opposite direction to the course of the sun, and continued to perform its revolutions until the domestics retired to rest. This apparition was renewed every night during a whole week, and was pronounced by Thorer with the wooden leg to presage



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pestilence or mortality. Shortly after a herdsman showed signs of mental alienation, and gave various indications of having sustained the persecution of evil demons. This man was found dead in his bed one morning, and then commenced a scene of ghost-seeing unheard of in the annals of superstition. The first victim was Thorer, who had presaged the calamity. Going out of doors one evening, he was grappled by the spectre of the deceased shepherd as he attempted to re-enter the house. His wooden leg stood him in poor stead in such an encounter; he was hurled to the earth, and so fearfully beaten, that he died in consequence of the bruises. Thorer was no sooner dead than his ghost associated itself to that of the herdsman, and joined him in pursuing and assaulting the inhabitants of Froda. Meantime an infectious disorder spread fast among them, and several of the bondsmen died one after the other. Strange portents were seen within-doors, the meal was displaced and mingled, and the dried fish flung about in a most alarming manner, without any visible agent. At length, while the servants were forming their evening circle round the fire, a spectre, resembling the head of a seal-fish, was seen to emerge out of the pavement of the room, bending its round black eyes full on the tapestried bed-curtains of Thorgunna. Some of the domestics ventured to strike at this figure, but, far from giving way, it rather erected itself further from the floor, until Kiartan, who seemed to have a natural predominance over these supernatural prodigies, seizing a huge forge-hammer, struck the seal repeatedly on the head, and compelled it to disappear, forcing it down into the floor, as if he had driven a stake into the earth. This prodigy was found to intimate a new calamity. Thorodd, the master of the family, had some time before set forth on a voyage to bring home a cargo of dried fish; but in crossing the river Enna the skiff was lost and he perished with the servants who attended him. A solemn funeral feast was held at Froda, in memory of the deceased, when, to the astonishment of the guests, the apparition of Thorodd and his followers seemed to enter the apartment dripping with water. Yet this vision excited less horror than might have been expected, for the Icelanders, though nominally Christians, retained, among other pagan superstitions, a belief that the spectres of such drowned persons as had been favourably received by the goddess Rana were wont to show themselves at their funeral feast. They saw, therefore, with some composure, Thorodd and his dripping attendants plant themselves by the fire, from which all mortal guests retreated to make room for them. It was supposed this apparition would not be renewed after the conclusion of the festival. But so far were their hopes disappointed, that, so soon as the mourning guests had departed, the fires being lighted, Thorodd and his comrades marched in on one side, drenched as before with water; on the other entered Thorer,



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heading all those who had died in the pestilence, and who appeared covered with dust. Both parties seized the seats by the fire, while the half-frozen and terrified domestics spent the night without either light or warmth. The same phenomenon took place the next night, though the fires had been lighted in a separate house, and at length Kiartan was obliged to compound matters with the spectres by kindling a large fire for them in the principal apartment, and one for the family and domestics in a separate hut. This prodigy continued during the whole feast of Jol. Other portents also happened to appal this devoted family: the contagious disease again broke forth, and when any one fell a sacrifice to it his spectre was sure to join the troop of persecutors, who had now almost full possession of the mansion of Froda. Thorgrima Galldrakinna, wife of Thorer, was one of these victims, and, in short, of thirty servants belonging to the household, eighteen died, and five fled for fear of the apparitions, so that only seven remained in the service of Kiartan.

Kiartan had now recourse to the advice of his maternal uncle Snorro, in consequence of whose counsel, which will perhaps appear surprising to the reader, judicial measures were instituted against the spectres. A Christian priest was, however, associated with Thordo Kausa, son of Snorro, and with Kiartan, to superintend and sanctify the proceedings. The inhabitants were regularly summoned to attend upon the inquest, as in a cause between man and man, and the assembly was constituted before the gate of the mansion, just as the spectres had assumed their wonted station by the fire. Kiartan boldly ventured to approach them, and, snatching a brand from the fire, he commanded the tapestry belonging to Thorgunna to be carried out of doors, set fire to it, and reduced it to ashes with all the other ornaments of her bed, which had been so inconsiderately preserved at the request of Thurida. A tribunal being then constituted with the usual legal solemnities, a charge was preferred by Kiartan against Thorer with the wooden leg, by Thordo Kausa against Thorodd, and by others chosen as accusers against the individual spectres present, accusing them of molesting the mansion, and introducing death and disease among its inhabitants. All the solemn rites of judicial procedure were observed on this singular occasion; evidence was adduced, charges given, and the cause formally decided. It does not appear that the ghosts put themselves on their defence, so that sentence of ejection was pronounced against them individually in due and legal form. When Thorer heard the judgment, he arose, and saying—

“I have sat while it was lawful for me to do so,” left the apartment by the door opposite to that at which the judicial assembly was constituted. Each of the spectres, as it heard its individual sentence, left the place, saying something which indicated its unwillingness to depart, until Thorodd himself was solemnly called on to leave.



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“We have here no longer,” said he, “a peaceful dwelling, therefore will we remove.”

Kiartan then entered the hall with his followers, and the priest, with holy water, and celebration of a solemn mass, completed the conquest over the goblins, which had been commenced by the power and authority of the Icelandic law.

THE LITTLE GLASS SHOE.

A peasant, named John Wilde, who lived in Rodenkirchen, found, one time, a little glass shoe on one of the hills, where the little people used to dance. He clapped it instantly in his pocket, and ran away with it, keeping his hand as close on his pocket as if he had a dove in it, for he knew he had found a treasure which the underground people must redeem at any price.

Others say that John Wilde lay in ambush one night for the underground people, and snatched an opportunity to pull off one of their shoes by stretching himself there with a brandy bottle beside him, and acting like one that was dead drunk, for he was a very cunning man, not over scrupulous in his morals, and had taken in many a one by his craftiness, and, on this account, his name was in no good repute among his neighbours, who, to say the truth, were willing to have as little to do with him as possible. Many hold, too, that he was acquainted with forbidden acts, and used to carry on an intercourse with the fiends and old women that raised storms, and such like.

However, be this as it may, when John had got the shoe he lost no time in letting the folk that dwell under the ground know that he had it. At midnight he went to the Nine-hills, and cried with all his might—

“John Wilde of Rodenkirchen has got a beautiful glass shoe. Who will buy it? who will buy it?” for he knew that the little one who had lost the shoe must go barefoot till he got it again; and that is no trifle, for the little people have generally to walk upon very hard and stony ground.

John’s advertisement was speedily attended to. The little fellow who had lost the shoe made no delay in setting about redeeming it. The first free day he got that he might come out in the daylight, he came as a respectable merchant, knocked at John Wilde’s door, and asked if John had not got a glass shoe to sell:

“For,” says he, “they are an article now in great demand, and are sought for in every market.”

John replied that it was true that he had a very pretty little glass shoe; but it was so small that even a dwarf’s foot would be squeezed in it, and that a person must be made on purpose to suit it before it could be of use. For all that, it was an extraordinary shoe,



a valuable shoe, and a dear shoe, and it was not every merchant that could afford to pay for it.

The merchant asked to see it, and when he had examined it—

“Glass shoes,” said he, “are not by any means such rare articles, my good friend, as you think here in Rodenkirchen, because you do not happen to go much into the world. However,” said he, after humming a little, “I will give you a good price for it, because I happen to have the very fellow of it.”



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He bid the countryman a thousand dollars for it.

“A thousand dollars are money, my father used to say when he drove fat oxen to market,” replied John Wilde, in a mocking tone; “but it will not leave my hands for that shabby price, and, for my own part, it may ornament the foot of my daughter’s doll! Hark ye, my friend, I have heard a sort of little song sung about the glass shoe, and it is not for a parcel of dirt it will go out of my hands. Tell me now, my good fellow, should you happen to know the knack of it, how in every furrow I make when I am ploughing I may find a ducat? If not, the shoe is still mine; and you may inquire for glass shoes at those other markets.”

The merchant made still a great many attempts, and twisted and turned in every direction to get the shoe; but when he found the farmer inflexible, he agreed to what John desired, and swore to the performance of it. Cunning John believed him, and gave him up the glass shoe, for he knew right well with whom he had to do. So, the business being ended, away went the merchant with his glass shoe.

Without a moment’s delay John repaired to his stable, got ready his horses and his plough, and went out to the field. He selected a piece of ground where he would have the shortest turns possible, and began to plough. Hardly had the plough turned up the first sod when up sprang a ducat out of the ground, and it was the same with every fresh furrow he made. There was now no end of his ploughing, and John Wilde soon bought eight new horses, and put them into the stable to the eight he already had, and their mangers were never without plenty of oats in them, that he might be able every two hours to yoke two fresh horses, and so be enabled to drive them the faster.

John was now insatiable in ploughing. Every morning he was out before sunrise, and many a time he ploughed on till after midnight. Summer and winter it was plough, plough with him ever-more, except when the ground was frozen as hard as a stone. He always ploughed by himself, and never suffered any one to go out with him, or to come to him when he was at work, for John understood too well the nature of his crop to let people see for what it was he ploughed so constantly.

However, it fared far worse with him than with his horses, who ate good oats, and were regularly changed and relieved, for he grew pale and meagre by reason of his continual working and toiling. His wife and children had no longer any comfort for him. He never went to the ale-house or to the club. He withdrew himself from every one, and scarcely ever spoke a single word, but went about silent and wrapped up in his own thoughts. All the day long he toiled for his ducats, and at night he had to count them, and to plan and meditate how he might find out a still swifter kind of plough.

His wife and the neighbours lamented over his strange conduct, his dulness and melancholy, and began to think he was grown foolish. Everybody pitied his wife and children, for they imagined the numerous horses that he kept in his stable, and the

preposterous mode of agriculture he pursued, with his unnecessary and superfluous ploughing, must soon leave him without house or land.



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Their anticipations, however, were not fulfilled. True it is, the poor man never enjoyed a happy or contented hour since he began to plough the ducats up out of the ground. The old saying held good in his case, that he who gives himself up to the pursuit of gold is half-way in the claws of the evil one. Flesh and blood cannot bear perpetual labour, and John Wilde did not long hold out against his running through the furrows day and night. He got through the first spring; but one day in the second he dropped down at the tail of the plough like an exhausted November fly. Out of the pure thirst for gold he was wasted away and dried up to nothing, whereas he had been a very strong and hearty man the day the shoe of the little underground man fell into his hands.

His wife, however, found he had left a great treasure—two great nailed-up chests full of good new ducats; and his sons purchased large estates for themselves, and became lords and noblemen.

But what good did all that to poor John Wilde?

HOW LOKI WAGERED HIS HEAD.

Loki, the son of Laufey, out of mischief cut off all the hair of Sif. When Thor discovered this he seized Loki, and would have broken every bone in his body, only he swore that he would get the black dwarfs to make hair of gold for Sif, which should grow like any other hair.

Loki then went to the dwarfs that are called the sons of Ivallda. They first made the hair, which, as soon as it was put on the head, grew like natural hair. Then they made the ship Skidbladnir, which always had the wind with it wherever it would sail. Lastly, they made the spear Gugnir, which always hit its mark in battle.

Then Loki wagered his head against the dwarf Brock, that his brother, Eitri, could not forge three such valuable things as these. They went to the forge. Eitri set the bellows to the fire, and bid his brother, Brock, blow. While he was blowing there came a fly that settled on his hand and bit him, but he blew without stopping till the smith took the work out of the fire, and it was a boar, and its bristles were of gold.

Eitri then put gold into the fire, and bid his brother not stop blowing till he came back. He went away, and the fly came and settled on Brock's neck, and bit him more severely than before, but he blew on till the smith came back, and took out of the fire the gold ring which is called Draupnir.

Then he put iron into the fire, and bid Brock blow, and said that if he stopped blowing all the work would be lost. The fly settled between Brock's eyes, and bit so hard that the blood ran down so that he could not see. So, when the bellows were down, he caught at the fly in all haste, and tore off its wings. When the smith came he said that all that

was in the fire was nearly spoiled. Then he took out of it the hammer, Mjolnir. He then gave all the things to his brother Brock, and bade him go with them to Asgard, and settle the wager.



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Loki produced his articles, and Odin, Thor, and Frey were the judges. Then Loki gave to Odin the spear Gungnir, and to Thor the hair that Sif was to have, and to Frey Skidbladnir, and told them what virtues those things possessed. Brock took out his articles, and gave to Odin the ring, and told him that every ninth night there would drop from it eight other rings as valuable as itself. To Frey he gave the boar, and said that it would run through air and water, by night and by day, better than any horse, and that never was there night so dark that the way by which he went would not be light from his hide. The hammer he gave to Thor, and said that it would never fail to hit a troll, and that at whatever he threw it, it would never miss the mark, and that Thor could never throw it so far that it would not return to his hand. It would also, when Thor chose, become so small that he could put it in his pocket. The only fault of the hammer was that its handle was a little too short.

Their judgment was that the hammer was the best of all the things before them, and that the dwarf had won his wager. Then Loki prayed hard not to lose his head, but the dwarf said that could not be.

“Catch me, then!” said Loki, and when the dwarf sought to catch him he was far away, for Loki had shoes with which he could run through air and water. Then the dwarf prayed Thor to catch him, and he did so. The dwarf now proceeded to cut off his head, but Loki objected that he was to have the head only, and not the neck. As he would not be quiet, the dwarf took a knife and a thong, and began to sew his mouth up; but the knife was bad, so the dwarf wished that he had his brother’s awl, and as soon as he wished it, it was there. So he sewed Loki’s lips together.

THE ADVENTURES OF JOHN DIETRICH.

There once lived in Ramin an honest, industrious man, named James Dietrich. He had several children, all of a good disposition, especially the youngest, whose name was John. John Dietrich was a handsome, smart boy, diligent at school, and obedient at home. His great passion was for hearing stories, and whenever he met any one who was well stored he never let him go till he had heard them all.

When John was about eight years old he was sent to spend a summer with his uncle, a farmer, in Rodenkirchen. Here John had to keep cows with other boys, and they used to drive them to graze about the Nine-hills. There was an old cowherd, one Klas Starkwolt who used frequently to join the boys, and then they would sit down together and tell stories. Klas abounded in these, and he became John Dietrich’s dearest friend. In particular, he knew a number of stories of the Nine-hills, and the underground people in the old times, when the giants disappeared from the country and the little ones came into the hills. These tales John swallowed so eagerly that he thought of nothing else, and was for ever talking of golden cups, and crowns, and glass shoes, and pockets full



of ducats, and gold rings, and diamond coronets, and snow-white brides, and such like. Old Klas used often to shake his head at him, and say—



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“John! John! what are you about? The spade and scythe will be your sceptre and crown, and your bride will wear a garland of rosemary, and a gown of striped drill.”

Still John almost longed to get into the Nine-hills, for Klas told him that every one who by luck or cunning should get a cap of the little ones might go down with safety, and instead of their making a servant of him, he would be their master. The person whose cap he got would be his servant, and obey all his commands.

St. John's day, when the days were longest and the nights shortest, was now come. Old and young kept the holiday, had all sorts of plays, and told all kinds of stories. John could now no longer contain himself, but the day after the festival he slipt away to the Nine-hills, and when it grew dark laid himself down on the top of the highest of them, where Klas had told him the underground people had their principal dancing-place. John lay quite still from ten till twelve at night. At last it struck twelve. Immediately there was a ringing and a singing in the hills, and then a whispering and a lisping, and a whiz and a buzz all about him, for the little people were now, some whirling round and round in the dance, and others sporting and tumbling about in the moonshine, and playing a thousand merry pranks and tricks. He felt a secret dread come over him at this whispering and buzzing, for he could see nothing of them, as the caps they wore made them invisible, but he lay quite still with his face in the grass, and his eyes fast shut, snoring a little, just as if he were asleep. Now and then he ventured to open his eyes a little and peep out, but not the slightest trace of them could he see, though it was bright moonlight.

It was not long before three of the underground people came jumping up to where he was lying, but they took no heed of him, and flung their brown caps up into the air, and caught them from one another. At length one snatched the cap out of the hand of another and flung it away. It flew direct, and fell upon John's head. The moment he felt it he caught hold of it, and, standing up, bid farewell to sleep. He flung his cap about for joy and made the little silver bell of it jingle, then set it upon his head, and—oh wonderful! that instant he saw the countless and merry swarm of the little people.

The three little men came sliily up to him, and thought by their nimbleness to get back the cap, but he held his prize fast, and they saw clearly that nothing was to be done in this way with him, for in size and strength John was a giant in comparison with these little fellows, who hardly came up to his knee. The owner of the cap now came up very humbly to the finder, and begged, in as supplicating a tone as if his life depended upon it, that he would give him back his cap.

“No,” said John, “you sly little rogue, you will get the cap no more. That's not the sort of thing one gives away for buttered cake. I should be in a nice way with you if I had not something of yours, but now you have no power over me, but must do what I please. I will go down with you and see how you live down below, and you shall be my servant.

Nay, no grumbling. You know you must. I know that just as well as you do, for Klas Starkwolt told it to me often and often!"



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The little man made as if he had not heard or understood one word of all this. He began his crying and whining over again, and wept and screamed and howled most piteously for his little cap. John, however, cut the matter short by saying—

“Have done. You are my servant, and I intend to make a trip with you.”

So he gave up, especially as the others told him there was no remedy.

John now flung away his old hat, and put on the cap, and set it firm on his head lest it should slip off or fly away, for all his power lay in the cap. He lost no time in trying its virtues, and commanded his new servant to fetch him food and drink. The servant ran away like the wind, and in a second was there again with bottles of wine, and bread, and rich fruits. So John ate and drank, and looked at the sports and dancing of the little ones, and it pleased him right well, and he behaved himself stoutly and wisely, as if he had been a born master.

When the cock had now crowed for the third time, and the little larks had made their first twirl in the sky, and the infant light appeared in solitary white streaks in the east, then it went hush, hush, hush, through the bushes and flowers and stalks, and the hills rent again, and opened up, and the little men went down. John gave close attention to everything, and found that it was exactly as he had been told, and, behold! on the top of the hill, where they had just been dancing, and where all was full of grass and flowers, as people see it by day, there rose of a sudden, when the retreat was sounded, a bright glass point. Whoever wanted to go in stepped upon this. It opened, and he glided gently in, the grass closing again after him; and when they had all entered it vanished, and there was no further trace of it to be seen. Those who descended through the glass point sank quite gently into a wide silver tun, which held them all, and could have easily harboured a thousand such little people. John and his man went down into such a one along with several others, all of whom screamed out, and prayed him not to tread on them, for if his weight came on them they were dead men. He was, however, careful, and acted in a very friendly way towards them. Several tuns of this kind went up and down after each other, until all were in. They hung by long silver chains, which were drawn and hung without.

In his descent John was amazed at the brilliancy of the walls between which the tun glided down. They were all, as it were, beset with pearls and diamonds, glittering and sparkling brightly, and below him he heard the most beautiful music tinkling at a distance, so that he did not know what was become of him, and from excess of pleasure he fell fast asleep.

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He slept a long time, and when he awoke he found himself in the most beautiful bed that could be, such as he had never seen the like of in his father's house, and it was in the prettiest chamber in the world, and his servant was beside him with a fan to keep away the flies and gnats. He had hardly opened his eyes when his little servant brought him a basin and towel, and held him the nicest new clothes of brown silk to put on, most beautifully made. With these was a pair of new black shoes with red ribbons, such as John had never beheld in Rambin or in Rodinkirchen either. There were also there several pairs of beautiful shining glass shoes, such as are only used on great occasions. John was, as we may well suppose, delighted to have such clothes to wear, and he put them upon him joyfully. His servant then flew like lightning, and returned with a breakfast of wine and milk, and beautiful white bread and fruits, and such other things as boys are fond of. He now perceived every moment more and more, that Klas Starkwolt, the old cowherd, knew what he was talking about, for the splendour and magnificence he saw here surpassed anything he had ever dreamt of. His servant, too, was the most obedient one possible, a nod or a sign was enough for him, for he was as wise as a bee, as all these little people are by nature. John's bedchamber was all covered with emeralds and other precious stones, and in the ceiling was a diamond as big as a nine-pin bowl, that gave light to the whole chamber. In this place they have neither sun nor moon nor stars to give them light, neither do they use lamps or candlesticks of any kind, but they live in the midst of precious stones, and have the purest of gold and silver in abundance, and the skill to make it light both by day and night, though indeed, properly speaking, as there is no sun there, there is no distinction between day and night, and they reckon only by weeks. They set the brightest and clearest precious stones in their dwellings, and in the ways and passages leading underground, and in the places where they had their large halls, and their dances and their feasts, where they sparkled so as to make it eternal day.

When John had finished breakfast, his servant opened a little door in the wall, where was a closet with the most beautiful silver and gold cups and dishes and other vessels and baskets filled with ducats and boxes of jewels and precious stones. There were also charming pictures, and the most delightful books he had seen in the whole course of his life.

John spent the morning looking at these things, and when it was midday a bell rang, and his servant said—

“Will you dine alone, sir, or with the large company?”

“With the large company, to be sure,” replied John. So his servant led him out. John, however, saw nothing but solitary halls lighted up with precious stones, and here and there little men and women, who appeared to him to glide in and out of the clefts and fissures of the rocks. Wondering what it was the bells rang for, he said to his servant—



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“But where is the company?”

Scarcely had he spoken when the hall they were in opened out to a great extent, and a canopy set with diamonds and precious stones was drawn over it. At the same moment he saw an immense throng of nicely dressed little men and women pouring in through several open doors. The floor opened in several places, and tables, covered with the most beautiful ware, and the most luscious meats and fruits and wines, placed themselves beside each other, and the chairs arranged themselves along the tables, and then the men and women took their seats.

The principal persons now came forward and bowed to John, and led him to their table, where they placed him among their most beautiful maidens, a distinction which pleased John well. The party, too, was very merry, for the underground people are extremely lively and cheerful, and can never stay long quiet. Then the most charming music sounded over their heads, and beautiful birds, flying about, sang most sweetly, and these were not real birds but artificial ones which the little men make so ingeniously that they can fly about and sing like natural ones.

The servants of both sexes who waited at table and handed about the golden cups, and the silver and crystal baskets with fruit, were children belonging to this world, whom some casualty or other had thrown among the underground people, and who, having come down without securing any pledge, were fallen into the power of the little ones. These were differently clad. The boys and girls were dressed in short white coats and jackets, and wore glass shoes so fine that their step could never be heard, with blue caps on their heads, and silver belts round their waists.

John at first pitied them, seeing how they were forced to run about and wait on the little people, but as they looked cheerful and happy, and were handsomely dressed, and had such rosy cheeks, he said to himself—“After all, they are not so badly off, and I was myself much worse when I had to be running after the cows and bullocks. To be sure I am now a master here, and they are servants, but there is no help for it. Why were they so foolish as to let themselves be taken and not get some pledge beforehand? At any rate the time must come when they will be set at liberty, and they will certainly not be longer than fifty years here.”

With these thoughts he consoled himself, and sported and played away with his little play-fellows, and ate, and drank, and made his servant tell him stories, for he would know everything exactly.

They sat at table about two hours. The principal person then rang a bell, and the tables and chairs all vanished in a whiff, leaving all the company on their feet. The birds now struck up a most lively air, and the little people danced their rounds most merrily. When they were done, the joyous sets jumped and leaped, and whirled themselves round and round, as if the world was grown dizzy. The pretty



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girls who sat next John caught hold of him and whirled him about, and, without making any resistance, he danced round and round with them for two good hours. Every afternoon while he remained there he used to dance thus merrily with them, and, to the last hour of his life, he used to speak of it with the greatest glee. His language was—that the joys of heaven and the songs and music of the angels, which the righteous hope to enjoy there, might be excessively beautiful, but that he could conceive nothing to surpass the music and the dancing under the earth, the beautiful and lively little men, the wonderful birds in the branches, and the tinkling silver bells in their caps.

“No one,” said he, “who has not seen and heard it, can form any idea whatever of it.”

When the music and dancing were over it might be about four o'clock. The little people then disappeared, and went each about his own business or pleasure. After supper they sported and danced in the same way, and at midnight, especially on star-light nights, they slipped out of their hills to dance in the open air. John used then to say his prayers, a duty he never neglected either in the evening or in the morning, and go to sleep.

For the first week John was in the glass hill, he only went from his chamber to the great hall and back again. After the first week, however, he began to walk about, making his servant show and explain everything to him. He found that there were in that place the most beautiful walks in which he might ramble about for miles, in all directions, without ever finding an end to them, so immensely large was the hill in which the little people lived, and yet outwardly it seemed but a little place, with a few bushes and trees growing on it.

It was extraordinary that, between the meads and fields, which were thick sown with hills and lakes and islands, and ornamented with trees and flowers in great variety, there ran, as it were, small lanes, through which, as through crystal rocks, one was obliged to pass to come to any new place; and the single meads and fields were often a mile long, and the flowers were so brilliant and so fragrant, and the songs of the numerous birds so sweet, that John had never seen anything on earth like it. There was a breeze, and yet one did not feel the wind. It was quite clear and bright, and yet there was no heat. The waves were dashing, still there was no danger, and the most beautiful little barks and canoes came, like white swans, when one wanted to cross the water, and went backwards and forwards of themselves. Whence all this came no one knew, nor could John's servant tell anything about it, but one thing John saw plainly, which was, that the large carbuncles and diamonds that were set in the roof and walls gave light instead of the sun, moon, and stars.



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These lovely meads and plains were, for the most part, all lonesome. Few of the underground people were to be seen upon them, and those that were just glided across them as if in the greatest hurry. It very rarely happened that any of them danced out there in the open air. Sometimes about three of them did so, or, at the most, half a dozen. John never saw a greater number together. The meads were never cheerful except when the servants, of whom there might be some hundreds, were let out to walk. This, however, happened but twice a week, for they were mostly kept employed in the great hall and adjoining apartments or at school.

For John soon found they had schools there also. He had been there about ten months when one day he saw something snow-white gliding into a rock and disappearing.

“What!” said he to his servant, “are there some of you that wear white like the servants?”

He was informed that there were, but they were few in number, and never appeared at the large tables or the dances, except once a year, on the birthday of the great Hill-king, who dwelt many thousand miles below in the great deep. These were the oldest among them, some of them many thousand years old, who knew all things and could tell of the beginning of the world, and were called the Wise. They lived all alone, and only left their chambers to instruct the underground children and the attendants of both sexes, for whom there was a great school.

John was much pleased with this intelligence, and he determined to take advantage of it; so next morning he made his servant conduct him to the school, and was so well pleased with it that he never missed a day going there. They were there taught reading, writing, and accounts, to compose and relate histories, stories, and many elegant kinds of work, so that many came out of the hills, both men and women, very prudent and knowing people in consequence of what they were taught there. The biggest, and those of best capacity, received instruction in natural science and astronomy, and in poetry and in riddle-making, arts highly esteemed among the little people. John was very diligent, and soon became a most clever painter and drawer. He wrought, too, most ingeniously in gold and silver and stones, and in verse and riddle-making he had no fellow.

John had spent many a happy year here without ever thinking of the upper world, or of those he had left behind, so pleasantly passed the time—so many agreeable companions had he.

Of all of them there was none of whom he was so fond as of a fair-haired girl named Elizabeth Krabbe. She was from his own village, and was the daughter of Frederick Krabbe, the minister of Ramin. She was but four years old when she was taken away, and John had often heard tell of her. She was not, however, stolen by the little people,

but had come into their power in this manner. One day in summer she and other children ran out into the fields.



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In their rambles they went to the Nine-hills, where little Elizabeth fell asleep, and was forgotten by the rest. At night when she awoke, she found herself under the ground among the little people. It was not merely because she was from his own village that John was so fond of Elizabeth, but she was very beautiful, with clear blue eyes and ringlets of fair hair, and a most angelic smile. Time flew away unperceived. John was now eighteen, and Elizabeth sixteen. Their childish fondness was now become love, and the little people were pleased to see it, thinking that by means of her they might get John to renounce his power, and become their servant, for they were fond of him, and would willingly have had him to wait upon them, for the love of dominion is their vice. They were, however, mistaken. John had learned too much from his servant to be caught in that way.

John's chief delight was walking about with Elizabeth, for he now knew every place so well that he could dispense with the attendance of his servant. In these rambles he was always gay and lively, but his companion was frequently sad and melancholy, thinking on the land above, where men live, and where the sun, moon, and stars shine. Now it happened in one of their walks, as they talked of their love, and it was after midnight, they passed under the place where the tops of the glass hills used to open and let the underground people in and out. As they went along, they heard of a sudden the crowing of several cocks above. At this sound, which she had not heard for several years, Elizabeth felt her heart so affected that she could contain herself no longer, but throwing her arms about John's neck, she bathed his cheek with her tears. At length she said—

“Dearest John, everything down here is very beautiful, and the little people are kind and do nothing to injure me, but still I have been always uneasy, nor ever felt any pleasure till I began to love you; and yet that is not pure pleasure, for this is not a right way of living, such as is fit for human beings. Every night I dream of my father and mother, and of our churchyard where the people stand so pious at the church door waiting for my father, and I could weep tears of blood that I cannot go into the church with them and worship God as a human being should, for this is no Christian life we lead down here, but a delusive half-heathen one. And only think, dear John, that we can never marry, as there is no priest to join us. Do, then, plan some way for us to leave this place, for I cannot tell you how I long to get once more to my father, and among pious Christians.”

John, too, had not been unaffected by the crowing of the cocks, and he felt what he had never felt there before, a longing after the land where the sun shines.

“Dear Elizabeth,” said he, “all you say is true, and I now feel it is a sin for Christians to stay here, and it seems to me as if our Lord said to us in that cry of the cocks, ‘Come up, ye Christian children, out of those abodes of illusion and magic. Come to the light of the stars, and act as children of the light.’ I now feel that it was a great sin for me to

come down here, but I trust I shall be forgiven on account of my youth, for I was only a boy, and knew not what I did. But now I will not stay a day longer. They cannot keep *me* here.”



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At these last words Elizabeth turned pale, for she recollected that she was a servant, and must serve her fifty years.

“And what will it avail me,” cried she, “that I shall continue young, and be but as of twenty years when I go out, for my father and mother will be dead, and all my companions old and grey; and you, dearest John, will be old and grey also,” cried she, throwing herself on his bosom.

John was thunderstruck at this, for it had never before occurred to him. He, however, comforted her as well as he could, and declared he would never leave the place without her. He spent the whole night in forming various plans. At last he fixed on one, and in the morning he despatched his servant to summon to his apartment six of the principal of the little people. When they came, John thus mildly addressed them—

“My friends, you know how I came here, not as a prisoner or servant, but as a lord and master over one of you, and of consequence over all. You have now for the ten years I have been with you treated me with respect and attention, and for that I am your debtor. But you are still more my debtors, for I might have given you every sort of vexation and annoyance, and you must have submitted to it. I have, however, not done so, but have behaved as your equal, and have sported and played with you rather than ruled over you. I have now one request to make. There is a girl among your servants whom I love, Elizabeth Krabbe, of Rambin, where I was born. Give her to me and let us depart, for I will return to where the sun shines and the plough goes through the land. I ask to take nothing with me but her and the ornaments and furniture of my chamber.”

He spoke in a determined tone, and they hesitated and cast their eyes upon the ground. At last the oldest of them replied—

“Sir, you ask what we cannot grant. It is a fixed law that no servant can leave this place before the appointed time. Were we to break through this law our whole subterranean empire would fall. Anything else you desire, for we love and respect you, but we cannot give up Elizabeth.”

“You can, and you shall, give her up!” cried John in a rage. “Go, think of it till tomorrow. Return then at this hour. I will show you whether or not I can triumph over your hypocritical and cunning stratagems.”

The six retired. Next morning, on their return, John addressed them in the kindest manner, but to no purpose. They persisted in their refusal. He gave them till the next day, threatening them severely in case they still proved refractory.

Next day, when the six little people appeared before him, John looked at them sternly, and made no return to their salutations, but said to them shortly—



“Yes, or No?”

They answered, with one voice, “No.” He then ordered his servant to summon twenty-four more of the principal persons, with their wives and children. When they came they were in all five hundred men, women, and children. John ordered them forthwith to go and fetch pick-axes, spades, and bars, which they did in a second.



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He now led them out to a rock in one of the fields, and ordered them to fall to work at blasting, hewing, and dragging stones. They toiled patiently, and made as if it were only sport to them.

From morning till night their task-master made them labour without ceasing, standing over them constantly to prevent them resting. Still their obstinacy was inflexible, and at the end of some weeks his pity for them was so great that he was obliged to give over.

He now thought of a new species of punishment for them. He ordered them to appear before him next morning, each provided with a new whip. They obeyed, and John commanded them to lash one another, and he stood looking on while they did it, as grim and cruel as an Eastern tyrant. Still the little people cut and slashed themselves and mocked at John, and refused to comply with his wishes. This he did for three or four days.

Several other courses did he try, but all in vain. His temper was too gentle to struggle with their obstinacy, and he commenced to despair of ever accomplishing his dearest wish. He began now to hate the little people of whom he had before been so fond. He kept away from their banquets and dances, and associated with none but Elizabeth, and ate and drank quite solitary in his chamber. In short, he became almost a hermit, and sank into moodiness and melancholy.

While in this temper, as he was taking a solitary walk in the evening, and, to divert his melancholy, was flinging the stones that lay in his path against each other, he happened to break a tolerably large one, and out of it jumped a toad. The moment John saw the ugly animal he caught him up in ecstasy, and put him in his pocket and ran home, crying

—
“Now I have her! I have my Elizabeth! Now you shall get it, you little mischievous rascals!”

On getting home he put the toad into a costly silver casket, as if it was the greatest treasure.

To account for John's joy, you must know that Klas Starkwolt had often told him that the underground people could not endure any ill smell, and that the sight, or even the smell, of a toad made them faint, and suffer the most dreadful tortures, and that by means of one of those odious animals one could compel them to do anything. Hence there are no bad smells to be found in the whole glass empire, and a toad is a thing unheard of there. This toad must certainly have been enclosed in the stone from the creation, as it were, for the sake of John and Elizabeth.

Resolved to try the effect of his toad, John took the casket under his arm and went out, and on the way he met two of the little people in a lonesome place. The moment he



approached they fell to the ground, and whimpered and howled most lamentably as long as he was near them.

Satisfied now of his power, he, the next morning, summoned the fifty principal persons, with their wives and children, to his apartment. When they came he addressed them, reminding them once again of his kindness and gentleness towards them, and of the good terms on which they had hitherto lived. He reproached them with their ingratitude in refusing him the only favour he had ever asked of them, but firmly declared that he would not give way to their obstinacy.



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“Therefore,” said he, “for the last time, think for a minute, and if you then say ‘No,’ you shall feel that pain which is to you and your children the most terrible of all pains.”

They did not take long to deliberate, but unanimously replied “No”; and they thought to themselves, “What new scheme has the youth hit on with which he thinks to frighten wise ones like us?” and they smiled as they said “No.” Their smiling enraged John above all, and he ran back a few hundred paces to where he had laid the casket with the toad under a bush.

He was hardly come within a few hundred paces of them when they all fell to the ground as if struck with a thunderbolt, and began to howl and whimper, and to writhe, as if suffering the most excruciating pain. They stretched out their hands, and cried—

“Have mercy, have mercy! We feel you have a toad, and there is no escape for us. Take the odious beast away, and we will do all you require.”

He let them kick a few seconds longer, and then took the toad away. They then stood up and felt no more pain. John let all depart but the six chief persons, to whom he said

“This night, between twelve and one, Elizabeth and I will depart. Load then for me three waggons with gold and silver and precious stones. I might, you know, take all that is in the hill, and you deserve it; but I will be merciful. Further, you must put all the furniture of my chamber in two waggons, and get ready for me the handsomest travelling carriage that is in the hill, with six black horses. Moreover, you must set at liberty all the servants who have been so long here that on earth they would be twenty years old and upwards; and you must give them as much silver and gold as will make them rich for life, and make a law that no one shall be detained here longer than his twentieth year.”

The six took the oath, and went away quite melancholy; and John buried his toad deep in the ground. The little people laboured hard, and prepared everything. At midnight everything was out of the hill; and John and Elizabeth got into the silver tun, and were drawn up.

It was then one o’clock, and it was midsummer, the very time that, twelve years before, John had gone down into the hill. Music sounded around them, and they saw the glass hill open, and the rays of the light of heaven shine on them after so many years. And when they got out, they saw the first streaks of dawn already in the east. Crowds of the underground people were around them, busied about the waggons. John bid them a last farewell, waved his brown cap three times in the air, and then flung it among them. At the same moment he ceased to see them. He beheld nothing but a green hill, and the well-known bushes and fields, and heard the town-clock of Rambin strike two. When all was still, save a few larks, who were tuning their morning songs, they all fell on

their knees and worshipped God, resolving henceforth to live a pious and a Christian life.



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When the sun rose, John arranged the procession, and they set out for Ramin. Every well-known object that they saw awoke pleasing recollections in the bosom of John and his bride; and as they passed by Rodenkirchen, John recognised, among the people that gazed at and followed them, his old friend Klas Starkwolt, the cowherd, and his dog Speed. It was about four in the morning when they entered Ramin, and they halted in the middle of the village, about twenty paces from the house where John was born. The whole village poured out to gaze on these Asiatic princes, for such the old sexton, who had in his youth been at Constantinople and at Moscow, said they were. There John saw his father and mother, and his brother Andrew, and his sister Trine. The old minister Krabbe stood there too, in his black slippers and white nightcap, gaping and staring with the rest.

John discovered himself to his parents, and Elizabeth to hers; and the wedding-day was soon fixed. And such a wedding was never seen before or since in the island of Ruegen, for John sent to Stralsund and Greifswald for whole boat-loads of wine and sugar and coffee; and whole herds of oxen, sheep, and pigs were driven to the feast. The quantity of harts and roes and hares that were shot upon the occasion it were vain to attempt to tell, or to count the fish that was caught. There was not a musician in Ruegen or in Pomerania that was not engaged, for John was immensely rich, and he wished to display his wealth.

John did not neglect his old friend Klas Starkwolt, the cowherd. He gave him enough to make him comfortable for the rest of his days, and insisted on his coming and staying with him as often and as long as he wished.

After his marriage John made a progress through the country with his wife; and he purchased towns and villages and lands until he became master of nearly half Ruegen and a very considerable Count in the country. His father, old James Dietrich, was made a nobleman, and his brothers and sisters gentlemen and ladies—for what cannot money do? John and his wife spent their days in doing acts of piety and charity. They built several churches, and had the blessing of every one that knew them, and died universally lamented. It was Count John Dietrich that built and richly endowed the present church of Ramin. He built it on the site of his father's house, and presented to it several of the cups and plates made by the underground people, and his own and Elizabeth's glass-shoes, in memory of what had befallen them in their youth. But they were taken away in the time of the great Charles the Twelfth of Sweden, when the Russians came on the island and the Cossacks plundered even the churches, and took away everything.



HOW THORSTON BECAME RICH.

When spring came Thorston made ready his ship and put twenty-four men on board of her. When they came to Finland they ran her into a harbour, and every day he went on shore to amuse himself.



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He came one day to an open part of the wood, where he saw a great rock, and a little way out from it was a horribly ugly dwarf. He was looking over his head, with his mouth wide open, and it appeared to Thorston that it stretched from ear to ear, and that the lower jaw came down to his knees.

Thorston asked him why he acted so foolishly.

“Do not be surprised, my good lad,” answered the dwarf, “do you not see that great dragon that is flying up there? He has taken off my son, and I believe that it is Odin himself that has sent the monster to do it. I shall burst and die if I lose my son.”

Then Thorston shot at the dragon, and hit him under one of the wings, so that he fell dead to the earth; but Thorston caught the dwarf’s child in the air, and brought him to his father.

The dwarf was very glad, more rejoiced than any one can tell, and he said—

“I have to reward you for a great service, you who are the deliverer of my son. Now choose your reward in silver or gold.”

“Take your son,” said Thorston; “but I am not used to accept rewards for my services.”

“It would not be becoming,” said the dwarf, “if I did not reward you. I will give you my vest of sheep’s wool. Do not think it is a contemptible gift, for you will never be tired when swimming, or wounded, if you wear it next your skin.”

Thorston took it and put it on, and it fitted him well, though it had appeared too small for the dwarf.

The dwarf next took a gold ring out of his purse and gave it to Thorston, and bade him take good care of it, telling him he should never want money while he had the ring.

Next he gave him a black stone, and said—

“If you hide this stone in the palm of your hand no one will see you. I have not many more things to offer you, or that would be of any value to you. I will, however, give you a firestone for your amusement.”

He took the stone out of his purse, and with it a steel point. The stone was triangular, white on one side and red on the other, and a yellow border ran round it. The dwarf said—

“If you prick the stone with the point in the white side there will come on such a hailstorm that no one will be able to look at it. If you want to stop the shower you have only to prick on the yellow part, and there will come so much sunshine that the hail will



melt away. If you prick the red side then there will come out of it such fire, with sparks and crackling, that no one will be able to look at it. You may also get whatever you will by means of this point and stone, and they will come of themselves back to your hand when you call them. I can give you no more of such gifts.”

Thorston then thanked the dwarf for his presents, and returned to his men; and it was better for him to have made that voyage than to have stayed at home.

GUDBRAND.



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There was once upon a time a man who was called Gudbrand. He had a farm which lay far away on a hill, and he was therefore known as Gudbrand of the Hillside. He and his wife lived so happily together, and were so well matched, that do what the man would his wife was well pleased, thinking nothing in the world could be better. Whatever he did she was satisfied. The farm was their own, and they had a hundred dollars which lay in a box, and in the stall they had two cows.

One day the woman said to Gudbrand.

“I think it would be well to take one of the cows to town and sell it, and so we shall have some money at hand. We are such fine folk that we ought to have a little ready money, as other people have. As for the hundred dollars which lie in the chest, we must not make a hole in them, but I do not see why we should keep more than one cow. We shall, too, gain something, for I shall then have only to look after one cow, instead of having to litter and feed two.”

This Gudbrand thought was right and reasonable, so he took the cow, and set off to town to sell it. When he arrived there he could find no one who would buy the beast.

“Well, well,” said he, “I can go home again with the cow. I have stall and litter for her, and the road home is no longer than the road here.”

So he began to go homewards again.

When he had gone a little distance he met a man who had a horse he wanted to sell. So Gudbrand thought it was better to have a horse than a cow, and exchanged with him. He went on a bit further, and met a man walking along driving a fat pig before him, and he thought it would be better to have a fat pig than a horse. So he exchanged with the man. He went on a bit further, and met a man with a goat. A goat, he thought, was better than a pig. So he exchanged with him. He went on a good bit further till he met a man who had a sheep, and he exchanged with him, for he thought a sheep was always better than a goat. He went on again, and met a man with a goose. So he exchanged the sheep for the goose. Then he went a long, long way, and met a man with a cock. So he gave the goose for the cock, for he thought to himself—

“It is better to have a cock than a goose.”

He walked on till late in the day, and then as he was getting hungry he sold the cock for twelve shillings, and bought something to eat, for, thought Gudbrand of the Hillside—

“It is better to save one’s life than have a cock.”

Then he walked on homeward till he came to the house of his nearest neighbour, and there he looked in.



“Well, how did you get on at the town?” asked the neighbour.

“Only so and so,” said the man. “I cannot say I have had good or bad luck,” and then he began and told them all that had happened.

“Well,” said the neighbour, “you will catch it when you get home to your wife. Heaven help you! I would not stand in your shoes.”



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"I think things might have been much worse," said Gudbrand of the Hillside; "but whether things have gone well or badly, I have such a gentle wife that she never says anything, do what I will."

"Ah," said the neighbour, "I hear what you say, but I don't believe it."

"Shall we make a bet?" said Gudbrand. "I have a hundred dollars lying at home in a chest, will you lay as much?"

The neighbour was willing, so the bet was made. They waited till evening, and then set out for Gudbrand's house. The neighbour stood outside the door, while Gudbrand went inside to his wife.

"Good evening," said Gudbrand, when he was inside.

"Good evening," said his wife. "Heaven be praised. Is it you?"

Yes, it was he. His wife then asked him how things went at the town.

"Oh, but so-so," said Gudbrand, "not much to boast of. When I came to the town I could find no one to buy the cow, so I exchanged it for a horse."

"Thanks for that!" said the wife; "we are such fine folk that we can ride to church the same as other people, and as we can keep a horse we might as well have one. Go and put the horse up, children."

"But," said Gudbrand, "I have not got the horse. After I had gone a bit further I exchanged it for a pig."

"Well, well," said his wife, "that was good. I should have done the same. Thanks for that! now I shall have meat in the house to put before folk when they come to see me. What could we do with a horse? People would only have said that we had got too proud to walk to church. Go along, children, and put the pig in the sty."

"But I have not got the pig either," said Gudbrand. "When I had gone on a bit further I exchanged it for a milch goat."

"Bless me," said the wife, "you do everything well! When I think of it, what could we have done with a pig? Folk would only have said we eat up all we had. Now we have a goat we shall have milk and cheese, and we shall have the goat too. Run, children, and put up the goat."

"But I have not got the goat," said Gudbrand. "I went on a bit, and exchanged it for a fine sheep."



“Well,” said the wife, “you have done just what I should have wished—just as if I had done it myself. What did we want a goat for? I should have had to go over hill and dale after it. Now we have a sheep I shall have wool and clothes in the house, and food as well. Go, children, and put up the sheep.”

“But I have not got the sheep either,” said Gudbrand. “I went on a while, and then I exchanged it for a goose.”

“You shall have thanks for that,” said the wife, “many thanks! What would we have done with a sheep? I have no spinning-wheel nor distaff, and I should not care to bother about making clothes. We can buy clothes, as we have always done. Now we shall have roast goose, which I have so often wished for, and I shall be able to stuff my little pillow with the down. Go and bring in the goose, children.”



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“But,” said Gudbrand, “I have not got the goose either. When I had gone a bit further I gave it in exchange for a cock.”

“Heaven knows,” said his wife, “how you thought all this out so well! It is just what I should have done myself. A cock! why it is just the same as if you had bought an eight-day clock, for the cock crows at four o’clock every morning, so we shall be able to get up in good time. What could we have done with a goose? I don’t know how to cook it, and I can stuff my pillow with moss. Run and fetch the cock in, children.”

“But,” said Gudbrand, “I have not got the cock either. When I had gone a bit further I got hungry, and so I sold the cock for twelve shillings so that I might live.”

“Thank God you did so,” said his wife; “whatever you do you do it just as I should have wished. What could we have done with a cock? We are our own masters, and can lie in bed in the morning as late as we please. Thank Heaven you have come back again safe. You do everything so well that we can well spare the cock, the goose, the pig, and the cow.”

Then Gudbrand opened the door.

“Have I won the hundred dollars?” said he, and the neighbour was obliged to own that he had.

THE DWARF-SWORD TIRFING.

Suaforlami, the second in descent from Odin, was king over Gardarike (Russia). One day he rode a-hunting, and sought long after a hart, but could not find one the whole day. When the sun was setting, he found himself plunged so deep in the forest that he knew not where he was. On his right hand he saw a hill, and before it he saw two dwarfs. He drew his sword against them, and cut off their retreat by getting between them and the rock. They offered him ransom for their lives, and he asked them their names, and they said that one of them was called Dyren and the other Dualin. Then he knew that they were the most ingenious and the most expert of all the dwarfs, and he therefore demanded that they should make for him a sword, the best that they could form. Its hilt was to be of gold, and its belt of the same metal. He moreover commanded that the sword should never miss a blow, should never rust, that it should cut through iron and stone as through a garment, and that it should always be victorious in war and in single combat. On these conditions he granted the dwarfs their lives.

At the time appointed he came, and the dwarfs appearing, they gave him the sword. When Dualin stood at the door, he said—

“This sword shall be the bane of a man every time it is drawn, and with it shall be perpetrated three of the greatest atrocities, and it will also prove thy bane.”



Suaforlami, when he heard that, struck at the dwarf, so that the blade of the sword penetrated the solid rock. Thus Suaforlami became possessed of this sword, and he called it Tirfing. He bore it in war and in single combat, and with it he slew the giant Thiasse, whose daughter Fridur he took.



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Suaforlami was soon after slain by the Berserker Andgrim, who then became master of the sword. When the twelve sons of Andgrim were to fight with Hialmar and Oddur for Ingaborg, the beautiful daughter of King Inges, Angantyr bore the dangerous Tirfing, but all the brethren were slain in the combat, and were buried with their arms.

Angantyr left an only daughter, Hervor, who, when she grew up, dressed herself in man's attire, and took the name of Hervardar, and joined a party of Vikinger, or pirates. Knowing that Tirfing lay buried with her father, she determined to awaken the dead, and obtain the charmed blade. She landed alone, in the evening, on the Island of Sams, where her father and uncles lay in their sepulchral mounds, and ascending by night to their tombs, that were enveloped in flame, she, by the force of entreaty, obtained from the reluctant Angantyr the formidable Tirfing.

Hervor proceeded to the court of King Gudmund, and there one day, as she was playing at tables with the king, one of the servants chanced to take up and draw Tirfing, which shone like a sunbeam. But Tirfing was never to see the light but for the bane of men, and Hervor, by a sudden impulse, sprang from her seat, snatched the sword, and struck off the head of the unfortunate man.

After this she returned to the house of her grandfather, Jarl Biartmar, where she resumed her female attire, and was married to Haufud, the son of King Gudmund. She bore him two sons, Angantyr and Heidreker; the former of a mild and gentle disposition, the latter violent and fierce. Haufud would not permit Heidreker to remain at his court, and as he was departing, his mother, among other gifts, presented him with Tirfing.

His brother accompanied him out of the castle. Before they parted, Heidreker drew out his sword to look at and admire it, but scarcely did the rays of light fall on the magic blade, when the Berserker rage came on its owner, and he slew his gentle brother.

After this he joined a body of Vikinger, and became so distinguished that King Harold, for the aid he lent him, gave him his daughter Helga in marriage. But it was the destiny of Tirfing to commit crime, and Harold fell by the sword of his son-in-law. Heidreker was afterwards in Russia, and the son of the king was his foster-son. One day as they were out hunting, Heidreker and his foster-son happened to be separated from the rest of the party, when a wild boar appeared before them.

Heidreker ran at him with his spear, but the beast caught it in his mouth and broke it across. Then he alighted and drew Tirfing, and killed the boar. On looking round him, he saw no one but his foster-son, and Tirfing could only be appeased with warm human blood, so Heidreker slew the poor youth.

In the end Heidreker was murdered in his bed by his Scottish slaves, who carried off Tirfing. His son Angantyr, who succeeded him, discovered the thieves and put them to

death, and recovered the magic blade. He made great slaughter in battle against the Huns, but among the slain was discovered his own brother, Landur.

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So ends the history of the Dwarf-Sword Tirling.

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