

madman, with the pale face and fine eyes, whose utterances, though incoherent, savored somewhat of poesy and prophecy. And what spell was attached to that name of Thelma? The more he thought of his morning's adventure the more puzzled he became. As a rule, he believed more in the commonplace than in the romantic—most people do. But truth to tell, romance is far more common than the commonplace. There are few who have not, at one time or other of their lives, had some strange or tragic episode woven into the tissue of their every-day existence, and it would be difficult to find one person, even among humdrum individuals, who, from birth to death, has experienced nothing out of the common.

Errington generally dismissed all tales of adventure as mere exaggerations of heated fancy, and had he read in some book of a respectable nineteenth-century yachtsman having such an interview with a madman in a sea-cavern he would have laughed at the affair as an utter improbability, though he could not have explained why he considered it improbable. But now it had occurred to himself, he was both surprised and amused at the whole circumstance; moreover, he was sufficiently interested and curious to be desirous of sifting the matter to its foundation.

It was, however, somewhat of a relief to him when he again reached the outer cavern. He replaced the lamp on the shelf where he had found it, and stepped once more into the brilliant light of the very early dawn, which then had all the splendor of full morning. There was a deliciously balmy wind, the blue sky was musical with a chorus of larks, and every breath of air that waved aside the long grass sent forth a thousand odors from hidden beds of wild thyme and bog-myrtle.

He perceived the "Eulalie" at anchor in her old place on the fjord; she had returned while he was absent on his explorations. Gathering together his rug and painting materials, he blew a whistle sharply three times; he was answered from the yacht, and presently a boat, manned by a couple of sailors, came skimming over the water toward him. It soon reached the shore, and, entering it, he was speedily rowed away from the scene of his morning's experience back to his floating palace, where, as yet, none of his friends were stirring.

"How about Jedke?" he inquired of one of his men. "Did they climb it?"

A slow grin overspread the sailor's brown face.

"Lord bless you, no, sir. Mr. Lorimer, he just looked at it and sat down in the shade; the other gentleman played pitch-and-toss with pebbles. They was main hungry too, and eat a mighty sight of 'am and pickles. Then they came on board and all turned in at once."

Errington laughed. He was amused at the utter failure of

Lorimer's recent sudden energy, but not surprised. His thoughts were, however, busied with something else, and he next asked:

"Where's our pilot?"

"Valdemar Svensen, sir? He went down to his bunk as soon as we anchored, for a snooze, he said."

"All right. If he comes on deck before I do, just tell him not to go ashore for anything till I see him. I want to speak to him after breakfast."

"Ay, ay, sir."

Whereupon Sir Philip descended to his private cabin. He drew the blind at the port-hole to shut out the dazzling sunlight, for it was nearly three o'clock in the morning, and quickly undressing, he flung himself into his berth with a slight, not altogether unpleasant, feeling of exhaustion. To the last as his eyes closed drowsily he seemed to hear the slow drip, drip of the water behind the rocky cavern, and the desolate cry of the incomprehensible Sigurd, while through these sounds that mingled with the gurgle of little waves lapping against the sides of the "Eulalie," the name of "Thelma" murmured itself in his ears till slumber drowned his senses in oblivion.

CHAPTER III.

Hast any mortal name,
Fit appellation for this dazzling frame,
Or friends or kinsfolk on the citted earth?

KEATS.

"This is positively absurd," murmured Lorimer, in mildly injured tones, seven hours later, as he sat on the edge of his berth, surveying Errington, who, fully dressed and in the highest spirits, had burst in to upbraid him for his laziness while he was yet but scantily attired. "I tell you, my good fellow, there are some things which the utmost stretch of friendship will *not* stand. Here am I in shirt and trousers with only one sock on, and you dare to say you have had an adventure. Why, if you had cut a piece out of the sun you ought to wait till a man is shaved before mentioning it."

"Don't be snappish, old boy," laughed Errington, gaily. "Put on that other sock and listen. I don't want to tell those other fellows just yet, they might go making inquiries about her—"

"Oh, there is a 'her' in the case, is there?" said Lorimer, opening his eyes rather widely. "Well, Phil! I thought you had had enough, and something too much, of women."

"This is not a woman!" declared Philip, with heat and eagerness, "at least not the sort of woman I have ever known. This is

a forest-empress, a sea-goddess, or sun-angel. I don't know *what* she is, upon my life!"

Lorimer regarded him with an air of reproachful offense.

"Don't go on—please don't!" he implored. "I can't stand it—I really can't! Incipient verse-mania is too much for me. Forest-empress, sea-goddess, sun-angel—by Jove! what next? You are evidently in a very bad way. If I remember rightly, you had a flask of that old green Chartreuse with you. Ah! that accounts for it! Nice stuff, but a little too strong."

Errington laughed, and, unabashed by his friend's raillery, proceeded to relate with much vivacity and graphic fervor the occurrences of the morning. Lorimer listened patiently with a forbearing smile on his open, ruddy countenance. When he had heard everything, he looked up and inquired, calmly:

"This is not a yarn, is it?"

"A yarn!" exclaimed Philip. "Do you think I would invent such a thing?"

"Can't say," returned Lorimer, imperturbably. "You are quite capable of it. It's a very creditable crammer, due to Chartreuse. Might have been designed by Victor Hugo; it's in his style. Scene, Norway—midnight. Mysterious maiden steals out of a cave and glides away in a boat over the water; man, the hero, goes into cave, finds a stone coffin, says—'*Qu'est-ce que c'est? Dieu! C'est la mort!*' Spectacle *affreux!* Staggers back perspiring, meets mad dwarf with torch; mad dwarf talks a good deal—mad people always do—then yells and runs away. Man comes out of cave and—and—goes home to astonish his friends; one of them won't be astonished—that's me."

"I don't care," said Errington. "It's a true story for all that. Only, I say, don't talk of it before the others; let's keep our own counsel—"

"No poachers allowed on the Sun-Angel Manor!" interrupted Lorimer, gravely. Philip went on without heeding him.

"I'll question Valdemar Svensen after breakfast. He knows everybody about here. Come and have a smoke on deck when I give you the sign, and we'll cross-examine him."

Lorimer still looked incredulous. "What's the good of it?" he inquired, languidly. "Even if it's all true, you had much better leave this goddess, or whatever you call her, alone, especially if she has any mad connections. What do *you* want with her?"

"Nothing!" declared Errington, though his color heightened. "Nothing, I assure you! It's just a matter of curiosity with me. I should like to know who she is—that's all. The affair won't go any further."

"How do you know?" and Lorimer began to brush his stiff curly hair with a sort of vicious vigor. "How can you tell? I'm not a spiritualist, nor any sort of a humbug at all, I hope, but I

sometimes indulge in presentiments. Before we started on this cruise I was haunted by that dismal old ballad of Sir Patrick Spens—

"The king's daughter of Norrway
'Tis thou maun bring her hame!"

And here you have found her, or so it appears. What's to come of it, I wonder?"

"Nothing's to come of it; nothing *will* come of it!" laughed Philip. "As I told you, she said she was a peasant. There's the breakfast-bell! Make haste, old boy. I'm as hungry as a hunter!"

And he left his friend to finish dressing, and entered the saloon, where he greeted his two other companions, Alec, or, as he was oftener called, Sandy Macfarlane, and Pierre Duprez; the former an Oxford student—the latter a young fellow whose acquaintance he had made in Paris, and with whom he had kept up a constant and friendly intercourse. A greater contrast than these two presented could scarcely be imagined. Macfarlane was tall and ungainly, with large loose joints that seemed to protrude angularly out of him in every direction—Duprez was short, slight and wiry, with a dapper and by no means ungraceful figure. The one had formal, *gauche* manners, a never-to-be-eradicated Glasgow accent, and a slow, infinitely tedious method of expressing himself—the other was full of restless movement and pantomimic gesture, and being proud of his English, plunged into that language recklessly, making it curiously light and flippant, though picturesque, as he went. Macfarlane was destined to become a shining light of the Established Church of Scotland, and therefore took life very seriously—Duprez was the spoiled only child of an eminent French banker, and had very little to do but enjoy himself, and that he did most thoroughly, without any calculation or care for the future. On all points of taste and opinion they differed widely; but there was no doubt about their both being good-hearted fellows, without any affectation of abnormal vice or virtue.

"So you did not climb Jedke after all!" remarked Errington, laughingly, as they seated themselves at the breakfast-table.

"My friend, what would you!" cried Duprez. "I have not said that I will climb it; no! I never say that I will do anything, because I'm not sure of myself. How can I be? It is that *cher enfant*, Lorimer, that said such brave words! See!—we arrive; we behold the shore—all black, great, vast!—rocks like needles, and, higher than all, this most fierce Jedke—bah! what a name!—straight as the spire of a cathedral. One must be a fly to crawl up it, and we, we are not flies—*ma foi!* no! Lorimer, he laugh, he yawn—so! He say, 'not for me to-day; I very much thank you!' And then, we watch the sun. Ah! that was grand,

glorious, beautiful!" And Duprez kissed the tips of his fingers in ecstasy.

"What did *you* think about it, Sandy?" asked Sir Philip.

"I didna think much," responded Macfarlane, shortly. "It's no sae grand a sight as a sunset in Skye. And it's an uncanny business to see the sun losin' a' his poonctuality, and remainin' stock still, as it were, when it's his plain duty to set below the horizon. Mysel', I think it's been fair overrated. It's unnatural an' oot o' the common, say what ye like."

"Of course it is," agreed Lorimer, who just then sauntered in from his cabin. "Nature *is* most unnatural. I always thought so. Tea for me, Phil, please; coffee wakes me up too suddenly. I say, what's the programme to-day?"

"Fishing in the Alten," answered Errington, promptly.

"That suits me perfectly," said Lorimer, as he leisurely sipped his tea. "I'm an excellent fisher. I hold the line and generally forget to bait it. Then—while it trails harmlessly in the water, I doze; thus both the fish and I are happy."

"And this evening," went on Errington, "we must return the minister's call. He's been to the yacht twice. We're bound to go out of common politeness."

"Spare us, good Lord!" groaned Lorimer.

"What a delightfully fat man is that good religious!" cried Duprez. "A living proof of the healthiness of Norway!"

"He's not a native," put in Macfarlane; "he's frae Yorkshire. He's only been a matter of three months here, filling the place o' the settled meenister who's awa' for a change of air."

"He's a precious specimen of a humbug, anyhow," sighed Lorimer, drearily. "However, I'll be civil to him as long as he doesn't ask me to hear him preach. At that suggestion I'll fight him. He's soft enough to bruise easily."

"Ye're just too lazy to fight onybody," declared Macfarlane.

Lorimer smiled sweetly. "Thanks, awfully! I dare say you're right. I've never found it worth while as yet to exert myself in any particular direction. No one has asked me to exert myself; no one wants me to exert myself; therefore, why should I?"

"Don't ye want to get on in the world?" asked Macfarlane almost brusquely.

"Dear me, no! What an exhausting idea! Get on in the world—what for? I have five hundred a year, and when my mother goes over to the majority (long distant be that day, for I'm very fond of the dear old lady) I shall have five thousand—more than enough to satisfy any sane man who doesn't want to speculate on the Stock Exchange. *Your* case, my good Mac, is different. You will be a celebrated Scotch divine. You will preach to a crowd of 'ious numskulls about predestination, and so forth. You will be a mp-orator for the securing of seats in paradise. Now,

now, keep calm!—don't mind me. It's only a figure of speech! And the numskulls will call you a 'rare powerfu' rousin' preacher'—isn't that the way they go on? and when you die—for die you must, most unfortunately—they will give you a three-cornered block of granite (if they can make up their minds to part with the necessary bawbees) with your name prettily engraved thereon. That's all very nice; it suits some people. It wouldn't suit me."

"What *would* suit you?" queried Errington. "You find every-thing more or less of a bore."

"Ah, my good little boy!" broke in Duprez. "Paris is the place for you. You should live in Paris. Of that you would never fatigue yourself."

"Too much absinthe, secret murder and suicidal mania," returned Lorimer, meditatively. "That was a neat idea about the coffins though. I never hoped to dine off a coffin."

"Ah! you mean the Taverne de l'Enfer?" exclaimed Duprez. "Yes; the divine waitresses wore winding-sheets, and the wine was served in imitation skulls. Excellent! I remember; the tables were shaped like coffins."

"Gude Lord Almighty!" piously murmured Macfarlane. "What a fearsome sight!"

As he pronounced these words with an unusually marked accent, Duprez looked inquiring.

"What does our Macfarlane say?"

"He says it must have been a 'fearsome sight,'" repeated Lorimer, with even a stronger accent than Sandy's own, "which, *mon cher* Pierre, means all the horrors in your language; *affreux*, *épouvantable*, *navrant*—anything you like that is sufficiently terrible."

"*Mais, point du tout!*" cried Duprez, energetically. "It was charming! It made us laugh at death—so much better than to cry! And there was a delicious child in a winding-sheet; brown curls, laughing eyes and little mouth; ha, ha! but she was well worth kissing!"

"I'd rather follow my own funeral than kiss a lass in a winding-sheet," said Sandy, in solemn and horrified tones. "It's just awfu' to think on."

"But see, my friend," persisted Duprez, "you would not be permitted to follow your own funeral, not possible—*voilà!* You *are* permitted to kiss the pretty one in the winding-sheet. It *is* possible. Behold the difference!"

"Never mind the Taverne de l'Enfer just now," said Errington, who had finished his breakfast hurriedly. "It's time for you fellows to get your fishing toggery on. I'm off to speak to the pilot."

And away he went, followed more slowly by Lorimer, who, though he pretended indifference, was rather curious to know

more, if possible, concerning his friend's adventure of the morning. They found the pilot, Valdemar Svensen, leaning at his ease against the idle wheel, with his face turned toward the eastern sky. He was a stalwart specimen of Norse manhood, tall and strongly built, with thoughtful, dignified features, and keen, clear hazel eyes. His chestnut hair, plentifully sprinkled with gray, clustered thickly over a broad brow, that was deeply furrowed with many a line of anxious and speculative thought, and the forcible brown hand that rested lightly on the spokes of the wheel, told its own tale of hard and honest labor. Neither wife nor child, nor living relative had Valdemar; the one passion of his heart was the sea. Sir Philip Errington had engaged him at Christiansund, hearing of him there as a man to whom the intricacies of the fjords, and the dangers of rock-bound coasts were more familiar than a straight road on dry land, and since then the management of the "Eulalie" had been entirely intrusted to him. Though an eminently practical sailor, he was half a mystic, and believed in the wildest legends of his land with more implicit faith than many so-called Christians believe in their sacred doctrines. He doffed his red cap respectfully now as Errington and Lorimer approached, smilingly wishing them "a fair day." Sir Philip offered him a cigar, and, coming to the point at once, asked abruptly:

"I say, Svensen, are there any pretty girls in Bosekop?"

The pilot drew the newly-lighted cigar from his mouth, and passed his rough hand across his forehead in a sort of grave perplexity.

"It is a matter in which I am foolish," he said at last, "for my ways have always gone far from the ways of women. Girls there are plenty, I suppose, but—" he mused with pondering patience for awhile. Then a broad smile broke like sunshine over his im-browed countenance, as he continued: "Now, gentlemen, I do remember well, it is said that at Bosekop yonder, are to be found some of the homeliest wenches in all Norway."

Errington's face fell at this reply. Lorimer turned away to hide the mischievous smile that came on his lips at his friend's discomfiture.

"I know it was that Chartreuse," he thought to himself. "That and the midnight-sun effects. Nothing else!"

"What!" went on Philip. "No good-looking girls at all about here, eh?"

Svensen shook his head, still smiling.

"Not at Bosekop, sir, that I ever heard of."

"I say!" broke in Lorimer, "are there any old tombs or sea-caves, or places of that sort close by worth exploring?"

Valdemar Svensen answered this question readily, almost eagerly.

"No, sir! There are no antiquities of any sort; and as for

caves there are plenty, but only the natural formations of the sea, and none of these are curious or beautiful on this side of the fjord."

Lorimer poked his friend secretly in the ribs.

"You've been dreaming, old fellow!" he whispered, slyly. "I knew it was a crammer!"

Errington shook him off good-humoredly.

"Can you tell me," he said, addressing Valdemar again in distinct accents, "whether there is any place, person, or thing near here called *Thelma*?"

The pilot started; a look of astonishment and fear came into his eyes; his hand went instinctively to his red cap, as though in deference to the name.

"The Froken *Thelma*!" he exclaimed, in low tones. "Is it possible that you have seen her?"

"Ah, George, what do you say now?" cried Errington, delightedly. "Yes, yes, Valdemar; the Froken *Thelma*, as you call her. Who is she? What is she?—and how can there be no pretty girls in Bosekop if such a beautiful creature as she lives there?"

Valdemar looked troubled and vexed.

"Truly, I thought not of the maiden," he said, gravely. "Tis not for me to speak of the daughter of Olaf," here his voice sunk a little, and his face grew more and more somber. "Pardon me, sir, but how did you meet her?"

"By accident," replied Errington, promptly, not caring to relate his morning's adventure for the pilot's benefit. "Is she some great personage here?"

Svensen sighed, and smiled somewhat dubiously.

"Great? Oh, no; not what you would call great. Her father, Olaf Guldmar, is a *bonde*—that is, a farmer in his own right. He has a goodly house, and a few fair acres well planted and tilled—also he pays his men freely—but those that work for him are all he sees—neither he nor his daughter ever visit the town. They dwell apart, and have nothing in common with their neighbors."

"And where do they live?" asked Lorimer, becoming as interested as he had formerly been incredulous.

The pilot leaned lightly over the rail of the deck and pointed toward the west.

"You see that great rock shaped like a giant's helmet, and behind it a high green knoll, clustered thick with birch and pine?"

They nodded assent.

"At the side of the knoll is the *bonde's* house, a good eight-mile walk from the outskirts of Bosekop. Should you ever seek to rest there, gentlemen," and Svensen spoke with quiet resolution, "I doubt whether you will receive a pleasant welcome."

And he looked at them both with an inquisitive air, as though seeking to discover their intentions.

"Is that so?" drawled Lorimer, lazily, giving his friend an expressive nudge. "Ah! We shan't trouble them! Thanks for your information, Valdemar! We don't intend to hunt up the—what d'ye call him?—the *bonde*, if he's at all surly. Hospitality that gives you greeting and a dinner for nothing—that's what suits me."

"Our people are not without hospitality," said the pilot, with a touch of wistful and appealing dignity. "All along your journey, gentlemen, you have been welcomed gladly, as you know. But Olaf Guldmar is not like the rest of us, he has the pride and fierceness of olden days; his manners and customs are different; and few like him. He is much feared."

"You know him then?" inquired Errington, carelessly.

"I know him," returned Valdemar, quietly. "And his daughter is fair as the sun and the sea. But it is not my place to speak of them—" he broke off, and after a slightly embarrassed pause, asked: "Will the Herren wish to sail to-day?"

"No, Valdemar," answered Errington, indifferently. "Not till to-morrow, when we'll visit the Kaa Fjord if the weather keeps fair."

"Very good, sir," and the pilot, tacitly avoiding any further converse with his employer respecting the mysterious Thelma and her equally mysterious father, turned to examine the wheel and compass as though something there needed his earnest attention. Errington and Lorimer strolled up and down the polished white deck arm in arm, talking in low tones.

"You didn't ask him about the coffin and the dwarf," said Lorimer.

"No; because I believe he knows nothing of either, and it would be news to him which I'm not bound to give. If I can manage to see the girl again the mystery of the cave may explain itself."

"Well, what are you going to do?"

Errington looked meditative. "Nothing at present. We'll go fishing with the others. But, I tell you what, if you're up to it, we'll leave Duprez and Macfarlane at the minister's house this evening and tell them to wait for us there—once they all begin to chatter they never know how time goes. Meanwhile you and I will take the boat and row over in search of this farmer's abode. I believe there's a short cut to it by water; at any rate I know the way *she* went."

"I know the way she went home with her maiden posy!" quoted Lorimer, with a laugh. "You are hit, Phil, 'a very palpable hit!' Who would have thought it! Clara Winsleigh needn't poison her husband after all in order to marry you, for nothing but a sun-empress will suit you now."

"Don't be a fool, George," said Errington, half vexedly, as the hot color mounted to his face in spite of himself. "It is all idle

curiosity, nothing else. After what Svenson told us, I'm quite as anxious to see this gruff old *bonde* as his daughter."

Lorimer held up a reproachful finger. "Now, Phil, don't stoop to duplicity—not with me, at any rate. Why disguise your feelings? Why, as the tragedians say, endeavor to crush the noblest and best emotions that ever warm the *boozum* of man? Chivalrous sentiment and admiration for beauty—chivalrous desire to pursue it and catch it and call it your own—I understand it all, my dear boy! But my prophetic soul tells me you will have to strangle the excellent Olaf Guldmar—heavens! what a name?—before you will be allowed to make love to his fair *chee-ild*. Then don't forget the madman with the torch—he may turn up in the most unexpected fashion and give you no end of trouble. But, by Jove, it is a romantic affair, positively quite stagey! Something will come of it, serious or comic. I wonder which?"

Errington laughed, but said nothing in reply, as their two companions ascended from the cabin at that moment, in full attire for the fishing expedition, followed by the steward bearing a large basket of provisions for luncheon—and all private conversation came to an end. Hastening the rest of their preparations, within twenty minutes they were skimming across the fjord in a long boat manned by four sailors, who rowed with a will and sent the light craft scudding through the water with the swiftness of an arrow. Landing, they climbed the dewy hills spangled thick with forget-me-nots and late violets, till they reached a shady and secluded part of the river, where, surrounded by the songs of hundreds of sweet-throated birds, they commenced their sport, which kept them well employed till a late hour in the afternoon.

CHAPTER IV.

Thou art violently carried away from grace; there is a devil haunts thee in the likeness of a fat old man—a tun of man is thy companion.—
SHAKESPEARE.

THE Reverend Charles Dyceworthy sat alone in the small dining-room of his house at Bosekop, finishing a late tea, and disposing of round after round of hot buttered toast with that suave alacrity he always displayed in the consumption of succulent eatables. He was a largely made man, very much on the wrong side of fifty, with accumulations of unwholesome fat on every available portion of his body. His round face was cleanly shaven and shiny, as though its flabby surface were frequently polished with some sort of luminous grease instead of the customary soap. His mouth was absurdly small and pursy for so broad a countenance—his nose