

"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

seemed endeavoring to retreat behind his puffy cheeks as though painfully aware of its own insignificance—and he had little, sharp, ferret-like eyes of a dull mahogany brown, which were utterly destitute of even the faintest attempt at any actual expression. They were more like glass beads than eyes, and glittered under their scanty fringe of pale-colored lashes with a sort of shallow cunning which might mean malice or good-humor—no one looking at them could precisely determine which. His hair was of an indefinite shade, neither light nor dark, somewhat of the tinge of a dusty potato before it is washed clean. It was neatly brushed and parted in the middle with mathematical precision, while from the back of his head it was brought forward in two projections, one on each side, like budding wings behind his ears. It was impossible for the most fastidious critic to find fault with the Reverend Mr. Dyceworthy's hands. He had beautiful hands, white, soft, plump and well-shaped—his delicate filbert nails were trimmed with punctilious care, and shone with a pink luster that was positively charming. He was evidently an amiable man, for he smiled to himself over his tea—he had a trick of smiling—ill-natured people said he did it on purpose, in order to widen his mouth and make it more in proportion to the size of his face. Such remarks, however, emanated only from the spiteful and envious who could not succeed in winning the social popularity that everywhere attended Mr. Dyceworthy's movements. For he was undoubtedly popular—no one could deny that. In the small Yorkshire town where he usually had his abode, he came little short of being adored by the women of his own particular sect, who crowded to listen to his fervent discourses, and came away from them on the verge of hysteria, so profoundly moved were their sensitive souls by his damnatory doctrines. The men were more reluctant in their admiration, yet even they were always ready to admit "that he was an excellent fellow, with his heart in the right place."

He had a convenient way of getting ill at the proper seasons, and of requiring immediate change of air, whereupon his grateful flock were ready and willing to subscribe the money necessary for their beloved preacher to take repose and relaxation in any part of the world he chose. This year, however, they had not been asked to furnish the usual funds for traveling expenses, for the resident minister of Bosekop, a frail, gentle old man, had been seriously prostrated during the past winter with an affection of the lungs, which necessitated his going to a different climate for change and rest. Knowing Dyceworthy as a zealous member of the Lutheran persuasion, and, moreover, as one who had in his youth lived for some years in Christiania—thereby gaining a knowledge of the Norwegian tongue—he invited him to take his place for his enforced time of absence, offering him his house, his servants, his pony-car-

riage and an agreeable pecuniary *douceur* in exchange for his services—proposals which the Reverend Charles eagerly accepted. Though Norway was not exactly new to him, the region of the Alten Fjord was, and he at once felt, though he knew not why, that the air there would be the very thing to benefit his delicate constitution. Besides, it looked well for at least *one* occasion, to go away for the summer without asking his congregation to pay for his trip. It was generous on his part, almost noble.

The ladies of his flock wept at his departure and made him socks, comforters, slippers, and other consoling gear of like description to recall their sweet memories to his saintly mind during his absence from their society. But, truth to tell, Mr. Dyceworthy gave little thought to these fond and regretful fair ones; he was much too comfortable at Bosekop to look back with any emotional yearning to the ugly, precise little provincial town he had left behind him. The minister's quaint, pretty house suited him perfectly; the minister's servants were most punctual in their services; the minister's phaeton conveniently held his cumbrous person, and the minister's pony was a quiet beast, that trotted good-temperedly wherever it was guided, and shied at nothing. Yes, he was thoroughly comfortable—as comfortable as a truly pious fat man deserves to be, and all the work he had to do was to preach twice on Sundays, to a quiet, primitive, decently ordered congregation, who listened to his words respectfully though without displaying any emotional rapture. Their stolidity, however, did not affect him—he preached to please himself—loving above all things to hear the sound of his own voice, and never so happy as when thundering fierce denunciations against the Church of Rome. His thoughts seemed tending in that direction now, as he poured himself out his third cup of tea and smilingly shook his head over it, while he stirred the cream and sugar in—for he took from his waistcoat pocket a small glittering object and laid it before him on the table, still shaking his head and smiling with a patient, yet reproachful air of superior wisdom. It was a crucifix of mother-o'-pearl and silver, the symbol of the Christian faith. But it seemed to carry no sacred suggestions to the soul of Mr. Dyceworthy. On the contrary, he looked at it with an expression of meek ridicule—ridicule that bordered on contempt.

"A Roman," he murmured placidly to himself, between two large bites of toast. "The girl is a Roman, and thereby hopelessly damned."

And he smiled again—more sweetly than before, as though the idea of hopeless damnation suggested some peculiarly agreeable reflections. And folding his fine cologne-scented cambric handkerchief, he carefully wiped his fat white fingers free from the greasy marks of the toast, and, taking up the objectionable cross gingerly as though it were red-hot, he examined it closely on all sides.

There were some words engraved on the back of it, and after some trouble Mr. Dyceworthy spelled them out. They were "*Passio Christi, conforta me. Thelma.*"

He shook his head with a sort of resigned cheerfulness.

"Hopelessly damned," he murmured again, gently, "unless——"

What alternative suggested itself to his mind was not precisely apparent, for his thoughts suddenly turned in a more frivolous direction. Rising from the now exhausted tea-table, he drew out a small pocket-mirror and surveyed himself therein with mild approval. With the extreme end of his handkerchief he tenderly removed two sacrilegious crumbs that presumed to linger in the corners of his piously pursed mouth. In the same way he detached a morsel of congealed butter that clung pertinaciously to the end of his bashfully retreating nose. This done, he again looked at himself with increased satisfaction, and, putting by his pocket mirror, rang the bell. It was answered at once by a tall, strongly-built woman, with colorless, stolid countenance—that might have been carved out of wood for any expression it had in it.

"Ulrika," said Mr. Dyceworthy, blandly, "you can clear the table."

Ulrika, without answering, began to pack the tea-things together in a methodical way, without clattering so much as a plate or spoon, and piling them compactly on the tray, was about to leave the room, when Mr. Dyceworthy called to her: "Ulrika!"

"Sir?"

"Did you ever see a thing like this before?" and he held up the crucifix to her gaze.

The woman shuddered, and her dull eyes lighted up with a sudden terror.

"It is the witch's charm!" she muttered, thickly, while her pale face grew yet paler. "Burn it, sir!—burn it, and the power will leave her."

Mr. Dyceworthy laughed indulgently. "My good woman, you mistake," he said, suavely. "Your zeal for the true gospel leads you into error. There are thousands of misguided persons who worship such a thing as this. It is often all of our dear Lord they know. Sad, very sad! But still, though they, alas! are not of the elect, and are plainly doomed to perdition—they are not precisely what are termed witches, Ulrika."

"She is," replied the woman with a sort of ferocity; "and, if I had my way, I would tell her so to her face, and see what would happen to her then!"

"Tut, tut!" remarked Mr. Dyceworthy, amiably. "The days of witchcraft are past. You show some little ignorance, Ulrika. You are not acquainted with the great advancement of recent learning."

"May be, may be," and Ulrika turned to go; but she muttered

sullenly as she went: "There be them that know and could tell, and them that will have her yet."

She shut the door behind her with a sharp clang, and, left to himself, Mr. Dyceworthy again smiled—such a benignant, fatherly smile! He then walked to the window and looked out. It was past seven o'clock, an hour that elsewhere would have been considered evening; but in Bosekop at that season it still seemed afternoon.

The sun was shining brilliantly, and in the minister's front garden the roses were all wide awake. A soft moisture glittered on every tiny leaf and blade of grass. The penetrating and delicious odor of sweet violets scented each puff of wind, and now and then the call of the cuckoo pierced the air with a subdued, far-off shrillness.

From his position Mr. Dyceworthy could catch a glimpse through the trees of the principal thoroughfare of Bosekop—a small, primitive street enough, of little low houses, which, though unpretending from without, were roomy and comfortable within. The distant cool sparkle of the waters of the fjord, the refreshing breeze, the perfume of the flowers, and the satisfied impression left on his mind by recent tea and toast—all these things combined had a soothing effect on Mr. Dyceworthy, and with a sigh of absolute comfort he settled his large person in a deep easy-chair and composed himself for pious meditation.

He meditated long—with fast-closed eyes and open mouth, while the earnestness of his inward thoughts was clearly demonstrated now and then by an irrepressible—almost triumphant—cornet-blast from that trifling elevation of his countenance called by courtesy a nose, when his blissful reverie was suddenly broken in upon by the sound of several footsteps crunching slowly along the garden path, and, starting up from his chair, he perceived four individuals clad in white flannel costumes and wearing light straw hats trimmed with fluttering blue ribbons, who were leisurely sauntering up to his door, and stopping occasionally to admire the flowers on their way. Mr. Dyceworthy's face reddened visibly with excitement.

"The gentlemen from the yacht," he murmured to himself, hastily settling his collar and cravat, and pushing up his cherubic wings of hair more prominently behind his ears. "I never thought they would come. Dear me! Sir Philip Errington himself, too! I must have refreshments instantly."

And he hurried from the room, calling his orders to Ulrika as he went, and before the visitors had time to ring, he had thrown open the door to them himself, and stood smiling urbanely on the threshold, welcoming them with enthusiasm—and assuring Sir Philip especially how much honored he felt by his thus visiting, familiarly and unannounced, his humble dwelling. Errington

waved his many compliments good-humoredly aside, and allowed himself and his friends to be marshaled into the best parlor, the drawing-room of the house, a pretty little apartment whose window looked out upon a tangled yet graceful wilderness of flowers.

"Nice, cozy place this," remarked Lorimer, as he seated himself negligently on the arm of the sofa. "You must be pretty comfortable here?"

Their perspiring and affable host rubbed his soft white hands together gently.

"I thank Heaven, it suits my simple needs," he answered, meekly. "Luxuries do not become a poor servant of God."

"Ah, then you are different to many others who profess to serve the same Master," said Duprez, with a *sourire fin* that had the devil's own mockery in it. "*Monsieur le bon Dieu* is very impartial! Some serve Him by constant overfeeding, others by constant overstarving; it is all one to Him apparently! How do you know which among His servants He likes best, the fat or the lean?"

Sandy Macfarlane, though slightly a bigot for his own form of doctrine, broke into a low chuckle of irrepressible laughter at Duprez's levity, but Mr. Dyceworthy's flabby face betokened the utmost horror.

"Sir," he said, gravely, "there are subjects concerning which it is not seemly to speak without due reverence. He knoweth His own elect. He hath chosen them out from the beginning. He summoned forth from the million, the glorious apostle of reform, Martin Luther—"

"*Le bon gaillard!*" laughed Duprez. "Tempted by a pretty nun! What man could resist! Myself, I would try to upset all the creeds of this world if I saw a pretty nun worth my trouble. Yes, truly! A pity, though, that the poor Luther died of over-eating; his exit from life was so undignified!"

"Shut up, Duprez," said Errington, severely. "You displease Mr. Dyceworthy by your fooling."

"Oh, pray do not mention it, Sir Philip," murmured the reverend gentleman with a mild patience. "We must accustom ourselves to hear with forbearance the opinions of all men, howsoever contradictory, otherwise our vocation is of no avail. Yet is it sorely grievous to me to consider that there should be any person or persons existent who lack the necessary faith requisite for the performance of God's promises."

"Ye must understand, Mr. Dyceworthy," said Macfarlane in his slow, deliberate manner, "that ye have before ye a young Frenchman who doesna believe in onything except himsel'—and even as to whether he himsel' is a mon or a myth, he has his doots—vera grave doots."

Duprez nodded delightedly. "That is so!" he exclaimed.

"Our dear Sandy puts it so charmingly! To be a myth seems original—to be a mere man, quite ordinary. I believe it is possible to find some good scientific professor who would prove me to be a myth—the moving shadow of a dream—imagine!—how perfectly poetical!"

"You talk too much to be a dream, my boy," laughed Errington, and turning to Mr. Dyceworthy, he added: "I'm afraid you must think us a shocking set. We are really none of us very religious, I fear though," and he tried to look serious; "if it had not been for Mr. Lorimer, we should have come to church last Sunday. Mr. Lorimer was, unfortunately, rather indisposed."

"Ya-as!" drawled that gentleman, turning from the little window where he had been gathering a rose for his buttonhole. "I was knocked up; had fits, and all that sort of things; took these three fellows all their time on Sunday to hold me down!"

"Dear me!" and Mr. Dyceworthy was about to make further inquiries concerning Mr. Lorimer's present state of health, when the door opened, and Ulrika entered, bearing a large tray laden with wine and other refreshments. As she set it down, she gave a keen covert glance round the room, as though rapidly taking note of the appearance and faces of all the young men, then, with a sort of stiff courtesy, she departed as noiselessly as she had come—not, however, without leaving a disagreeable impression on Errington's mind.

"Rather a stern Phyllis, that waiting-maid of yours," he remarked, watching his host, who was carefully drawing the cork from one of the bottles of wine.

Mr. Dyceworthy smiled. "Oh, no, no! not stern at all," he answered, sweetly. "On the contrary, most affable and kind-hearted. Her only fault is that she is a little zealous—overzealous for the purity of the faith; and she has suffered much; but she is an excellent woman, really excellent! Sir Philip, will you try this *Lacrima Christi*?"

"*Lacrima Christi!*" exclaimed Duprez. "You do not surely get that in Norway?"

"It seems strange, certainly," replied Mr. Dyceworthy, "but it is a fact that the Italian or Papist wines are often used here. The minister whose place I humbly endeavor to fill has his cellar stocked with them. The matter is easy of comprehension when once explained. The benighted inhabitants of Italy, a land lost in the darkness of error, still persist in their fasts, notwithstanding the evident folly of their ways—and the Norwegian sailors provided them with large quantities of fish for their idolatrous customs, bringing back their wines in exchange."

"A very good idea," said Lorimer, sipping the *Lacrima* with evident approval—"Phil, I doubt if your brands on board the '*Eulalie*' are better than this."

"Hardly so good," replied Errington, with some surprise, as he tasted the wine and noted its delicious flavor. "The minister must be a fine connoisseur. Are there many other families about here, Mr. Dyceworthy, who know how to choose their wines so well?"

Mr. Dyceworthy smiled with a dubious air.

"There is one other household that in the matter of choice liquids is almost profanely particular," he said. "But they are people who are ejected with good reason from respectable society, and—it behooves me not to speak of their names."

"Oh, indeed!" said Errington, while a sudden and inexplicable thrill of indignation fired his blood and sent it in a wave of color up to his forehead. "May I ask—"

But he was interrupted by Lorimer, who, nudging him slyly on one side, muttered: "Keep cool, old fellow! *You* can't tell whether he's talking about the Guldmar folk! Be quiet—you don't want every one to know your little game."

Thus adjured Philip swallowed a large gulp of wine, to keep down his feelings, and strove to appear interested in the habits and caprices of bees, a subject into which Mr. Dyceworthy had just inveigled Duprez and Macfarlane.

"Come and see my bees," said the Reverend Charles almost pathetically. "They are emblems of ever-working and patient industry—storing up honey for others to partake thereof."

"They wudna store it up at a', perhaps, if they knew that," observed Sandy, significantly.

Mr. Dyceworthy positively shone all over with beneficence.

"They *would* store it up, sir; yes, they would, even if they knew! It is God's will that they should store it up; it is God's will that they should show an example of unselfishness, that they should flit from flower to flower sucking therefrom the sweetness to impart into strange palates unlike their own. It is a beautiful lesson; it teaches us who are the ministers of the Lord to likewise suck the sweetness from the flowers of the living gospel and impart it gladly to the unbelievers who shall find it sweeter than the sweetest honey!"

And he shook his head piously several times, while the pores of his fat visage exuded holy oil. Duprez sniggered secretly. Macfarlane looked preternaturally solemn.

"Come," repeated the reverend gentleman, with an inviting smile. "Come and see my bees—also my strawberries! I shall be delighted to send a basket of the fruit to the yacht, if Sir Philip will permit me?"

Errington expressed his thanks with due courtesy, and hastened to seize the opportunity that presented itself for breaking away from the party.

"If you will excuse us for twenty minutes or so, Mr. Dyce-

worthy," he said, "Lorimer and I want to consult a fellow here in Bosekop about some new fishing-tackle. We sha'n't be gone long. Mac, you and Duprez wait for us here. Don't commit too many depredations on Mr. Dyceworthy's strawberries."

The reason for their departure was so simply and naturally given, that it was accepted without any opposing remarks. Duprez was delighted to have the chance of amusing himself by harassing the Reverend Charles with open professions of utter atheism, and Macfarlane, who loved an argument more than he loved whisky, looked forward to a sharp discussion presently concerning the superiority of John Knox, morally and physically, over Martin Luther. So that when the others went their way their departure excited no suspicion in the minds of their friends, and most unsuspecting of all was the placid Mr. Dyceworthy, who, had he imagined for an instant the direction in which they were going, would certainly not have discoursed on the pleasures of bee-keeping with the calmness and placid conviction that always distinguished him when holding forth on any subject that was attractive to his mind. Leading the way through his dewy, rose-grown garden, and conversing amicably as he went, he escorted Macfarlane and Duprez to what he called with a gentle humor his "Bee-Metropolis," while Errington and Lorimer returned to the shore of the fjord, where they had left their boat moored to a small, clumsily constructed pier—and entering it, they set themselves to the oars and pulled away together with the long, steady, sweeping stroke rendered famous by the exploits of the Oxford and Cambridge men. After some twenty minutes' rowing, Lorimer looked up and spoke as he drew his blade swiftly through the bright green water.

"I feel as though I were aiding and abetting you in some crime, Phil. You know, my first impression of this business remains the same. You had much better leave it alone."

"Why?" asked Errington, coolly.

"Well, 'pon my life I don't know why. Except that, from long experience, I have proved that it's always dangerous and troublesome to run after a woman. Leave her to run after you—she'll do it fast enough."

"Wait till you see her. Besides, I'm not running after any woman," averred Philip with some heat.

"Oh, I beg your pardon—I forgot. She's not a woman; she's a sun-angel! You are rowing, not running, after a sun-angel. Is that correct? I say, don't drive through the water like that; you'll pull the boat round."

Errington slackened his speed and laughed. "It's only curiosity," he said, lifting his hat, and pushing back the clustering dark-brown curls from his brow. "I bet you that sleek Dyceworthy fellow meant the old *bonde* and his daughter, when he

spoke of persons who were 'ejected' from the social circles of Bosekop. Fancy Bosekop society presuming to be particular!—what an absurd idea!"

"My dear fellow, don't pretend to be so deplorably ignorant! Surely you know that a trumpery village or a twopenny town is much more choice and exclusive in its 'sets' than a great city? I wouldn't live in a small place for the world. Every inhabitant would know the cut of my clothes by heart, and the number of buttons on my waistcoat. The grocer would copy the pattern of my trousers—the butcher would carry a cane like mine. It would be simply insufferable. To change the subject may I ask you if you know which way you are going, for it seems to me we're bound straight for a smash on that uncomfortable-looking rock, where there is certainly no landing-place."

Errington stopped pulling, and, standing up in the boat, began to examine the surroundings with keen interest. They were close to the great crag "shaped like a giant's helmet," as Vlademar Svensen had said. It rose sheer out of the water, and its sides were almost perpendicular. Some beautiful star-shaped sea anemones clung to it in a vari-colored cluster on one projection, and the running ripple of the small waves broke on its jagged corners with a musical splash and sparkle of white foam. Below them, in the emerald mirror of the fjord, it was so clear that they could see the fine white sand lying at the bottom, sprinkled thick with shells and lithe moving creatures of all shapes, while every now and then there streamed past them, brilliantly tinted specimens of the medusæ, with their long feelers or tendrils, looking like torn skeins of crimson and azure floss silk.

The place was very silent; only the sea-gulls circled round and round the summit of the great rock, some of them occasionally swooping down on the unwary fishes their keen eyes perceived in the waters beneath, then up again they soared, swaying their graceful wings and uttering at intervals that peculiar wild cry that in solitary haunts sounds so intensely mournful. Errington gazed about him in doubt for some minutes, then suddenly his face brightened. He sat down again in the boat and resumed his oar.

"Row quietly, George," he said, in a subdued tone. "Quietly—round to the left."

The oars dipped noiselessly, and the boat shot forward—then swerved sharply round in the direction indicated—and there before them lay a small sandy creek, white and shining as though sprinkled with powdered silver. From this, a small but strongly built wooden pier ran out into the sea. It was carved all over with fantastic figures, and in it, at equal distances, were fastened iron rings, such as are used for the safe mooring of boats. One boat was there already, and Errington recognized it with delight. It

was that in which he had seen the mysterious maiden disappear. High and dry on the sand, and out of reach of the tides, was a neat sailing vessel; its name was painted round the stern—"The Valkyrie."

As the two friends ran their boat on shore, and fastened it to the furthest ring of the convenient pier, they caught the distant sound of the plaintive "coo-cooing" of turtle doves.

"You've done it this time, old boy," said Lorimer, speaking in a whisper, though he knew not why. "This is the old *bonde's* own private landing-place evidently, and here's a footpath leading somewhere. Shall we follow it?"

Philip emphatically assented, and, treading softly, like the trespassers they felt themselves to be, they climbed the ascending narrow way that guided them up from the sea-shore, round through a close thicket of pines, where their footsteps fell noiselessly on a thick carpet of velvety green moss, dotted prettily here and there with the red gleam of ripening wild strawberries. Everything was intensely still, and as yet there seemed no sign of human habitation. Suddenly a low whirring sound broke upon their ears, and Errington, who was a little in advance of his companion, paused abruptly with a smothered exclamation, and drew back on tiptoe, catching Lorimer by the arm.

"By Jove!" he whispered, excitedly, "we've come right up to the very windows of the house. Look!"

Lorimer obeyed, and for once, the light jest died upon his lips. Surprise and admiration held him absolutely silent.

CHAPTER V.

Elle filait et souriait—et je crois qu'elle enveloppa mon cœur avec son fil.—HEINE.

BEFORE them, close enough for their outstretched hands to have touched it, was what appeared to be a framed picture, exquisitely painted—a picture perfect in outline, matchless in color, faultless in detail—but which was in reality nothing but a large latticed window thrown wide open to admit the air. They could now see distinctly through the shadows cast by the stately pines a long, low, rambling house, built roughly, but strongly, of wooden rafters, all overgrown with green and blossoming creepers; but they scarcely glanced at the actual building, so strongly was their attention riveted on the one window before them. It was surrounded by an unusually broad framework, curiously and elaborately carved, and black as polished ebony. Flowers grew all about it—sweet peas, mignonnette, and large purple pansies—while red and white climbing roses rioted in untrained profusion over its