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

wide sill. Above it was a quaintly built dove-cot, where some of the strutting fan-tailed inhabitants were perched, swelling out their snowy breasts and discoursing of their domestic trials in notes of dulcet melancholy; while lower down, three or four ring-doves nestled on the roof in a patch of sunlight, spreading up their pinions like miniature sails, to catch the warmth and luster.

Within the deep, shadowy embrasure, like a jewel placed on dark velvet, was seated a girl spinning—no other than the mysterious maiden of the shell cavern. She was attired in a plain, straight gown, of some soft, white woolen stuff, cut squarely at the throat; her round, graceful arms were partially bare, and as the wheel turned swiftly, and her slender hands busied themselves with the flax, she smiled, as though some pleasing thought had touched her mind. Her smile had the effect of sudden sunshine in the dark room where she sat and spun—it was radiant and mirthful as the smile of a happy child. Yet her dark-blue eyes remained pensive and earnest, and the smile soon faded, leaving her fair face absorbed and almost dreamy. The whirr-whirring of the wheel grew less and less rapid—it slackened—it stopped altogether—and, as though startled by some unexpected sound, the girl paused and listened, pushing away the clustering masses of her rich hair from her brow. Then rising slowly from her seat, she advanced to the window, put aside the roses with one hand, and looked out—thus forming another picture as beautiful, if not more beautiful, than the first.

Lorimer drew his breath hard. "I say, old fellow," he whispered; but Errington pressed his arm with vice-like firmness, as a warning to him to be silent, while they both stepped further back into the dusky gloom of the pine-boughs.

The girl, meanwhile, stood motionless, in a half-expectant attitude, and, seeing her there, some of the doves on the roof flew down and strutted on the ground before her, coo-cooing proudly, as though desirous of attracting her attention. One of them boldly perched on the window-sill; she glanced at the bird musingly, and softly stroked its opaline wings and shining head without terrifying it. It seemed delighted to be noticed, and almost lay down under hand in order to be more conveniently caressed. Still gently smoothing its feathers, she leaned further out among the clambering wealth of blossoms, and called in a low, penetrating tone: "Father! father! is that you?"

There was no answer; and, after waiting a minute or two, she moved and resumed her former seat—the stray doves flew back to their customary promenade on the roof, and the drowsy whirr-whirr of the spinning-wheel murmured again its monotonous hum upon the air.

"Come on, Phil," whispered Lorimer, determined not to be checked this time; "I feel perfectly wretched! It's mean of us



to be skulking about here, as if we were a couple of low thieves waiting to trap some of those birds for a pigeon-pie. Come away—you've seen her; that's enough."

Errington did not move. Holding back a branch of pine, he watched the movements of the girl at her wheel with absorbed fascination.

Suddenly her sweet lips parted, and she sung a weird, wild melody, that seemed, like a running torrent, to have fallen from the crests of the mountains, bringing with it echoes from the furthest summits, mingled with soft wailings of a mournful wind,

Her voice was pure as the ring of fine crystal—deep, liquid, and tender, with a restrained passion in it that stirred Errington's heart and filled it with a strange unrest and feverish yearning—emotions which were new to him, and which while he realized their existence, moved him to a sort of ashamed impatience. He would have willingly left his post of observation now, if only for the sake of shaking off his unwonted sensations; and he took a step or two backward for that purpose, when Lorimer, in his turn, laid a detaining hand on his shoulder.

"For Heaven's sake, let us hear the song through!" he said in subdued tones. "What a voice! A positive golden flute!"

His rapt face betokened his enjoyment, and Errington, nothing loath, still lingered, his eyes fixed on the white-robed slim figure framed in the dark old rose-wreathed window—the figure that swayed softly with the motion of the wheel and the rhythm of the song—while flickering sunbeams sparkled now and then on the maiden's dusky gold hair, or touched up a warmer tint on her tenderly flushed cheeks and fair neck, more snowy than the gown she wore. Music poured from her lips as from the throat of a nightingale. The words she sung were Norwegian, and her listeners understood nothing of them; but the melody—the pathetic appealing melody—soul-moving as all true melody must be, touched the very core of their hearts and entangled them in a web of delicious reveries.

"Talk of Ary Scheffer's Gretchen!" murmured Lorimer, with a sigh. "What a miserable, pasty, milk-and-watery young person she is beside that magnificent, unconscious beauty! I give in, Phil! I admit your taste. I'm willing to swear that she's a sun-angel if you like. Her voice has convinced me of that."

At that instant the song ceased. Errington turned and regarded him steadfastly.

"Are *you* hit, George?" he said, softly, with a forced smile.

Lorimer's face flushed, but he met his friend's eyes frankly.

"I am no poacher, old fellow," he answered in the same quiet accents; "I think you know that. If that girl's mind is as lovely as her face, I say go in and win!"

Sir Philip smiled. His brow cleared and an expression of relief

settled there. The look of gladness was unconscious, but Lorimer saw it at once, and noted it.

"Nonsense!" he said, in a mirthful undertone. "How can I go in and win, as you say? What am I to do? I can't go up to that window and speak to her—she might take me for a thief."

"You look like a thief," replied Lorimer, surveying his friend's athletic figure, clad in its loose but well-cut yachting suit of white flannel, ornamented with silver anchor buttons, and taking a comprehensive glance from the easy pose of the fine head and handsome face, down to the trim foot with the high and well-arched instep. "Very much like a thief! I wonder I haven't noticed it before. Any London policeman would arrest you on the mere fact of your suspicious appearance."

Errington laughed. "Well, my boy, whatever my looks may testify, I am at this moment an undoubted trespasser on private property—and so are you for that matter. What shall we do?"

"Find the front door and ring the bell," suggested George, promptly. "Say we are benighted travelers and have lost our way. The *bonde* can but flay us. The operation, I believe, is painful, but it cannot last long."

"George, you are incorrigible. Suppose we go back and try the other side of this pine wood? That might lead us to the front of the house."

"I don't see why we shouldn't walk coolly past that window," said Lorimer. "If any observation is made by the fair Marguerite yonder, we can boldly say we have come to see the *bonde*."

Unconsciously they had both raised their voices a little during the latter part of their hasty dialogue, and at the instant when Lorimer uttered the last words, a heavy hand was laid on each of their shoulders—a hand that turned them round forcibly away from the window they had been gazing at, and a deep, resonant voice addressed them.

"The *bonde*? Truly, young men, you need seek no further—I am Olaf Guldmar."

Had he said, "I am an emperor," he could not have spoken with more pride.

Errington and his friend were for a moment speechless—partly from displeasure at the summary manner in which they had been seized and twisted round like young uprooted saplings, and partly from surprise and involuntary admiration for the personage who had treated them with such scant courtesy. They saw before them a man somewhat above the middle height, who might have served an aspiring sculptor as a perfect model for a chieftain of old Gaul, or a dauntless Viking. His frame was firmly and powerfully built, and seemed to be exceptionally strong and muscular, yet an air of almost courtly grace pervaded his movements, making each attitude he assumed more or less picturesque. He was broad-shouldered and deep-chested; his face was full and healthy colored, while his head was truly magnificent. Well-poised and shapely, it indicated power, will and wisdom, and was furthermore adorned by a rough, thick mass of snow-white hair that shone in the sunlight like spun silver. His beard was short and curly, trimmed after the fashion of the warriors of old Rome, and, from under his fierce fuzzy, gray eyebrows a pair of sentinel eyes, that were keen, clear and bold as an eagle's, looked out with a watchful steadiness—steadiness, that, like the sharp edge of a diamond, seemed warranted to cut through the brittle glass of a lie. Judging by his outward appearance, his age might have been guessed at as between fifty-eight and sixty, but he was, in truth, seventy-two, and more strong, active and daring than many another man whose years are not counted past the thirties. He was curiously attired, after something of the fashion of the Highlander, and something yet more of the ancient Greek, in a tunic, vest and loose jacket all made of reindeer skin, thickly embroidered with curious designs worked in coarse thread and colored beads; while thrown carelessly over his shoulders and knotted at his waist was a broad scarf of white woolen stuff or *wadmal*, very soft looking and warm. In his belt he carried a formidable hunting-knife, and as he faced the two intruders on his ground he rested one hand lightly yet suggestively on a weighty staff of pine, which was notched all over with quaint letters and figures, and terminated in a curved handle at the top. He waited for the young men to speak, and finding they remained silent he glanced at them half angrily and again repeated his words:



"I am the *bonde*—Olaf Guldmar. Speak your business and take your departure; my time is brief."

"Lorimer looked up with his usual nonchalance—a faint smile playing about his lips. He saw at once that the old farmer was not a man to be trifled with, and he raised his cap with a ready grace as he spoke.

"Fact is," he said, frankly, "we've no business here at all—not the least in the world. We are perfectly aware of it. We are trespassers, and we know it. Pray don't be hard on us, Mr.—Mr. Guldmar."

The *bonde* glanced him over with a quick lightning of the eyes, and the suspicion of a smile in the depths of his curly beard. He turned to Errington.

"Is this true? You came here on purpose, knowing the ground was private property?"

Errington, in his turn, lifted his cap from his clustering brown curls with that serene and stately court manner which was to him second nature.

"We did," he confessed, quietly following Lorimer's cue, and seeing also that it was best to be straightforward. "We heard

you spoken of in Bosekop, and we came to see if you would permit us the honor of your acquaintance."

The old man struck his pine staff violently into the ground and his face flushed wrathfully.

"Bosekop!" he exclaimed. "Talk to me of a wasp's nest! Bosekop! You shall hear of me there enough to satisfy your appetite for news. Bosekop! In the days when my race ruled the land such people as they that dwell there would have been put to sharpen my sword on the grindstone, or to wait, hungry and humble, for the refuse of the food left from my table."

He spoke with extraordinary heat and passion—it was evidently necessary to soothe him. Lorimer took a covert glance backward over his shoulder toward the lattice window, and saw that the white figure at the spinning-wheel had disappeared.

"My dear Mr. Guldmar," he then said, with polite fervor, "I assure you I think the Bosekop folk by no means deserve to sharpen your sword on the grindstone, or to enjoy the remains of your dinner! Myself, I despise them. My friend here, Sir Philip Errington, despises them—don't you, Phil?"

Errington nodded demurely.

"What my friend said just now is perfectly true," continued Lorimer. "We desire the honor of your acquaintance—it will charm and delight us above all things."

And his face beamed with a candid, winning, boyish smile, which was very captivating in its own way, and which certainly had its effect on the old *bonde*, for his tone softened, though he said gravely:

"My acquaintance, young men, is never sought by any. Those who are wise keep away from me. I love not strangers; it is best you should know it. I freely pardon your trespass; take your leave, and go in peace."

The two friends exchanged disconsolate looks. There really seemed nothing for it but to obey this unpleasing command. Errington made one more venture.

"May I hope, Mr. Guldmar," he said, with persuasive courtesy, "that you will break through your apparent rule of seclusion for once and visit me on board my yacht? You have no doubt seen her—the 'Eulalie'—she lies at anchor in the fjord."

The *bonde* looked him straight in the eyes. "I have seen her. A fair toy vessel to amuse an idle young man's leisure. You are he that in that fool's hole of a Bosekop is known as the 'rich Englishman'—an idle trifler with time—an aimless wanderer from those dull shores where they eat gold till they die of surfeit. I have heard of you—a mushroom knight, a fungus of nobility—an ephemeral growth on a grand decaying old tree, whose roots lie buried in the annals of a far-forgotten past."

The rich, deep voice of the old man quivered as he spoke, and a



shadow of melancholy flitted across his brow. Errington listened with unruffled patience. He heard himself, his pleasures, his wealth, his rank thus made light of without the least offense. He met the steady gaze of the *bonde* quietly, and slightly bent his head as though in deference to his remarks.

"You are quite right," he said, simply. "We modern men are but pygmies compared with the giants of old time. Royal blood itself is tainted nowadays. But, for myself, I attach no importance to the mere appurtenances of life—the baggage that accompanies one on that brief journey. Life itself is quite enough for me."

"And for me, too," averred Lorimer, delighted that his friend had taken the old farmer's scornful observations so good-naturedly. "But do you know, Mr. Guldmar, you are making life unpleasant for us just now by turning us out? The conversation is becoming interesting. Why not prolong it? We have no friends in Bosekop, and we are to anchor here for some days. Surely you will allow us to come and see you again?"

Olaf Guldmar was silent. He advanced a step nearer, and studied them both with such earnest and searching scrutiny that as they remembered the real attraction that had drawn them thither, the conscious blood mounted to their faces, flushing Errington's forehead to the very roots of his curly brown hair. Still the old man gazed as though he sought to read their very soul. He muttered something to himself in Norwegian, and finally, to their utter astonishment, he drew his hunting-knife from its sheath and with a rapid, wild gesture threw it on the ground and placed his foot upon it.

"Be it so!" he said, briefly. "I cover the blade! You are men; like men, you speak truth. As such I receive you. Had you told me a lie concerning your coming here—had you made pretense of having lost your way, or other such shifty evasion, your path would never have again crossed mine. As it is—welcome."

And he held out his hand with a sort of royal dignity, still resting one foot on the fallen weapon. The young men, struck by his action and gratified by his change of manner and the genial expression that now softened his rugged features, were quick to respond to his friendly greeting, and the *bonde*, picking up and resheathing his hunting-knife as if he had done nothing at all out of the common, motioned them toward the very window on which their eyes had been so long and so ardently fixed.

"Come!" he said. "You must drain a cup of wine with me before you leave. Your unguided footsteps led you by the wrong path—I saw your boat moored to my pier, and wondered who had been venturesome enough to trample through my woodland. I might have guessed that only a couple of idle boys like yourselves, knowing no better, would have pushed their way to a spot that all

worthy dwellers in Bosekop, and all true followers of the Lutheran devilry, avoid as though the plague were settled in it."

And the old man laughed, a splendid, mellow laugh, with the ring of true jollity in it—a laugh that was infectious, for Errington and Lorimer joined in it heartily without precisely knowing why. Lorimer, however, thought it seemly to protest against the appellation "idle boys."

"What do you take us for, sir?" he said, with lazy good nature. "I carry upon my shoulders the sorrowful burden of twenty-six years—Philip, there, is painfully conscious of being thirty—may we not therefore dispute the word 'boys' as being derogatory to our dignity? You called us 'men' awhile ago—remember that."

Olaf Guldmar laughed again. His suspicious gravity had entirely disappeared, leaving his face a beaming mirror of beneficence and good humor.

"So you *are* men," he said, cheerily, "men in the bud, like leaves on a tree. But you seem boys to a tough old stump of humanity such as I am. That is my way—my child Thelma, though they tell me she is a woman grown, is always a babe to me. 'Tis one of the many privileges of the old to see the world about them always young and full of children."

And he led the way past the wide-open lattice, where they could dimly perceive the spinning-wheel standing alone, as though thinking deeply of the fair hands that had lately left it idle, and so round to the actual front of the house, which was exceedingly picturesque, and literally overgrown with roses from ground to roof. The entrance door stood open; it was surrounded by a wide, deep porch richly carved and grotesquely ornamented, having two comfortable seats within it, one on each side. Through this they went, involuntarily brushing down as they passed a shower of pink and white rose-leaves, and stepped into a wide passage, where upon walls of dark polished pine hung a large collection of curiously shaped weapons, all of primitive manufacture, such as stone darts and rough axes, together with bows and arrows and two handled swords, huge as the fabled weapon of William Wallace.

Opening a door to the right, the *bonde* stood courteously aside and bade them enter, and they found themselves in the very apartment where they had seen the maiden spinning.

"Sit down, sit down," said their host hospitably. "We will have wine directly, and Thelma shall come hither. Thelma! Thelma! Where is the child? She wanders hither and thither like a mountain sprite. Wait here my lads, I shall return directly."

As he strode away, leaving Errington and Lorimer delightedat the success of their plans, yet somewhat abashed, to . There was a peace and gentle simplicity about the little roor in which they were that touched the chivalrous sentiment in their natures and kept them silent. On one side of it half a dozen broad shelves



supported a goodly row of well-bound volumes, among which the time-honored golden names of Shakespeare and Scott glittered invitingly, together with such works as Chapman's "Homer," Byron's "Childe Harold," the "Poems of John Keats," Gibbon's "Rome," and Plutarch; while mingled with these were the devotional works in French of Alphonse de Liguori, the "Imitation," also in French—and a number of books with titles in Norwegian—altogether a heterogeneous collection of literature, yet not without interest as displaying taste and culture on the part of those to whom it belonged. Errington, himself learned in books, was surprised to see so many standard works in the library of one who professed to be nothing but a Norwegian farmer, and his respect for the sturdy old *bonde* increased. There were no pictures in the room—the wide lattice window on one hand, looking out on the roses and the pine wood, and the other smaller one, close to the entrance door, from which the fjord was distinctly visible, were sufficient pictures in themselves to need no others. The furniture was roughly made of pine and seemed to have been carved by hand—some of the chairs were very quaint and pretty, and would have sold in a bric-à-brac shop for more than a sovereign apiece. On the wide mantle-shelf was a quantity of curious old china that seemed to have been picked up from all parts of the world—most of it was undoubtedly valuable. In one dark corner stood an ancient harp, then there was the spinning wheel—itself a curiosity fit for a museum—testifying dumbly of the mistress of all these surroundings, and on the floor there was something else—something that both the young men were strongly inclined to take possession of. It was only a bunch of tiny meadow daisies, fastened together with a bit of blue silk. It had fallen—they guessed by whom it had been worn—but neither made any remark, and both, by some strange instinct, avoiding looking at it, as though the innocent little blossoms carried within them some terrible temptation. They were conscious of a certain embarrassment, and making an effort to break through it, Lorimer remarked, softly:

"By Jove, Phil! if this old Guldmar really knew what you now are up to I believe he would bundle you out of this place like a tramp. Didn't you feel a sneak when he said we had told the truth like men?"

Philip smiled dreamily. He was seated in one of the quaintly carved chairs, half absorbed in what was evidently a pleasing reverie.

"No, not exactly," he replied. "Because we *did* tell him the truth; we did want to know him, and he's worth knowing, too. He is a magnificent looking fellow; don't you think so?"

"Rather!" assented Lorimer, with emphasis. "I wish there were any hope of my becoming such a fine old buffer in my *decadence*—it would be worth living for, if only to look at myself

in the glass now and then. He rather startled me when he threw down that knife, though. I suppose it is some old Norwegian custom?"

"I suppose so," Errington answered, and then was silent, for at that moment the door opened, and the old farmer returned, followed by a girl bearing a tray glittering with flasks of Italian wine, and long graceful glasses shaped like round goblets, set on particularly slender stems. The sight of the girl disappointed the eager visitors, for though she was undeniably pretty, she was not Thelma. She was short and plump, with rebellious nut-brown locks, that rippled about her face and from under her close white cap with persistent untidiness. Her cheeks were as round and red as love-apples, and she had dancing blue eyes that appeared forever engaged in good-natured efforts to outsparkle each other. She wore a spotless apron, lavishly trimmed with coquettish little starched frills—her hands were, unfortunately, rather large and coarse—but her smile, as she set down the tray and courtesied respectfully to the young men, was charming, disclosing, as it did, tiny teeth as even and white as a double row of small pearls.

"That is well, Britta," said Guldmar, speaking in English and assisting her to place the glasses. "Now, quick!—run after thy mistress to the shore—her boat cannot yet have left the creek—bid her return and come to me—tell her there are friends here who will be glad of her presence."

Britta hurried away at once, but Errington's heart sunk. Thelma had gone—gone, most probably for one of those erratic journeys across the fjord to the cave where he had first seen her. She would not come back, he felt certain; not even at her father's request would that beautiful, proud maiden, consent to alter her plans. What an unlucky destiny was his! Absorbed in disappointed reflections, he scarcely heard the enthusiastic praises Lorimer was diplomatically bestowing on the *bonde's* wine. He hardly felt its mellow flavor on his own palate, though it was in truth delicious, and fit for the table of a monarch. Guldmar noticed the young baronet's abstraction and addressed him with genial kindness."

"Are you thinking, Sir Philip, of my rough speeches to you yonder? No offense was meant, no offense—" the fellow paused, and laughed over his wine-glass. "Yet I may as well be honest about it. Offense *was* meant; but when I found that none was taken, my humor changed."

A slight, half-weary smile played on Errington's lips. "I assure you, sir," he said, "I agreed with you then, and agree with you now, in every word you uttered. You took my measure very correctly, and allow me to add that no one can be more conscious of my own insignificance than I am myself. The days we live in



are insignificant; the chronicle of our paltry doings will be skipped by future readers of the country's history. Among a society of particularly useless men, I feel myself to be one of the most useless. If you could show me any way to make my life valuable——"

He paused abruptly, and his heart beat with inexplicable rapidity. A light step and the rustle of a dress was heard coming through the porch; another perfumed shower of rose-leaves fell softly on the garden path; the door of the room opened, and a tall, fair white-robed figure shone forth from the dark background of the outer passage—a figure that hesitated on the threshold, and then advanced noiselessly and with a reluctant shyness. The old *bonde* turned round in his chair with a smile.

"Ah, here she is!" he said, fondly. "Where hast thou been, my Thelma?"

## CHAPTER VI.

And Sigurd the Bishop said,
"The old gods are not dead,
For the great Thor still reigns,
And among the Jarls and Thanes
The old witchcraft is spread."

LONGFELLOW'S *Saga of King Olaf*.

THE girl stood silent, and a faint blush crimsoned her cheeks. The young men had risen at her entrance, and in one fleeting glance she recognized Errington, though she gave no sign to that effect.

"See, my darling," continued her father, "here are English visitors to Norway. This is Sir Philip Errington, who travels through our wild waters in the great steam yacht now at anchor in the fjord; and this is his friend, Mr.—Mr.—Lorimer—have I caught your name rightly, my lad?" he continued, turning to George Lorimer with a kindly smile.

"You have, sir," answered that gentleman, promptly, and then he was mute, feeling curiously abashed in the presence of this royal-looking young lady, who, encircled by her father's arm, raised her deep, dazzling blue eyes, and serenely bent her stately head to him as his name was mentioned.

The old farmer went on: "Welcome, then, Thelma mine!—friends are scarce in these days, and we must not be ungrateful for good company. What! what! I know honest lads when I see them! Smile on them, my Thelma!—and then we will warm their hearts with another cup of wine."

As he spoke the maiden advanced with a graceful, even noble