CHAPTER X.

She believed that by dealing nobly with all, all would show themselves noble ; so that whatsoever she did became her.—HAFIZ.

As the afternoon lengthened, and the sun lowered his glittering shield toward that part of the horizon where he rested a brief while without setting, the "Eulalie"—her white sails spread to the cool, refreshing breeze—swept gracefully and swiftly back to her old place on the fjord, and her anchor dropped with musical clank and splash, just as Mr. Dyceworthy entered his house, fatigued, perspiring, and ill-tempered at the non-success of his day. All on board of the yacht were at dinner—a dinner of the most tasteful and elegant description, such as Sir Philip Errington well knew how to order and superintend—and Thelma, leaning against the violet velvet cushions that were piled behind her for her greater ease, looked—as she indeed was—the veritable queen of the feast. Macfarlane and Duprez had been rendered astonished and bashful by her excessive beauty. From the moment she came on board with her father, clad in her simple white gown, with a deep crimson hood drawn over her fair hair, and tied under her rounded chin, she had taken them all captive—they were her abject slaves in heart, though they put on very creditable airs of manly independence and nonchalance. Each man in his different way strove to amuse or interest her, except, strange to say, Errington himself, who, though deeply courteous to her, kept somewhat in the background, and appeared more anxious to render himself agreeable to old Olaf Guldmar than to win the good graces of his lovely daughter. The girl was delighted with everything on board the yacht—she admired its elegance and luxury with childlike enthusiasm ; she gloried in the speed with which its glittering prow cleaved the waters ; she clapped her hands at the hiss of the white foam as it split into a creaming pathway for the rushing vessel ; and she was so unaffected and graceful in all her actions and attitudes that the slow blood of the cautious Macfarlane began to warm up by degrees to a most unwonted heat of admiration. When she had first arrived, Errington, in receiving her, had seriously apologized for not having some lady to meet her, but she seemed not to understand his meaning. Her naïve smile and frankly uplifted eyes put all his suddenly conceived notions of social stiffness to flight.

"Why should a lady come?" she asked, sweetly. "It is not necessary?"

"Of course it isn't!" said Lorimer, promptly and delightedly. "I am sure we shall be able to amuse you, Miss Guldmar."

"Oh—for that!" she replied, with a little shrug that had something French about it. "I amuse myself always! I am amused now—you must not trouble yourselves!"

As she was introduced to Duprez and Macfarlane, she gave them each a quaint, sweeping courtesy, which had the effect of making them feel the most ungainly, lumbersome fellows on the face of the earth. Macfarlane grew secretly enraged at the length of his legs—while Pierre Duprez, though his bow was entirely Parisian, decided in his own mind that it was jerky, and not good style. She was perfectly unembarrassed with all the young men ; she laughed at their jokes and turned her glorious eyes full on them with the unabashed sweetness of innocence ; she listened to the accounts they gave her of their fishing and climbing excursions with the most eager interest—and, in her turn, she told them of fresh nooks and streams and waterfalls, of which they had never even heard the names. Not only were they enchanted with her, but they were thoroughly delighted with her father, Olaf Guldmar. The sturdy old pagan was in the best of humors, and seemed determined to be pleased with everything ; he told good stories, and laughed that rollicking, jovial laugh of his with such unforced heartiness that it was impossible to be dull in his company—and not one of Errington's companions gave a thought to the reports concerning him and his daughter which had been so gratuitously related by Mr. Dyceworthy.

They had had a glorious day's sail, piloted by Valdemar Svensen, whose astonishment at seeing the Guldmars on board the "Eulalie" was depicted in his face, but who prudently forbore from making any remarks thereon. The *bonde* hailed him good-humoredly as an old acquaintance—much in the tone of a master addressing a servant—and Thelma smiled kindly at him ; but the boundary line between superior and inferior was in this case very strongly marked, and neither side showed any intention of overstepping it. In the course of the day Duprez had accidentally lapsed into French, whereupon, to his surprise, Thelma had answered him in the same tongue—though with a different and much softer pronunciation. Her "*bien zoli!*" had the mellifluous sweetness of the Provençal dialect, and on his eagerly questioning her, he learned that she had received her education in a large convent at Arles, where she had learned French from the nuns. Her father overheard her talking of her school-days, and he added :

"Yes, I sent my girl away for her education, though I know the teaching is good in Christiania. Yet it did not seem good enough for her. Besides, your modern 'higher education' is not the fit thing for a woman—it is too heavy and commonplace. Thelma

knows nothing about mathematics or algebra. She can sing and read and write—and, what is more, she can spin and sew; but even these things were not the first consideration with me. I wanted her disposition trained, and her bodily health attended to. I said to those good women at Arles: 'Look here—here's a child for you! I don't care how much or how little she knows about accomplishments. I want her to be sound and sweet from head to heel—a clean mind in a wholesome body. Teach her self-respect, and make her prefer death to a lie. Show her the curse of a shrewish temper and the blessing of cheerfulness. That will satisfy me!' I dare say, now I come to think of it, those nuns thought me an odd customer; but, at any rate, they seemed to understand me. Thelma was very happy with them, and considering all things"—the old man's eyes twinkled fondly—"she hasn't turned out so badly!"

They laughed—and Thelma blushed as Errington's dreamy eyes rested on her with a look, which, though he was unconscious of it, spoke passionate admiration. The day passed too quickly with them all—and now, as they sat at dinner in the richly ornamented saloon, there was not one among them who could contemplate without reluctance the approaching break-up of so pleasant a party. Dessert was served, and as Thelma toyed with the fruit on her plate and sipped her glass of champagne, her face grew serious and absorbed—even sad—and she scarcely seemed to hear the merry chatter of tongues around her, till Errington's voice asking a question of her father roused her into a swift attention.

"Do you know any one of the name of Sigurd?" he was saying, "a poor fellow whose wits are in heaven, let us hope—for they certainly are not on earth."

Olaf Guldmar's fine face softened with pity, and he replied:

"Sigurd? Have you met him, then? Ah, poor boy, his is a sad fate! He has wit enough, but it works wrongly; the brain is there, but 'tis twisted. Yes, we know Sigurd well enough—his home is with us, in default of a better. Ay, ay! we snatched him from death—perhaps unwisely—yet he has a good heart and finds pleasure in his life."

"He is a kind of poet in his own way," went on Errington, watching Thelma as she listened intently to their conversation. "Do you know he actually visited me on board here last night, and begged me to go away from the Alten Fjord altogether? He seemed afraid of me, as if he thought I meant to do him some harm."

"How strange!" murmured Thelma. "Sigurd never speaks to visitors—he is too shy. I cannot understand his motive!"

"Ah, my dear!" sighed her father. "Has he any motive at all?—and does he ever understand himself? His fancies change with every shifting breeze! I will tell you," he continued, addressing himself to Errington, "how he came to be, as it were, a bit of our home. Just before Thelma was born, I was walking with my wife one day on the shore, when we both caught sight of something bumping against our little pier, like a large box or basket. I managed to get hold of it with a boat-hook and drag it in; it was a sort of creel such as is used to pack fish in, and in it was the naked body of a half-drowned child. It was an ugly little creature—a newly-born infant deformity—and on its chest there was a horrible scar in the shape of a cross, as though it had been gashed deeply with a pen-knife. I thought it was dead, and was for throwing it back into the fjord, but my wife—a tender-hearted angel—took the poor wretched little wet body in her arms, and found that it breathed. She warmed it, dried it, and wrapped it in her shawl—and after awhile the tiny monster opened its eyes and stared at her. Well!—somehow, neither of us could forget the look it gave us—such a solemn, warning, pitiful, appealing sort of expression! There was no resisting it—so we took the foundling and did the best we could for him. We gave him the name of Sigurd—and when Thelma was born, the two babies used to play together all day, and we never noticed anything wrong with the boy, except his natural deformity, till he was about ten or twelve years old. Then we saw to our sorrow that the gods had chosen to play havoc with his wits. However, we humored him tenderly, and he was always manageable. Poor Sigurd! He adored my wife; I have known him listen for hours to catch the sound of her footstep; he would actually deck the threshold with flowers in the morning that she might tread on them as she passed by." The old *bonde* sighed and rubbed his hand across his eyes with a gesture half of pain, half of impatience. "And now he is Thelma's slave—a regular servant to her. She can manage him best of us all—he is as docile as a lamb, and will do anything she tells him."

"I am not surprised at that," said the gallant Duprez; "there is reason in such obedience!"

Thelma looked at him inquiringly, ignoring the implied compliment.

"You think so!" she said, simply. "I am glad! I always hope that he will one day be well in mind—and every little sign of reason in him is pleasant to me."

Duprez was silent. It was evidently no use making even an attempt at flattering this strange girl; surely she must be dense not to understand compliments that most other women compel from the lips of men as their right? He was confused—his Paris breeding was no use to him—in fact he had been at a loss all day, and his conversation had, even to himself, seemed particularly shallow and frothy. This Mlle. Guldmar, as he called her, was by no means stupid—she was not a mere moving statue of lovely flesh and perfect color, whose outward beauty was her only recommend-

ation—she was, on the contrary, of a most superior intelligence—she had read much and thought more—and the dignified elegance of her manner and bearing would have done honor to a queen. After all, thought Duprez, musingly, the social creeds of Paris *might* be wrong—it was just possible! There might be women who were womanly—there might be beautiful girls who were neither vain nor frivolous—there might even be creatures of the feminine sex beside whom a trained Parisian coquette would seem nothing more than a painted fiend of the neuter gender. These were new and startling considerations to the feather-light mind of the Frenchman—and unconsciously, his fancy began to busy itself with the old romantic histories of the ancient French chivalry, when faith and love and loyalty kept white the lilies of France, and the stately courtesy and unflinching pride of the *ancien régime* made its name honored throughout the world. An odd direction indeed for Pierre Duprez's reflections to wander in—he, who never reflected on either past or future, but was content to fritter away the present as pleasantly as might be—and the only reason to which his unusually serious reverie could be attributed was the presence of Thelma. She certainly had a strange influence on them all, though she herself was not aware of it—and not only Errington, but each one of his companions had been deeply considering during the day, that notwithstanding the unheroic tendency of modern living, life itself might be turned to good and even noble account, if only an effort were made in the right direction.

Such was the compelling effect of Thelma's stainless mind, reflected in her pure face, on the different dispositions of all the young men; and she, perfectly unconscious of it, smiled at them and conversed gayly—little knowing, as she talked in her own sweet and unaffected way, that the most profound resolutions were being formed, and the most noble and unselfish deeds were being planned in the souls of her listeners—all forsooth! because one fair, innocent woman had, in the clear, grave glances of her wondrous sea-blue eyes, suddenly made them aware of their own utter unworthiness. Macfarlane, meditatively watching the girl from under his pale eyelashes, thought of Mr. Dyceworthy's matrimonial pretensions with a humorous smile hovering on his thin lips.

"Ma certes! the fellow has an unco' gude opeenion o' himsel'," he mused. "He might as well offer his hand in marriage to the queen while he's aboot it—he wad hae just as muckle chance o' acceptance."

Meanwhile Errington, having learned all he wished to know concerning Sigurd, was skillfully drawing out old Olaf Guldmar, and getting him to give his ideas on things in general, a task in which Lorimer joined.

"So you don't think we're making any progress nowadays?"

inquired the latter, with an appearance of interest and a lazy amusement in his blue eyes as he put the question.

"Progress!" exclaimed Guldmar. "Not a bit of it! It is all a going backward; it may not seem apparent, but it is so. England, for instance, is losing the great place she once held in the world's history—and these things always happen to all nations when money becomes more precious to the souls of the people than honesty and honor. I take the universal widespread greed of gain to be one of the worst signs of the times—the forewarning of some great upheaval and disaster, the effects of which no human mind can calculate. I am told that America is destined to be the dominating power of the future—but I doubt it! Its politics are too corrupt—its people live too fast and burn their candle at both ends, which is unnatural and most unwholesome; moreover, it is almost destitute of Art in its highest forms—and is not its confessed watchword 'the Almighty Dollar'? And such a country as that expects to arrogate to itself the absolute sway of the world? I tell you, *no*—ten thousand times *no!* It is destitute of nearly everything that has made nations great and all-powerful in historic annals—and my belief is that what has been will be again—and that what has never been, will never be."

"You mean by that, I suppose, that there is no possibility of doing anything new—no way of branching out in some better and untried direction?" asked Errington.

Olaf Guldmar shook his head emphatically. "You can't do it," he said, decisively. "Everything in every way has been begun and completed and then forgotten over and over, in this world—to be begun and completed and forgotten again, and so on to the end of the chapter. No one nation is better than another in this respect—there is, there can be, nothing new. Norway, for example, has had its day; whether it will ever have another I know not—at any rate, I shall not live to see it. And, yet, what a past——!" He broke off and his eyes grew meditative.

Lorimer looked at him. "You would have been a Viking, Mr. Guldmar, had you lived in the old days," he said, with a smile.

"I should indeed!" returned the old man, with an unconsciously haughty gesture of his head; "and no better could have befallen me! To sail the seas in hot pursuit of one's enemies or in search of further conquest—to feel the very wind and sun beating up the blood in one's veins—to live the life of a *man*—a true man!—in all the pride and worth of strength and invincible vigor!—how much better than the puling, feeble, sickly existence led by the majority of men to-day! I dwell apart from them as much as I can—I steep my mind and body in the joys of nature and the free fresh air—but often I feel that the old days of the heroes must have been best—when Gorm the Bold and the fierce Siegfried seized Paris and stabled their horses in the chapel where Charlemagne lay buried!"

Pierre Duprez looked up with a faint smile. "Ah, *pardon!* But that was surely a very long time ago!"

"True!" said Guldmar, quietly. "And no doubt you will not believe the story at this distance of years. But the day is coming when people will look back on the little chronicle of your empire—your commune—your republic, all your little affairs and will say: 'Surely these things are myths; they occurred—if they occurred at all—a very long time ago!'"

"Monsieur is a philosopher!" said Duprez, with a good-humored gesture; "I would not presume to contradict him."

"You see, my lad," went on Guldmar, more gently, "there is much in our ancient Norwegian history that is forgotten or ignored by students of to-day. The travelers that come hither come to see the glories of our glaciers and fjords—but they think little or nothing of the vanished tribe of heroes who once possessed the land. If you know your Greek history, you must have heard of Pythias, who lived three hundred and fifty-six years before Christ, and who was taken captive by a band of Norsemen and carried away to see 'the place where the sun slept in winter.' Most probably he came to this very spot, the Alten Fjord—at any rate, the ancient Greeks had good words to say for the 'Outside Northwinders,' as they called us Norwegians, for they reported us to be 'persons living in peace with their gods and themselves.' Again, one of the oldest tribes in the world came among us in times past—the Phœnicians—there are traces among us still of their customs and manners. Yes! we have a great deal to look back upon with pride as well as sorrow; and much as I hear of the wonders of the New World, the marvels and the go-ahead speed of American manners and civilization, I would rather be a Norseman than a Yankee." And he laughed.

"There's more dignity in the name, at any rate," said Lorimer. "But I say, Mr. Guldmar, you are 'up' in history much better than I am. The annals of my country were grounded into my tender soul early in life, but I have a very hazy recollection of them. I know Henry VIII. got rid of his wives expeditiously and conveniently—and I distinctly remember that Queen Elizabeth wore the first pair of silk stockings, and danced a kind of jig in them with the Earl of Leicester; these things interested me at the time—and they now seem firmly impressed on my memory to the exclusion of everything else that might possibly be more important."

Old Guldmar smiled, but Thelma laughed outright, and her eyes danced mirthfully.

"Ah, I do know you now!" she said, nodding her fair head at him wisely. "You are not anything that is to be believed! So I shall well understand you—that is, you are a very great scholar—but that it pleases you to pretend you are a dunce!"

Lorimer's face brightened into a very gentle and winning softness as he looked at her.

"I assure you, Miss Guldmar, I am not pretending in the least. I'm no scholar. Errington is, if you like! If it hadn't been for him, I should never have learned anything at Oxford at all. He used to leap over a difficulty while I was looking at it. Phil, don't interrupt me—you know you did! I tell you he's up to everything: Greek, Latin, and all the rest of it—and, what's more, he writes well; I believe—though he'll never forgive me for mentioning it—that he has even published some poems."

"Be quiet, George!" exclaimed Errington, with a vexed laugh. "You are boring Miss Guldmar to death!"

"What is *boring?*" asked Thelma, gently, and then turning her eyes full on the young baronet, she added, "I like to hear that you will pass your days sometimes without shooting the birds and killing the fish; it can hurt nobody for you to write." And she smiled that dreamy, pensive smile of hers that was so infinitely bewitching. "You must show me all your sweet poems!"

Errington colored hotly. "They are all nonsense, Miss Guldmar," he said, quickly. "There's nothing 'sweet' about them, I tell you frankly. All rubbish, every line of them!"

"Then you should not write them," said Thelma, quietly. "It is only a pity and a disappointment."

"I wish every one were of your opinion," laughed Lorimer; "it would spare us a lot of indifferent verse."

"Ah! you have the chief Skald of all the world in your land!" cried Guldmar, bringing his fist down with a jovial thump on the table. "He can teach you all that you need to know."

"*Skald?*" queried Lorimer, dubiously. "Oh, you mean bard. I suppose you allude to Shakespeare?"

"I do," said the old *bonde*, enthusiastically; "he is the only glory of your country I envy! I would give anything to prove him a Norwegian. By Valhalla! had he but been one of the bards of Odin the world might have followed the grand old creed still! If anything could ever persuade me to be a Christian, it would be the fact that Shakespeare was one. If England's name is rendered imperishable, it will be through the fame of Shakespeare alone—just as we have a kind of tenderness for degraded modern Greece, because of Homer. Ay, ay! countries and nations are worthless enough; it is only the great names of heroes that endure, to teach the lesson that is never learned sufficiently, namely, that man and man alone is fitted to grasp the prize of immortality."

"Ye believe in immortality?" inquired Macfarlane, seriously.

Guldmar's keen eyes lighted on him with fiery impetuousness.

"Believe in it? I possess it! How can it be taken from me? As well make a bird without wings, a tree without sap, an ocean without depth, as expect to find a man without an immortal soul!

What a question to ask? Do *you* not possess Heaven's gift? and why should not I?"

"No offense," said Macfarlane, secretly astonished at the old *bonde's* fervor—for had not he, though himself intending to become a devout minister of the Word—had not he now and then felt a creeping doubt as to whether, after all, there was any truth in the doctrine of another life than this one. "I only thocht ye might have perhaps questioned the probabeelity o't, in your own mind?"

"I never question Divine authority," replied Olaf Guldmar; "I pity those that do!"

"And this Divine authority?" asked Duprez, suddenly, with a delicate sarcastic smile, "how and where do you perceive it?"

"In the very Law that compels me to exist, young sir," said Guldmar—"in the mysteries of the universe about me—the glory of the heavens—the wonders of the sea! You have perhaps lived in cities all your life, and your mind is cramped a bit. No wonder—you can hardly see the stars above the roofs of a wilderness of houses. Cities are men's work—the gods have never had a finger in the building of them. Dwelling in them, I suppose you cannot help forgetting Divine authority altogether; but here—here among the mountains, you would soon remember it! You should live here—it would make a man of you!"

"And you do not consider me a man?" inquired Duprez, with imperturbable good humor.

Guldmar laughed. "Well, not quite!" he admitted candidly; "there's not enough muscle about you. I confess I like to see strong fellows—fellows fit to rule the planet on which they are placed. That's my whim!—but you're a neat little chap enough, and I dare say you can hold your own!"

And his eyes twinkled good-temperedly as he filled himself another glass of his host's fine Burgundy and drank it off while Duprez, with a half-plaintive, half-comical shrug of resignation to Guldmar's verdict on his personal appearance, asked Thelma if she would favor them with a song. She rose from her seat instantly, without any affected hesitation, and went to the piano. She had a delicate touch, and accompanied herself with great taste; but her voice—full, penetrating, rich and true—was one of the purest and most sympathetic ever possessed by woman, and its freshness was unspoiled by any of the varied "system" of torture invented by singing-masters for the ingenious destruction of the delicate vocal organ. She sung a Norwegian love-song in the original tongue, which might be roughly translated as follows:

"Lovest thou me for my beauty's sake?
Love me not then!
Love the victorious, glittering Sun,
The fadeless, deathless, marvelous One!

"Lovest thou me for my youth's sake?
Love me not then!
Love the triumphant, unperishing Spring,
Who every year new charms doth bring!

"Lovest thou me for treasure's sake?
Oh, love me not then!
Love the deep, the wonderful Sea,
Its jewels are worthier love than me!

"Lovest thou me for Love's own sake?
Ah, sweet, then love me!
More than the Sun and the Spring and the Sea,
Is the faithful heart I will yield to thee!"

A silence greeted the close of her song. Though the young men were ignorant of the meaning of the words till old Guldmar translated them for their benefit, they could feel the intensity of the passion vibrating through her ringing tones—and Errington sighed involuntarily. She heard the sigh, and turned round on the music-stool laughing.

"Are you so tired, or sad, or what is it?" she asked merrily. "It is too melancholy a tune? And I was foolish to sing it—because you cannot understand the meaning of it. It is all about love—and of course love is always sorrowful."

"Always?" asked Lorimer, with a half smile.

"I do not know," she said, frankly, with a pretty, deprecatory gesture of her hands—"but all books say so! It must be a great pain and also a great happiness. Let me think what I can sing to you now—but perhaps you will yourself sing?"

"Not one of us has a voice, Miss Guldmar," said Errington. "I used to think I had, but Lorimer discouraged my efforts."

"Men shouldn't sing," observed Lorimer. "If they only knew how awfully ridiculous they look, standing up in dress-coats and white ties, pouring forth inane love-ditties that nobody wants to hear, they wouldn't do it. Only a woman looks pretty while singing."

"Ah, that is very nice!" said Thelma, with a demure smile. "Then I am agreeable to you when I sing?"

Agreeable? This was far too tame a word—they all rose from the table and came toward her, with many assurances of their delight and admiration; but she put all their compliments aside with a little gesture that was both incredulous and peremptory.

"You must not say so many things in praise of me," she said, with a swift upward glance at Errington, where he leaned on the piano regarding her. "It is nothing to be able to sing. It is only like the birds; but we cannot understand the words they say, just as you cannot understand Norwegian. Listen—here is a little ballad you will all know," and she played a soft prelude, while her

voice, subdued to a plaintive murmur, rippled out in the dainty verses of Sainte-Beuve :

" Sur ma lyre, l'autre fois
Dans un bois,
Ma main préludait à peine;
Une colombe descend
En passant,
Blanche sur le luth d'ébène.

" Mais au lieu d'accords, touchants,
De doux chants,
La colombe gémissante
Me demande par pitié
Sa moitié
Sa moitié loin d'elle absente ! "

She sung this seriously and sweetly, till she came to the last three lines, when, catching Errington's earnest gaze, her voice quivered and her cheeks flushed. She rose from the piano as soon as she had finished, and said to the *bonde*, who had been watching her with proud and gratified looks :

"It is growing late, father. We must say good-bye to our friends and return home."

" Not yet ! " eagerly implored Sir Philip. " Come up on deck—we will have coffee there, and afterward you shall leave us when you will."

Guldmar acquiesced in this arrangement before his daughter had time to raise any objection, and they all went on deck, where a comfortable lounging-chair was placed for Thelma, facing the most gorgeous portion of the glowing sky, which on this evening was like a moving mass of molten-gold, split asunder here and there by angry, ragged-looking rifts of crimson. The young men grouped themselves together at the prow of the vessel in order to smoke their cigars without annoyance to Thelma. Old Guldmar did not smoke, but he talked—and Errington, after seeing them all fairly absorbed in an argument on the best methods of spearing salmon, moved quietly away to where the girl was sitting, her great pensive eyes fixed on the burning splendors of the heavens.

" Are you warm enough there? " he asked; and there was an unconscious tenderness in his voice as he asked the question, " or shall I fetch you a wrap? "

She smiled. " I have my hood," she said. " It is the warmest thing I ever wear, except, of course, in winter."

Philip looked at the hood as she drew it more closely over her head, and thought that surely no more becoming article of apparel ever was designed for woman's wear. He had never seen anything like it, either in color or texture—it was of a peculiarly

warm, rich crimson, like the heart of a red damask rose, and it suited the bright hair and tender, thoughtful eyes of its owner to perfection.

" Tell me," he said, drawing a little nearer and speaking in a lower tone, " have you forgiven me for my rudeness the first time I saw you? "

She looked a little troubled.

" Perhaps also I was rude," she said, gently. " I did not know you. I thought——"

" You were quite right," he eagerly interrupted her. " It was very impertinent of me to ask you for your name. I should have found it out for myself, as I *have* done."

And he smiled at her as he said the last words with marked emphasis. She raised her eyes wistfully.

" And you are glad? " she asked, softly, and with a sort of wonder in her accents.

" Glad to know your name? glad to know *you!* Of course ! Can you ask such a question? "

" But why? " persisted Thelma. " It is not as if you were lonely—you have friends already. We are nothing to you. Soon you will go away, and you will think of the Alten Fjord as a dream—and our names will be forgotten. That is natural ! "

What a foolish rush of passion filled his heart as she spoke in those mellow, almost plaintive accents—what wild words leaped to his lips, and what an effort it cost him to keep them back ! The heart and impetuosity of Romeo—whom up to the present he had been inclined to consider a particularly stupid youth—was now quite comprehensible to his mind, and he, the cool, self-possessed Englishman, was ready at that moment to outrival Juliet's lover in his utmost excesses of amorous folly. In spite of his self-restraint, his voice quivered a little as he answered her :

" I shall never forget the Alten Fjord or you, Miss Guldmar. Don't you know there are some things that cannot be forgotten?—such as a sudden glimpse of fine scenery, a beautiful song, or a pathetic poem." She bent her head in assent. " And here there is so much to remember—the light of the midnight sun—the glorious mountains, the loveliness of the whole land ! "

" Is it better than other countries you have seen? " asked the girl, with some interest.

" Much better ! " returned Sir Philip, fervently. " In fact, there is no place like it, in my opinion." He paused at the sound of her pretty laughter.

" You are—what is it?—ecstatic ! " she said, mirthfully. " Tell me, have you been to the south of France and the Pyrenees? "

" Of course I have," he replied. " I have been all over the Continent—traveled about it till I'm tired of it. Do you like the south of France better than Norway? "

"No—not so very much better," she said, dubiously. "And yet a little. It is so warm and bright there, and the people are gay. Here they are stern and sullen. My father loves to sail the seas, and when I first went to school at Arles, he took me a long and beautiful voyage. We went from Christiansund to Holland, and saw all those pretty Dutch cities with their canals and quaint bridges. Then we went through the English Channel to Brest—then by the Bay of Biscay to Bayonne. Bayonne seemed to me very lovely, but we left it soon, and traveled a long way by land, seeing all sorts of wonderful things, till we came to Arles. And though it is such a long route, and not one for many persons to take, I have traveled to Arles and back twice that way, so all there is familiar to me—and in some things I do think it better than Norway."

"What induced your father to send you so far away from him?" asked Philip, rather curiously.

The girl's eyes softened tenderly. "Ah, that is easy to understand!" she said. "My mother came from Arles."

"She was French, then?" he exclaimed, with some surprise.

"No," she answered, gravely. "She was Norwegian, because her father and mother both were of this land. She was what they called 'born sadly.' You must not ask me any more about her, please!"

Errington apologized at once with some embarrassment, and a deeper color than usual on his face. She looked up at him quite frankly.

"It is possible I will tell you her history some day," she said, "when we shall know each other better. I do like to talk to you very much! I suppose there are not many Englishmen like you?"

Philip laughed. "I don't think I am at all exceptional! Why do you ask?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "I have seen some of them," she said, slowly, "and they are stupid. They shoot, shoot—fish, fish, all day, and eat a great deal."

"My dear Miss Guldmar, I also do all these things!" declared Errington, amusedly. "These are only our surface faults. Englishmen are the best fellows to be found anywhere. You mustn't judge them by their athletic sports or their vulgar appetites. You must appeal to their hearts when you want to know them."

"Or to their pockets, and you will know them still better!" said Thelma, almost mischievously, as she raised herself in her chair to take a cup of coffee from the tray that was then being handed to her by the respectful steward. "Ah, how good this is! It reminds me of our coffee luncheon at Arles!"

Errington watched her with a half smile, but said no more, as the others now came up to claim their share of her company.

"I say!" said Lorimer, lazily throwing himself full length on the deck and looking up at her, "come and see us spear a salmon to-morrow, Miss Guldmar. Your father is going to show us how to do it in proper Norse style."

"That is for men," said Thelma, loftily. "Women must know nothing about such things."

"By Jove!" and Lorimer looked profoundly astonished. "Why, Miss Guldmar, women are going in for everything nowadays! Hunting, shooting, bull-fighting, dueling, horse-whipping, lecturing—Heaven knows what! They stop at nothing—salmon-spearing is a mere trifle in the list of modern feminine accomplishments."

Thelma smiled down upon him benignly. "You will always be the same," she said, with a sort of indulgent air. "It is your delight to say things upside down! But you shall not make me believe that women do all these dreadful things. Because, how is it possible? The men would not allow them!"

Errington laughed, and Lorimer appeared stupefied with surprise.

"The men—would—not—allow them?" he repeated, slowly. "Oh, Miss Guldmar, little do you realize the state of things at the present day! The glamour of Viking memories clings about you still! Don't you know the power of man has passed away, and that ladies do exactly as they like? It is easier to control the thunderbolt than to prevent a woman having her own way."

"All that is nonsense!" said Thelma, decidedly. "Where there is a man to rule, he *must* rule, that is certain."

"Is that positively your opinion?" and Lorimer looked more astonished than ever.

"It is everybody's opinion, of course!" averred Thelma. "How foolish it would be if women did not obey men! The world would be all confusion! Ah, you see you cannot make me think your funny thoughts; it is no use! And she laughed and rose from her chair, adding, with a gentle, persuasive air: "Father, dear, is it not time to say good-bye?"

"Truly I think it is!" returned Guldmar, giving himself a shake like an old lion, as he broke off a rather tedious conversation he had been having with Macfarlane. "We shall have Sigurd coming to look for us, and poor Britta will think we have left her too long alone. Thank you, my lad!" this to Sir Philip, who instantly gave orders for the boat to be lowered. "You have given us a day of thorough, wholesome enjoyment. I hope I shall be able to return it in some way. You must let us see as much of you as possible."

They shook hands cordially, and Errington proposed to escort them back as far as their own pier, but this offer Guldmar refused.

"Nonsense!" he exclaimed, cheerily. "With four oarsmen to

row us along, why should we take you away from your friends? I won't hear of such a thing! And now, regarding the great fall of Njedegorze: Mr. Macfarlane here says you have not visited it yet. Well, the best guide you can have there is Sigurd. We'll make up a party and go when it is agreeable to you; it is a grand sight—well worth seeing. To-morrow we shall meet again for the salmon-spearing—I warrant I shall be able to make the time pass quickly for you! How long do you think of staying here?"

"As long as possible!" answered Errington, absently, his eyes wandering to Thelma, who was just then shaking hands with his friends and bidding them farewell.

Guldmar laughed and clapped him on the shoulder. "That means till you are tired of the place," he said, good-humoredly. "Well, you shall not be dull if I can prevent it! Good-bye, and thanks for your hospitality."

"Ah, yes!" added Thelma, gently, coming up at that moment and laying her soft hand in his. "I have been so happy all day, and it is all your kindness! I am very grateful!"

"It is I who have cause to be grateful," said Errington, hurriedly, clasping her hand warmly, "for your company and that of your father. I trust we shall have many more pleasant days together."

"I hope so too!" she answered, simply, and then, the boat being ready, they departed. Errington and Lorimer leaned on the deck-rails, waving their hats and watching them disappear over the gleaming water, till the very last glimpse of Thelma's crimson hood had vanished, and then they turned to rejoin their companions who were strolling up and down smoking.

"*Belle comme un ange!*" said Duprez, briefly. "In short, I doubt if the angels are so good looking!"

"The auld pagan's a fine scholar," added Macfarlane, meditatively. "He corrected me in a bit o' Latin."

"Did he, indeed?" And Lorimer laughed indolently. "I suppose you think better of him now, Sandy?"

Sandy made no reply, and as Errington persisted in turning the conversation away from the merits or demerits of their recent guest, they soon entered on other topics. But that night, before retiring to rest, Lorimer laid a hand on his friend's shoulder, and said, quietly, with a keen look:

"Well, old man, have you made up your mind? Have I seen the future Lady Bruce-Errington?"

Sir Philip smiled—then, after a brief pause, answered, steadily:

"Yes, George, you have! That is—if I can win her!"

Lorimer laughed a little and sighed. "There's no doubt about that, Phil." And eying Errington's fine figure and noble features musingly, he repeated again, thoughtfully: "No doubt about that, my boy!" Then, after a pause, he said, somewhat abruptly: "Time to turn in—good-night!"

"Good-night, old fellow!" And Errington wrung his hand warmly, and left him to repose.

But Lorimer had rather a bad night—he tossed and tumbled a good deal, and had dreams—unusual visitors with him—and once or twice he muttered in his sleep: "No doubt about it—not the least in the world—and if there were——"

But the conclusion of this sentence was inaudible.

CHAPTER XI.

Tu vas faire un beau rêve,
Et t'enivrer d'un plaisir dangereux.
Sur ton chemin l'étoile qui se lève
Longtemps encore éblouira tes yeux!

DE MUSSET.

A FORTNIGHT passed. The first excursion in the "Eulalie" had been followed by others of a similar kind, and Errington's acquaintance with the Guldmars was fast ripening into a pleasant intimacy. It had grown customary for the young men to spend that part of the day which, in spite of persistent sunshine, they still called evening, in the comfortable, quaint parlor of the old farm-house—looking at the view through the rose-wreathed windows—listening to the fantastic legends of Norway as told by Olaf Guldmar—or watching Thelma's picturesque figure as she sat pensively apart in her shadowed corner spinning. They had fraternized with Sigurd too—that is, as far as he would permit them—for the unhappy dwarf was uncertain of temper, and if at one hour he were docile and yielding as a child, the next he would be found excited and furious at some imaginary slight that he fancied had been inflicted upon him. Sometimes, if good-humored, he would converse almost rationally—only allowing his fancy to play with poetical ideas concerning the sea, the flowers, or the sunlight—but he was far more often sullen and silent. He would draw a low chair to Thelma's side, and sit there with half-closed eyes and compressed lips, and none could tell whether he listened to the conversation around him, or was utterly indifferent to it. He had taken a notable fancy to Lorimer, but he avoided Errington in the most marked and persistent manner. The latter did his best to overcome this unreasonable dislike, but his efforts were useless—and deciding in his own mind that it was best to humor Sigurd's vagaries, he soon let him alone, and devoted his attention more entirely to Thelma.

One evening, after supper at the farm-house, Lorimer, who for some time had been watching Philip and Thelma conversing to-