

Chapter 1

"What time is it?" inquired Dame Hansen, shaking the ashes from her pipe, the last curling rings from which were slowly disappearing between the stained rafters overhead.

"Eight o'clock, mother," replied Hulda.

"It isn't likely that any travelers will come to-night. The weather is too stormy."

"I agree with you. At all events, the rooms are in readiness, and if any one comes, I shall be sure to hear them."

"Has your brother returned?"

"Not yet."

"Didn't he say he would be back to-night?"

"No, mother. Joel went to take a traveler to Lake Tinn, and as he didn't start until very late, I do not think he can get back to Dal before to-morrow."

"Then he will spend the night at Moel, probably."

"Yes; unless he should take it into his head to go on to Bamble to see Farmer Helmboe."

"And his daughter Siegfrid."

"Yes. Siegfrid, my best friend, whom I love like a sister!" replied the young girl, smiling.

"All, well, Hulda, shut up the house, and let's go to bed."

"You are not ill, are you, mother?"

"No; but I want to be up bright and early to-morrow morning. I must go to Moel."

"What for?"

"Why, we must be laying in our stock of provisions for the coming summer, and—"

"And I suppose the agent from Christiania has come down with his wagon of wines and provisions."

"Yes; Lengling, the foreman at the saw-mill, met him this afternoon, and informed me of the fact as he passed. We have very little left in the way of ham and smoked salmon, and I don't want to run any risk of

being caught with an empty larder. Tourists are likely to begin their excursions to the Telemark almost any day now; especially, if the weather should become settled, and our establishment must be in a condition to receive them. Do you realize that this is the fifteenth of April?"

"The fifteenth of April!" repeated the young girl, thoughtfully.

"Yes, so to-morrow I must attend to these matters," continued Dame Hansen. "I can make all my purchases in two hours, and I will return with Joel in the kariol."

"In case you should meet the postman, don't forget to ask him if there is a letter for us—"

"And especially for you. That is quite likely, for it is a month since you heard from Ole."

"Yes, a month—a whole month."

"Still, you should not worry, child. The delay is not at all surprising. Besides, if the Moel postman has nothing for you, that which didn't come by the way of Christiania may come by the way of Bergen, may it not?"

"Yes, mother," replied Hulda. "But how can I help worrying, when I think how far it is from here to the Newfoundland fishing banks. The whole broad Atlantic to cross, while the weather continues so bad. It is almost a year since my poor Ole left me, and who can say when we shall see him again in Dal?"

"And whether we shall be here when he returns," sighed Dame Hansen, but so softly that her daughter did not hear the words.

Hulda went to close the front door of the inn which stood on the Vesfjorddal road; but she did not take the trouble to turn the key in the lock. In hospitable Norway, such precautions are unnecessary. It is customary for travelers to enter these country inns either by night or by day without calling any one to open the door; and even the loneliest habitations are safe from the depredations of thieves or assassins, for no criminal attempts against life or property ever disturb the peace of this primitive land.

The mother and daughter occupied two front rooms on the second story of the inn—two neat and airy, though plainly furnished rooms. Above them, directly under the sloping roof, was Joel's chamber, lighted by a window incased in a tastefully carved frame-work of pine.

From this window, the eye, after roaming over the grand mountain horizon, returned with delight to the narrow valley through which flowed the Maan, which is half river, half torrent.

A wooden staircase, with heavy balusters and highly polished steps, led from the lower hall to the floors above, and nothing could be more

neat and attractive than the whole aspect of this establishment, in which the travelers found a comfort that is rare in Norwegian inns.

Hulda and her mother were in the habit of retiring early when they were alone, and Dame Hansen had already lighted her candle, and was on her way upstairs, when a loud knocking at the door made them both start.

"Dame Hansen! Dame Hansen!" cried a voice.

Dame Hansen paused on the stairs.

"Who can have come so late?" she exclaimed.

"Can it be that Joel has met with an accident?" returned Hulda, quickly.

And she hastened toward the door.

She found a lad there—one of the young rascals known as *skydskarls*, that make a living by clinging to the back of kariols, and taking the horse back when the journey is ended.

"What do you want here at this hour?" asked Hulda.

"First of all to bid you good-evening," replied the boy, mischievously.

"Is that all?"

"No; that isn't all; but a boy oughtn't to forget his manners, ought he?"

"You are right. But who sent you?"

"Your brother Joel."

"And what for?" asked Dame Hansen, advancing to the door with the slow and measured tread that is a characteristic of the inhabitants of Norway. There is quicksilver in the veins of their soil, but little or none in the veins of their bodies.

The reply had evidently caused the mother some anxiety, however, for she added hastily:

"Has anything happened to my son?"

"No, but the Christiania postman gave him a letter, and—"

"A letter from Drammen?" repeated Dame Hansen, in a lower tone.

"I don't know about that," replied the youth. "All I do know is, that Joel can't get home before to-morrow, and he sent me here to deliver the letter."

"It is important then?"

"I should judge so."

"Hand it here," said Dame Hansen, in a tone that betrayed keen anxiety.

"Here it is, clean and not wrinkled in the least. But the letter is not for you."

Dame Hansen seemed to breathe more freely.

"Then who is it for?" she asked.

"For your daughter."

"For me!" cried Hulda. "It is a letter from Ole! I am sure it is—a letter that came by way of Christiania. My brother did not want me to be kept waiting."

Hulda had snatched the letter from the boy's hand, and now taking it to the table upon which her mother had deposited the candle, she examined the address.

"Yes, it is from him. It is certainly from him! Heaven grant that he writes to announce the speedy return of the 'Viking'!"

"Won't you come in?" said Dame Hansen, turning to the boy.

"Only for a minute. I must get back home to-night, for I am to go with a kariol to-morrow morning."

"Very well. Tell Joel, from me, that I expect to go to Moel to-morrow, and that he must wait for me there."

"To-morrow evening?"

"No; to-morrow morning, and he must not leave Moel until he sees me. We will return to Dal together."

"Very well, Dame Hansen."

"Won't you take a drop of *brandevin*?"

"With pleasure."

The boy approached the table, and Dame Hansen handed him a glass of the beverage which is such a powerful protection against the evening fogs. It is needless to say that he drained the glass, then,

"*God-aften!*" he said.

"*God-aften, my son!*"

This is the Norwegian good-night. It was simply spoken, without even an inclination of the head, and the lad instantly departed, without seeming to mind in the least the long walk that he had before him. The sound of his footsteps soon died away beneath the trees that border the swiftly flowing river.

Hulda still stood gazing at Ole's letter. Think of it! This frail envelope must have crossed the broad ocean to reach her, the broad ocean in which the rivers of western Norway lose themselves. She examined the different postmarks. Though mailed on the 15th of March, the missive had not reached Dal until the 15th of April. Why! a month had already elapsed since the letter was written! How many things might have happened in a month on the shores of Newfoundland! Was it not still winter, the dangerous season of equinoxes? Are not these fishing banks the most dangerous in the world, swept by terrible gales from the North

Pole? A perilous and arduous vocation was this business of fishing which Ole followed! And if he followed it was it not that she, his betrothed, whom he was to marry on his return, might reap the benefits?

Poor Ole! What did he say in this letter? Doubtless that he loved Hulda as faithfully and truly as Hulda loved him, that they were united in thought, in spite of the distance that separated them, and that he longed for the day of his return to Dal.

Yes, he said all this, Hulda was sure of it. But perhaps he might add that the day of his return was near at hand—that the fishing cruise which had enticed the inhabitants of Bergen so far from their native land, was nearly at an end. Perhaps Ole would tell her that the "Viking" had finished taking aboard her cargo, that she was about to sail, and that the last days of April would not pass without a blissful meeting in the pleasant home at Vesfjorddal. Perhaps, too, he would assure her, at last, that she might safely appoint the day for the pastor to come to Moel to unite them in the little chapel whose steeple rose from a small grove not a hundred yards from Dame Hansen's inn.

To learn all this, it might only be necessary to break the seal, draw out Ole's letter, and read it, through the tears of joy or sorrow that its contents would be sure to bring to Hulda's eyes, and doubtless more than one impatient girl of the south, or even of Denmark or Holland, would already have known all! But Hulda was in a sort of a dream, and dreams terminate only when God chooses to end them, and how often one regrets them, so bitter is the reality.

"Is it really a letter from Ole that your brother has sent you, my daughter?" inquired Dame Hansen.

"Yes; I recognize the handwriting."

"Well, are you going to wait until to-morrow to read it?"

Hulda took one more look at the envelope, then, after slowly breaking the seal, she drew out the carefully written letter, which read as follows:

"Saint-Pierre-Miquelon, March 17th, 1862.

"My Dearest Hulda,—You will hear, with pleasure, that our fishing venture has prospered, and that it will be concluded in a few days. Yes; we are nearing the end of the season, and after a year's absence how glad I shall be to return to Dal and find myself in the midst of the only friends I have in the world—yours and mine.

"My share in the profits of the expedition amounts to quite a handsome sum, which will start us in housekeeping. Messrs. Help Bros., the owners of the ship, have been informed that the

'Viking' will probably return by the 15th or 20th of May; so you may expect to see me at that time; that is to say, in a few weeks at the very longest.

"My dear Hulda, I trust to find you looking even prettier than at my departure, and in the best of health, you and your mother as well, also that hardy, brave comrade, my cousin Joel, your brother, who asks nothing better than to become mine.

"On receipt of this, give my very best respects to Dame Hansen—I can see her now, sitting in her wooden arm-chair by the old stove in the big hall—and tell her I love her with a twofold love, for she is my aunt as well as your mother.

"Above all, don't take the trouble to come to Bergen to meet me, for it is quite possible that the 'Viking' will arrive at an earlier date than I have mentioned. However that may be, my dear Hulda can count upon seeing me at Dal twenty-four hours after we land. Don't be too much surprised if I should arrive considerably ahead of time.

"We have had a pretty rough time of it, this past winter, the weather having been more severe than any our fishermen have ever encountered; but fortunately fish have been plenty. The 'Viking' brings back nearly five thousand quintals, deliverable at Bergen, and already sold by the efforts of Help Bros. And last, but not least, we have succeeded in selling at a handsome profit, and I, who have a share in the venture, will realize something quite handsome from it.

"Besides, even if I should not bring a small competence home with me, I have an idea, or rather, I have a presentiment that it is awaiting me on my return. Yes; comparative wealth, to say nothing of happiness! In what way? That is my secret, my dearest Hulda, and you will forgive me for having a secret from you! It is the only one! Besides, I will tell you all about it. When? Well, as soon as an opportunity offers—before our marriage, if it should be delayed by some unforeseen misfortune—afterward, if I return at the appointed time, and you become my wife within a week after my arrival, as I trust you will.

"A hundred fond kisses, my darling Hulda. Kiss Dame Hansen, and Joel, too, for me. In fancy, I imprint another kiss upon your brow, around which the shining crown of the brides of the Telemark will cast a saint-like halo. Once more, farewell, dearest Hulda, farewell!

"Your devoted lover,
"OLE KAMP."

Chapter 2

Dal is a modest hamlet consisting of but a few houses; some on either side of a road that is little more than a bridle-path, others scattered over the surrounding hills. But they all face the narrow valley of Vesfjorddal, with their backs to the line of hills to the north, at the base of which flows the Maan.

A little church erected in 1855, whose chancel is pierced by two narrow stained-glass windows, lifts its square belfry from out a leafy grove hard by. Here and there rustic bridges cross the rivulets that dance merrily along toward the river. In the distance are two or three primitive saw-mills, run by water-power, with a wheel to move the saw, as well as a wheel to move the beam or the tree; and seen from a little distance, the chapel, saw-mills, houses, and cabins, all seem to be enveloped in a soft olive haze that emanates from the dark-green firs and the paler birches which either singly or in groups extend from the winding banks of the Maan to the crests of the lofty mountains.

Such is the fresh and laughing hamlet of Dal, with its picturesque dwellings, painted, some of them, in delicate green or pale pink tints, others in such glaring colors as bright yellow and blood-red. The roofs of birch bark, covered with turf, which is mown in the autumn, are crowned with natural flowers. All this is indescribably charming, and eminently characteristic of the most picturesque country in the world. In short, Dal is in the Telemark, the Telemark is in Norway, and Norway is in Switzerland, with thousands of fiords that permit the sea to kiss the feet of its mountains.

The Telemark composes the broad portion of the immense horn that Norway forms between Bergen and Christiania.

This dependency of the prefecture of Batsberg, has the mountains and glaciers of Switzerland, but it is not Switzerland. It has gigantic waterfalls like North America, but it is not America. The landscape is adorned with picturesque cottages, and processions of inhabitants, clad in costumes of a former age, like Holland, but it is not Holland. The Telemark is far better than any or all of these; it is the Telemark, noted above all

countries in the world for the beauty of its scenery. The writer has had the pleasure of visiting it. He has explored it thoroughly, in a kariol with relays of post-horses—when he could get them—and he brought back with him such a vivid recollection of its manifold charms that he would be glad to convey some idea of it to the reader of this simple narrative.

At the date of this story, 1862, Norway was not yet traversed by the railroad that now enables one to go from Stockholm to Drontheim, by way of Christiania. Now, an extensive network of iron rails extends entirely across these two Scandinavian countries, which are so averse to a united existence. But imprisoned in a railroad-carriage, the traveler, though he makes much more rapid progress than in a kariol, misses all the originality that formerly pervaded the routes of travel. He misses the journey through Southern Sweden on the curious Gotha Canal, in which the steamboats, by rising from lock to lock, manage to reach an elevation of three hundred feet. Nor does he have an opportunity to visit the falls of Trolletann, nor Drammen, nor Kongsberg, nor any of the beauties of the Telemark.

In those days the railroad existed only upon paper. Twenty years were to elapse before one could traverse the Scandinavian kingdom from one shore to the other in forty hours, and visit the North Cape on excursion tickets to Spitzberg.

In those days Dal was, and may it long remain, the central point for foreign or native tourists, these last being for the most part students from Christiania. From Dal they could wander over the entire Telemark and Hardanger region, explore the valley of Vesfjorddal between Lakes Mjos and Tinn, and visit the wonderful cataracts of the Rjukan Tun. The hamlet boasts of but one inn, but that is certainly the most attractive and comfortable imaginable, and one of the most important also, for it can offer four bed-chambers for the accommodation of its guests. In a word, it is Dame Hansen's inn.

A few benches surround the base of its pink walls, which are separated from the ground by a substantial granite foundation. The spruce rafters and weather-boarding have acquired such hardness and toughness with age that the sharpest hatchet can make little or no impression upon them. Between the roughly hewn rafters, which are placed horizontally one above the other, a mixture of clay and turf forms a stanch roof, through which the hardest winter rains can not force their way.

Upstairs, in the bedrooms, the ceilings are painted in dark red or black tints to contrast with the more cheerful and delicate hues of the wood-work.

In one corner of the large hall stands a huge cylinder stove, the pipe of which rises nearly to the ceiling, before it disappears in the kitchen chimney. In another corner stands a tall clock which emits a sonorous tick-tack, as its carved hands travel slowly around its enameled face. Here is a secretary, black with age, side by side with a massive iron tripod. Upon the mantel is an immense terra-cotta candlestick which can be transformed into a three-branched candelabrum by turning it upside down. The handsomest furniture in the house adorns this spacious hall—the birch-root table, with its spreading feet, the big chest with its richly wrought brass handles, in which the Sunday and holiday clothing is kept, the tall arm-chair, hard and uncomfortable as a church-pew, the painted wooden chairs, and the spinning-wheel striped with green, to contrast with the scarlet petticoat of the spinner.

Yonder stands the pot in which the butter is kept, and the paddle with which it is worked, and here is the tobacco-box, and the grater of elaborately carved bone.

And, finally, over the door which opens into the kitchen is a large dresser, with long rows of brass and copper cooking-utensils and brightly-colored dishes, the little grindstone for sharpening knives, half-buried in its varnished case, and the egg-dish, old enough to serve as a chalice.

And how wonderful and amusing are the walls, hung with linen tapestries representing scenes from the Bible, and brilliant with all the gorgeous coloring of the pictures of Epinal.

As for the guests' rooms, though they are less pretentious, they are no less comfortable, with their spotless neatness, their curtains of hanging-vines that droop from the turf-covered roof, their huge beds, sheeted with snowy and fragrant linen, and their hangings with verses from the Old Testament, embroidered in yellow upon a red ground.

Nor must we forget that the floor of the main hall, and the floors of all the rooms, both upstairs and down, are strewn with little twigs of birch, pine, and juniper, whose leaves fill the house with their healthful and exhilarating odor.

Can one imagine a more charming *posada* in Italy, or a more seductive *fonda* in Spain? No. And the crowd of English tourists have not yet raised the scale of prices as in Switzerland—at least, they had not at the time of which I write. In Dal, the current coin is not the pound sterling, the sovereign of which the travelers' purse is soon emptied. It is a silver coin, worth about five francs, and its subdivisions are the mark, equal in value to about a franc, and the skilling, which must not be confounded with the English shilling, as it is only equivalent to a French *sou*.

Nor will the tourist have any opportunity to use or abuse the pretentious bank-note in the Telemark. One-mark notes are white; five-mark notes are blue; ten-mark notes are yellow; fifty-mark notes, green; one hundred mark notes, red. Two more, and we should have all the colors of the rainbow.

Besides—and this is a point of very considerable importance—the food one obtains at the Dal inn is excellent; a very unusual thing at houses of public entertainment in this locality, for the Telemark deserves only too well its surname of the Buttermilk Country. At Tiness, Listhus, Tinoset, and many other places, no bread is to be had, or if there be, it is of such poor quality as to be uneatable. One finds there only an oaten cake, known as *flat brod*, dry, black, and hard as pasteboard, or a coarse loaf composed of a mixture of birch-bark, lichens, and chopped straw. Eggs are a luxury, and a most stale and unprofitable one; but there is any quantity of poor beer to be had, a profusion of buttermilk, either sweet or sour, and sometimes a little coffee, so thick and muddy that it is much more like distilled soot than the products of Mocha or Rio Nunez.

In Dame Hansen's establishment, on the contrary, cellar and larder were alike well-stored. What more could the most exacting tourist ask than salmon, either salt or smoked—fresh salmon that have never tasted tainted waters, fish from the pure streams of the Telemark, fowls, neither too fat nor too lean, eggs in every style, crisp oaten and barley cakes, fruits, more especially strawberries, bread—unleavened bread, it is here, but of the very best quality—beer, and some old bottles of that Saint Julien that have spread the fame of French vineyards even to this distant land?

And this being the case, it is not strange that the inn at Dal is well and favorably known in all the countries of Northern Europe.

One can see this, too, by glancing over the register in which many travelers have not only recorded their names, but paid glowing tributes to Dame Hansen's merits as an inn-keeper. The names are principally those of Swedes and Norwegians from every part of Scandinavia; but the English make a very respectable showing; and one of them, who had waited at least an hour for the summit of Gousta to emerge from the morning mist that enveloped it, wrote upon one of the pages:

"Patientia omnia vincit?"

Chapter 3

Without being very deeply versed in ethnography, one may be strongly inclined to believe, in common with many *savants*, that a close relationship exists between the leading families of the English aristocracy and the oldest families of Scandinavia. Numerous proofs of this fact, indeed, are to be found in the ancestral names which are identical in both countries. There is no aristocracy in Norway, however; still, though the democracy everywhere rules, that does not prevent it from being aristocratic to the highest degree. All are equals upon an exalted plane instead of a low one. Even in the humblest hut may be found a genealogical tree which has not degenerated in the least because it has sprung up anew in humble soil; and the walls are adorned with the proud blazons of the feudal lords from whom these plain peasants are descended.

So it was with the Hansens of Dal, who were unquestionably related, though rather remotely, to the English peers created after Rollo's invasion of Normandy, and though rank and wealth had both departed they had at least preserved the old pride, or rather dignity, which becomes all social ranks.

It was a matter of very little consequence, however. Whether he had ancestors of lofty lineage or not, Harald Hansen was simply a village inn-keeper. The house had come down to him from his father and from his grandfather, who were widely known and respected, and after his death his widow continued the business in a way that elicited universal commendation.

Whether or not Harald had made a fortune in the business, no one was able to say; but he had been able to rear his son Joel and his daughter Hulda in comfort; and Ole Kamp, a son of his wife's sister, had also been brought up like one of his own children. But for his uncle Harald, this orphan child would doubtless have been one of those poor creatures who come into the world only to leave it; and Ole Kamp evinced a truly filial devotion toward his parents by adoption. Nothing would ever sever the tie that bound him to the Hansen family, to which his marriage with Hulda was about to bind him still more closely.

Harald Hansen had died about eighteen months before, leaving his wife, in addition to the inn, a small farm on the mountain, a piece of property which yielded very meager returns, if any. This was especially true of late, for the seasons had been remarkably unpropitious, and agriculture of every kind had suffered greatly, even the pastures. There had been many of those "iron nights," as the Norwegian peasants call them—nights of north-easterly gales and ice that kill the corn down to the very root—and that meant ruin to the farmers of the Telemark and the Hardanger.

Still, whatever Dame Hansen might think of the situation of affairs, she had never said a word to any living soul, not even to her children. Naturally cold and reserved, she was very uncommunicative—a fact that pained Hulda and Joel not a little. But with that respect for the head of the family innate in Northern lands, they made no attempt to break down a reserve which was eminently distasteful to them. Besides, Dame Hansen never asked aid or counsel, being firmly convinced of the infallibility of her own judgment, for she was a true Norwegian in that respect.

Dame Hansen was now about fifty years old. Advancing age had not bowed her tall form, though it had whitened her hair; nor had it dimmed the brightness of her dark-blue eyes, whose azure was reflected in the clear orbs of her daughter; but her complexion had taken on the yellow hue of old parchment, and a few wrinkles were beginning to furrow her forehead.

The madame, as they say in Scandinavia, was invariably attired in a full black skirt, for she had never laid aside her mourning since her husband's death. Below the shoulder-straps of a brown bodice appeared the long full sleeves of an unbleached cotton chemise. On her shoulders she wore a small dark-colored fichu that crossed upon her breast, which was also covered by the large bib of her apron. She always wore as a head-dress a close-fitting black-silk cap that covered almost her entire head, and tied behind, a kind of head-dress that is rarely seen nowadays.

Seated stiffly erect in her wooden arm-chair, the grave hostess neglected her spinning-wheel only to enjoy a small birchwood pipe, whose smoke enveloped her in a faint cloud.

Really, the house would have seemed very gloomy had it not been for the presence of the two children.

A worthy lad was Joel Hansen. Twenty-five years of age, well built, tall, like all Norwegian mountaineers, proud in bearing, though not in the least boastful or conceited. He had fine hair, verging upon chestnut,

with blue eyes so dark as to seem almost black. His garb displayed to admirable advantage his powerful shoulders, his broad chest, in which his lungs had full play, and stalwart limbs which never failed him even in the most difficult mountain ascents. His dark-blue jacket, fitting tightly at the waist, was adorned on the shoulders with epaulets, and in the back with designs in colored embroidery similar to those that embellish the vests of the Breton peasantry. His yellow breeches were fastened at the knee by large buckles. Upon his head he wore a broad-brimmed brown hat with a red-and-black band, and his legs were usually incased either in coarse cloth gaiters or in long stout boots without heels.

His vocation was that of a mountain guide in the district of the Telemark, and even in the Hardanger. Always ready to start, and untiring in his exertions, he was a worthy descendant of the Norwegian hero Rollo, the walker, celebrated in the legends of that country. Between times he accompanied English sportsmen who repair to that region to shoot the riper, a species of ptarmigan, larger than that found in the Hebrides, and the jerpir, a partridge much more delicate in its flavor than the grouse of Scotland. When winter came, the hunting of wolves engrossed his attention, for at that season of the year these fierce animals, emboldened by hunger, not unfrequently venture out upon the surface of the frozen lake. Then there was bear hunting in summer, when that animal, accompanied by her young, comes to secure its feast of fresh grass, and when one must pursue it over plateaus at an altitude of from ten to twelve thousand feet. More than once Joel had owed his life solely to the great strength that enabled him to endure the embraces of these formidable animals, and to the imperturbable coolness which enabled him to eventually dispatch them.

But when there was neither tourist nor hunter to be guided through the valley of the Vesfjorddal, Joel devoted his attention to the *soetur*, the little mountain farm where a young shepherd kept guard over half a dozen cows and about thirty sheep—a *soetur* consisting exclusively of pasture land.

Joel, being naturally very pleasant and obliging, was known and loved in every village in the Telemark; but two persons for whom he felt a boundless affection were his cousin Ole and his sister Hulda.

When Ole Kamp left Dal to embark for the last time, how deeply Joel regretted his inability to dower Hulda and thus avert the necessity for her lover's departure! In fact, if he had been accustomed to the sea, he would certainly have gone in his cousin's place. But money was needed to start them in housekeeping, and as Dame Hansen had offered no

assistance, Joel understood only too well that she did not feel inclined to devote any portion of the estate to that purpose, so there was nothing for Ole to do but cross the broad Atlantic.

Joel had accompanied him to the extreme end of the valley on his way to Bergen, and there, after a long embrace, he wished him a pleasant journey and a speedy return, and then returned to console his sister, whom he loved with an affection which was at the same time fraternal and paternal in its character.

Hulda at that time was exactly eighteen years of age. She was not the *piga*, as the servant in a Norwegian inn is called, but rather the *froken*, the young lady of the house, as her mother was the madame. What a charming face was hers, framed in a wealth of pale golden hair, under a thin linen cap projecting in the back to give room for the long plaits of hair! What a lovely form incased in this tightly fitting bodice of red stuff, ornamented with green shoulder-straps and surmounted by a snowy chemisette, the sleeves of which were fastened at the wrist by a ribbon bracelet! What grace and perfect symmetry in the waist, encircled by a red belt with clasps of silver filigree which held in place the dark-green skirt, below which appeared the white stocking protected by the dainty pointed toed shoe of the Telemark!

Yes, Ole's betrothed was certainly charming, with the slightly melancholy expression of the daughters of the North softening her smiling face; and on seeing her one instantly thought of Hulda the Fair, whose name she bore, and who figures as the household fairy in Scandinavian mythology.

Nor did the reserve of a chaste and modest maiden mar the grace with which she welcomed the guests who came to the inn. She was well known to the world of tourists; and it was not one of the smallest attractions of the inn to be greeted by that cordial shake of the hand that Hulda bestowed on one and all. And after having said to her, "*Tack for mad*" (Thanks for the meal), what could be more delightful than to hear her reply in her fresh sonorous voice: "*Wed bekomme!*" (May it do you good!)

Chapter 4

Ole Kamp had been absent a year; and as he said in his letter, his winter's experience on the fishing banks of Newfoundland had been a severe one. When one makes money there one richly earns it. The equinoctial storms that rage there not unfrequently destroy a whole fishing fleet in a few hours; but fish abound, and vessels which escape find ample compensation for the toil and dangers of this home of the tempest.

Besides, Norwegians are excellent seamen, and shrink from no danger. In the numberless fiords that extend from Christiansand to Cape North, among the dangerous reefs of Finland, and in the channels of the Lofoden Islands, opportunities to familiarize themselves with the perils of ocean are not wanting; and from time immemorial they have given abundant proofs of their courage. Their ancestors were intrepid mariners at an epoch when the Hanse monopolized the commerce of northern Europe. Possibly they were a trifle prone to indulge in piracy in days gone by, but piracy was then quite common. Doubtless commerce has reformed since then, though one may perhaps be pardoned for thinking that there is still room for improvement.

However that may be, the Norwegians were certainly fearless seamen; they are to-day, and so they will ever be. Ole Kamp was not the man to belie his origin; besides, he had served his apprenticeship under his father, who was the master of a Bergen coasting vessel. His childhood had been spent in that port, which is one of the most frequented in Scandinavia. Before he ventured out upon the open sea he had been an untiring fisher in the fiords, and a fearless robber of the sea-birds' nests, and when he became old enough to serve as cabin-boy he made a voyage across the North Sea and even to the waters of the Polar Ocean.

Soon afterward his father died, and as he had lost his mother several years before, his uncle Harald Hansen invited him to become a member of his family, which he did, though he continued to follow the same calling.

In the intervals between his voyages he invariably spent his time with the friends he loved; but he made regular voyages upon large fishing

vessels, and rose to the rank of mate when he was but twenty-one. He was now twenty-three years of age.

When he visited Dal, Joel found him a most congenial companion. He accompanied him on his excursions to the mountains, and across the highest table-lands of the Telemark. The young sailor seemed as much at home in the fields as in the fiords, and never lagged behind unless it was to keep his cousin Hulda company.

A close friendship gradually sprung up between Joel and Ole, and quite naturally the same sentiment assumed a different form in respect to the young girl. Joel, of course, encouraged it. Where would his sister ever find a better fellow, a more sympathetic nature, a warmer and more devoted heart? With Ole for a husband, Hulda's happiness was assured. So it was with the entire approval of her mother and brother that the young girl followed the natural promptings of her heart. Though these people of the North are undemonstrative, they must not be accused of a want of sensibility. No! It is only their way; and perhaps their way is as good as any other, after all.

So it came to pass that one day, when all four of them were sitting quietly together, Ole remarked, without any preamble whatever:

"An idea occurs to me, Hulda."

"What is it?"

"It seems to me that we ought to marry."

"I think so too."

"And so do I," added Dame Hansen as coolly as if the matter had been under discussion for some time.

"I agree with you," remarked Joel, "and in that case I shall naturally become your brother-in-law."

"Yes," said Ole; "but it is probable that I shall only love you the better for it."

"That is very possible."

"We have your consent, then?"

"Upon my word! nothing would please me better," replied Joel.

"So it is decided, Hulda?" inquired Dame Hansen.

"Yes, mother," replied the girl, quietly.

"You are really willing?" asked Ole. "I have loved you a long time, Hulda, without saying so."

"And I you, Ole."

"How it came about, I really do not know."

"Nor I."

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