

## CHAPTER XIII.

Meanwhile, Sylvius Hogg was hastening toward Bergen. His tenacious nature and energetic character, though daunted for a moment, were now reasserting themselves. He refused to credit Ole's death, nor would he admit that Hulda was doomed never to see her lover again. No, until the fact was established beyond a doubt, he was determined to regard the report as false.

But had he any information which would serve as a basis for the task he was about to undertake in Bergen? Yes, though we must admit that the clew was of a very vague nature.

He knew merely the date on which the bottle had been cast into the sea by Ole Kamp, and the date and locality in which it had been recovered from the waves. He had learned those facts through the letter just received from the Naval Department, the letter which had decided him to leave for Bergen immediately, in order that he might consult with Help Bros., and with the most experienced seamen of that port.

The journey was made as quickly as possible. On reaching Moel, Sylvius Hogg sent his companion back with the kariol, and took passage upon one of the birch-bark canoes that are used in traversing the waters of Lake Finn. Then, at Tinoset, instead of turning his steps toward the south--that is to say, in the direction of Bamble--he hired another

kariol, and took the Hardanger route, in order to reach the gulf of that name in the shortest possible time. From there, a little steamer called the "Run" transported him to the mouth of the gulf, and finally, after crossing a network of fiords and inlets, between the islands and islets that stud the Norwegian coast, he landed at Bergen on the morning of the second of July.

This old city, laved by the waters of both the Logne and Hardanger, is delightfully situated in a picturesque region which would bear a striking resemblance to Switzerland if an artificial arm of the sea should ever conduct the waters of the blue Mediterranean to the foot of the Alps.

A magnificent avenue of ash trees leads to the town.

The houses, with their fantastic, pointed gables, are as dazzling in their whiteness as the habitations of Arabian cities, and are all congregated in an irregular triangle that contains a population of about thirty thousand souls. Its churches date from the twelfth century. Its tall cathedral is visible from afar to vessels returning from sea, and it is the capital of commercial Norway, though situated off the regular lines of travel, and a long distance from the two cities which rank first and second in the kingdom, politically--Christiania and Drontheim.

Under any other circumstances the professor would have taken great

pleasure in studying this important city, which is Dutch rather than Norwegian in its aspect and manners. It had been one of the cities included in his original route, but since his adventure on the Maristien and his subsequent sojourn at Dal, his plans had undergone important changes.

Sylvius Hogg was no longer the traveling deputy, anxious to ascertain the exact condition of the country from a commercial as well as a political point of view. He was the guest of the Hansens, the debtor of Joel and Hulda, whose interests now outweighed all else in his estimation--a debtor who was resolved to pay his debt of gratitude at any cost, though he felt that what he was about to attempt for them was but a trifle.

On his arrival in Bergen, Sylvius Hogg landed at the lower end of the town, on the wharf used as a fish-market, but he lost no time in repairing to the part of the town known as the Tyske Bodrone quarter, where Help, Junior, of the house of Help Bros., resided.

It was raining, of course, for rain falls in Bergen on at least three hundred and sixty days of every year; but it would be impossible to find a house better protected against the wind and rain than the hospitable mansion of Help, Junior, and nowhere could Sylvius Hogg have received a warmer and more cordial welcome. His friend took possession of him very much as if he had been some precious bale of merchandise which had been consigned to his care, and which would be

delivered up only upon the presentation of a formal order.

Sylvius Hogg immediately made known the object of his visit to Help, Junior. He inquired if any news had yet been received of the "Viking," and if Bergen mariners were really of the opinion that she had gone down with all on board. He also inquired if this probable shipwreck, which had plunged so many homes into mourning, had not led the maritime authorities to make some search for the missing vessel.

"But where were they to begin?" replied Help, Junior. "They do not even know where the shipwreck occurred."

"True, my dear Help, and for that very reason they should endeavor to ascertain."

"But how?"

"Why, though they do not know where the 'Viking' foundered, they certainly know where the bottle was picked up by the Danish vessel. So we have one valuable clew which it would be very wrong to ignore."

"Where was it?"

"Listen, my dear Help, and I will tell you."

Sylvius Hogg then apprised his friend of the important information

which had just been received through the Naval Department, and the full permission given him to utilize it.

The bottle containing Ole Kamp's lottery-ticket had been picked up on the third of June, about two hundred miles south of Iceland, by the schooner "Christian," of Elsineur, Captain Mosselman, and the wind was blowing strong from the south-east at the time.

The captain had immediately examined the contents of the bottle, as it was certainly his duty to do, inasmuch as he might-have rendered very effectual aid to the survivors of the "Viking" had he known where the catastrophe occurred; but the lines scrawled upon the back of the lottery-ticket gave no clew, so the "Christian" could not direct her course to the scene of the shipwreck.

This Captain Mosselman was an honest man. Very possibly some less scrupulous person would have kept the ticket; but he had only one thought--to transmit the ticket to the person to whom it was addressed as soon as he entered port. Hulda Hansen, of Dal, that was enough. It was not necessary to know any more.

But on reaching Copenhagen, Captain Mosselman said to himself that it would perhaps be better to transmit the document through the hands of the Danish authorities, instead of sending it straight to the person for whom it was intended. This would be the safest, as well as the regular way. He did so, and the Naval Department at Copenhagen

promptly notified the Naval Department at Christiania.

Sylvius Hogg's letter, asking for information in regard to the "Viking," had already been received, and the deep interest he took in the Hansen family was well known. It was known, too, that he intended to remain in Dal some time longer, so it was there that the ticket found by the Danish sea-captain was sent, to be delivered into Hulda Hansen's hands by the famous deputy.

And ever since that time the public had taken a deep interest in the affair, which had not been forgotten, thanks to the touching details given by the newspapers of both continents.

Sylvius Hogg stated the case briefly to his friend Help, who listened to him with the deepest interest, and without once interrupting him. He concluded his recital by saying:

"There is certainly one point about which there can be no possible doubt: this is, that on the third day of June, about one month after the departure from Saint-Pierre-Miquelon, the ticket was picked up two hundred miles south-west of Iceland."

"And that is all you know?"

"Yes, my dear Help, but by consulting some of the most experienced mariners of Bergen, men who are familiar with that locality, with the

general direction of its winds, and, above-all, with its currents, will it not be a comparatively easy matter to decide upon the route followed by the bottle? Then, by calculating its probable speed, and the time that elapsed before it was picked up, it certainly would not be impossible to discover the spot at which it was cast into the sea by Ole Kamp, that is to say, the scene of the shipwreck."

Help, Junior, shook his head with a doubting air. Would not any search that was based upon such vague indications as these be sure to prove a failure? The shipowner, being of a decided, cool and practical turn of mind, certainly thought so, and felt it his duty to say as much to Sylvius Hogg.

"Perhaps it may prove a failure, friend Help," was the prompt rejoinder; "but the fact that we have been able to secure only vague information, is certainly no reason for abandoning the undertaking. I am anxious that nothing shall be left undone for these poor people to whom I am indebted for my life. Yes, if need be, I would not hesitate to sacrifice all I possess to find Ole Kamp, and bring him safely back to his betrothed, Hulda Hansen."

Then Sylvius Hogg proceeded to give a full account of his adventure on the Rjukanfos. He related the intrepid manner in which Joel and his sister had risked their own lives to save him, and how, but for their timely assistance, he would not have had the pleasure of being the guest of his friend Help that day.

His friend Help, as we said before, was an eminently practical man, but he was not opposed to useless and even impossible efforts when a question of humanity was involved, and he finally approved what Sylvius Hogg wished to attempt.

"Sylvius," he said, "I will assist you by every means in my power. Yes, you are right. However small the chance of finding some survivor of the 'Viking' may be, and especially of finding this brave Ole whose betrothed saved your life, it must not be neglected."

"No, Help, no," interrupted the professor; "not if it were but one chance in a hundred thousand."

"So this very day, Sylvius, I will assemble all the most experienced seamen of Bergen in my office. I will send for all who have navigated or who are now navigating the ocean between Iceland and Newfoundland, and we will see what they advise us to do."

"And what they advise us to do we will do," added Sylvius Hogg, without an instant's hesitation. "I have the approval of the government. In fact, I am authorized to send one of its dispatch-boats in search of the 'Viking,' and I feel sure that no one will hesitate to take part in such a work."

"I will pay a visit to the marine bureau, and see what I can learn



there," remarked Help, Junior.

"Would you like me to accompany you?"

"It is not necessary, and you must be fatigued."

"Fatigued! I--at my age?"

"Nevertheless, you had better rest until my return, my dear and ever-young Sylvius."

That same day there was a large meeting of captains of merchant and whaling vessels, as well as pilots, in the office of Help Bros.--an assemblage of men who were still navigating the seas, as well as of those who had retired from active service.

Sylvius Hogg explained the situation briefly but clearly. He told them the date--May 3d--on which the bottle had been cast into the sea by Ole Kamp, and the date--June 3d--on which it had been picked up by the Danish captain, two hundred miles south-west of Iceland.

The discussion that followed was long and serious. There was not one of these brave men who were not familiar with the currents of that locality, and upon the direction of these currents they must, of course, chiefly depend for a solution of the problem.

But it was an incontestable fact that at the time of the shipwreck, and during the interval that elapsed between the sailing of the "Viking" from Saint-Pierre-Miquelon, and the discovery of the bottle by the Danish vessel, constant gales from the south-east had disturbed that portion of the Atlantic. In fact, it was to one of these tempests that the catastrophe must be attributed. Probably the "Viking," being unable to carry sail in the teeth of the tempest, had been obliged to scud before the wind and it being at this season of the year that the ice from the polar seas begins to make its way down into the Atlantic, it was more than likely that a collision had taken place, and that the "Viking" had been crushed by a floating iceberg, which it was impossible to avoid.

Still, in that case, was it not more than probable that the whole, or a part, of the ship's crew had taken refuge upon one of these ice fields after having placed a quantity of provisions upon it? If they had really done so, the iceberg, having certainly been driven in a north-westerly direction by the winds which were prevailing at the time, it was not unlikely that the survivors had been able to reach some point on the coast of Greenland, so it was in that direction, and in those seas, that search should be made.

This was the unanimous opinion of these experienced mariners, and there could be no doubt that this was the only feasible plan. But would they find aught save a few fragments of the "Viking" in case the vessel had been crushed by some enormous iceberg? Could they hope to

effect the rescue of any survivors?

This was more than doubtful, and the professor on putting the question perceived that the more competent could not, or would not, reply.

Still, this was no cause for inaction--they were all agreed upon that point--but action must be taken without delay.

There are always several government vessels at Bergen, and one of the three dispatch-boats charged with the surveillance of the western coast of Norway is attached to this port. As good luck would have it, that very boat was now riding at anchor in the bay.

After making a note of the various suggestions advanced by the most experienced seamen who had assembled at the office of Help, Junior, Sylvius Hogg went aboard the dispatch-boat "Telegraph," and apprised the commander of the special mission intrusted to him by the government.

The commander received him very cordially, and declared his willingness to render all the assistance in his power. He had become familiar with the navigation of the locality specified during several long and dangerous voyages from the Loffoden Islands and Finmark to the Iceland and Newfoundland fisheries; so he would have experience to aid him in the humane work he was about to undertake, as he fully agreed with the seamen already consulted that it was in the waters between Iceland and Greenland that they must look for the survivors,

or at least for some trace of the "Viking." If he did not succeed there, he would, however, explore the neighboring shores, and perhaps the eastern part of Baffin's Bay.

"I am all ready to start, sir," he added. "My coal and provisions are on board, my crew has been selected, and I can set sail this very day."

"Thank you, captain," replied the professor, "not only for your promptness, but for the very kind reception you have given me. But one question more: Can you tell me how long it will take you to reach the shores of Greenland?"

"My vessel makes about eleven knots an hour, and as the distance from Bergen to Greenland is only about twenty degrees, I can count upon arriving there in less than a week."

"Make all possible haste, captain," replied Sylvius Hogg. "If any of the shipwrecked crew did survive the catastrophe, two months have already elapsed since the vessel went down, and they are perhaps in a destitute and even famishing condition upon some desert coast."

"Yes, there is no time to lose, Monsieur Hogg. I will start this very day, keep my vessel going at the top of her speed, and as soon as I find any trace whatever I will inform the Naval Department at Christiania by a telegram from Newfoundland."

"God-speed you, captain," replied Sylvius Hogg, "and may you succeed."

That same day the "Telegraph" set sail, followed by the sympathizing cheers of the entire population of Bergen, and it was not without keen emotion that the kind-hearted people watched the vessel make its way down the channel, and finally disappear behind the islands of the fiord.

But Sylvius Hogg did not confine his efforts to the expedition undertaken by the dispatch-boat "Telegraph." On the contrary, he was resolved to multiply the chances of finding some trace of the missing "Viking." Would it not be possible to excite a spirit of emulation in the captains of merchant vessels and fishing-smacks that navigated the waters of Iceland and the Faroe Islands? Unquestionably. So a reward of two thousand marks was promised in the name of the government to any vessel that would furnish any information in regard to the missing "Viking," and one of five thousand marks to any vessel that would bring one of the survivors of the shipwreck back to his native land.

So, during the two days spent in Bergen Sylvius Hogg did everything in his power to insure the success of the enterprise, and he was cheerfully seconded in his efforts by Help, Junior, and all the maritime authorities. M. Help would have been glad to have the worthy deputy as a guest some time longer, but though Sylvius Hogg thanked him cordially he declined to prolong his stay. He was anxious to

rejoin Hulda and Joel, being afraid to leave them to themselves too long, but Help, Junior, promised him that any news that might be received should be promptly transmitted to Dal.

So, on the morning of the 4th, after taking leave of his friend Help, Sylvius Hogg re-embarked on the "Run" to cross the fiord of the Hardanger, and if nothing unforeseen occurred he counted on reaching the Telemark by the evening of the 5th.