

CHAPTER XVI.

The next morning Foreman Lengling's gayly painted kariol bore away Sylvius Hogg and Hulda, seated comfortably side by side. There was not room for Joel, as we know already, so the brave fellow trudged along on foot at the horse's head.

The fourteen kilometers that lay between Dal and Moel had no terrors for this untiring walker.

Their route lay along the left bank of the Maan, down the charming valley of the Vesfjorddal--a narrow, heavily wooded valley, watered by a thousand dashing cataracts. At each turn in the path, too, one saw appearing or disappearing the lofty summit of Gousta, with its two large patches of dazzling snow.

The sky was cloudless, the weather magnificent, the air not too cool, nor the sun too warm.

Strange to say, Sylvius Hogg's face seemed to have become more serene since his departure from the inn, though it is not improbable that his cheerfulness was a trifle forced, so anxious was he that this trip should divert Joel and Hulda from their sorrowful thoughts.

It took them only about two hours and a half to reach Moel, which is

situated at the end of Lake Tinn. Here they were obliged to leave the kariol and take a small boat, for at this point a chain of small lakes begins. The kariol paused near the little church, at the foot of a water-fall at least five hundred feet in height. This water-fall, which is visible for only about one fifth of its descent, loses itself in a deep crevasse before being swallowed up by the lake.

Two boatmen were standing on the shore beside a birch-bark canoe, so fragile and unstable that the slightest imprudence on the part of its occupants would inevitably overturn it.

The lake was at its very best this beautiful morning. The sun had absorbed all the mist of the previous night, and no one could not have asked for a more superb summer's day.

"You are not tired, my good Joel?" inquired the professor, as he alighted from the kariol.

"No, Monsieur Sylvius. You forget that I am accustomed to long tramps through the Telemark."

"That is true. Tell me, do you know the most direct route from Moel to Christiania?"

"Perfectly, sir. But I fear when we reach Tinoset, at the further end of the lake, we shall have some difficulty in procuring a kariol, as

we have not warned them of our intended arrival, as is customary in this country."

"Have no fears, my boy," replied the professor: "I attended to that. You needn't be afraid that I have any intention of making you foot it from Dal to Christiania."

"I could easily do it if necessary," remarked Joel.

"But it will not be necessary, fortunately. Now suppose we go over our route again."

"Well, once at Tinoset, Monsieur Sylvius, we for a time follow the shores of Lake Fol, passing through Vik and Bolkesko, so as to reach Mose, and afterward Kongsberg, Hangsund, and Drammen. If we travel both night and day it will be possible for us to reach Christiania to-morrow afternoon."

"Very well, Joel. I see that you are familiar with the country, and the route you propose is certainly a very pleasant one."

"It is also the shortest."

"But I am not at all particular about taking the shortest route," replied Sylvius Hogg, laughing. "I know another and even more agreeable route that prolongs the journey only a few hours, and you,

too, are familiar with it, my boy, though you failed to mention it."

"What route do you refer to?"

"To the one that passes through Bamble."

"Through Bamble?"

"Yes, through Bamble. Don't feign ignorance. Yes, through Bamble, where Farmer Helmboe and his daughter Siegfrid reside."

"Monsieur Sylvius!"

"Yes, and that is the route we are going to take, following the northern shore of Lake Fol instead of the southern, but finally reaching Kongsberg all the same."

"Yes, quite as well, and even better," answered Joel smiling.

"I must thank you in behalf of my brother, Monsieur Sylvius," said Hulda, archly.

"And for yourself as well, for I am sure that you too will be glad to see your friend Siegfrid."

The boat being ready, all three seated themselves upon a pile of

leaves in the stern, and the vigorous strokes of the boatmen soon carried the frail bark a long way from the shore.

After passing Hackenoes, a tiny hamlet of two or three houses, built upon a rocky promontory laved by the narrow fiord into which the Maan empties, the lake begins to widen rapidly. At first it is walled in by tall cliffs whose real height one can estimate accurately only when a boat passes their base, appearing no larger than some aquatic bird in comparison; but gradually the mountains retire into the background.

The lake is dotted here and there with small islands, some absolutely devoid of vegetation, others covered with verdure through which peep a few fishermen's huts. Upon the lake, too, may be seen floating countless logs not yet sold to the saw-mills in the neighborhood.

This sight led Sylvius Hogg to jestingly remark--and he certainly must have been in a mood for jesting:

"If our lakes are the eyes of Norway, as our poets pretend, it must be admitted that poor Norway has more than one beam in her eye, as the Bible says."

About four o'clock the boat reached Tinoset, one of the most primitive of hamlets. Still that mattered little, as Sylvius Hogg had no intention of remaining there even for an hour. As he had prophesied to Joel, a vehicle was awaiting them on the shore, for having decided

upon this journey several weeks before, he had written to Mr. Benett, of Christiania, requesting him to provide the means of making it with the least possible fatigue and delay, which explains the fact that a comfortable carriage was in attendance, with its box well stocked with eatables, thus enabling the party to dispense with the stale eggs and sour milk with which travelers are usually regaled in the hamlets of the Telemark.

Tinoset is situated near the end of Lake Tinn, and here the Maan plunges majestically into the valley below, where it resumes its former course.

The horses being already harnessed to the carriage, our friends immediately started in the direction of Bamble. In those days this was the only mode of travel in vogue throughout Central Norway, and through the Telemark in particular, and perhaps modern railroads have already caused the tourist to think with regret of the national kariol and Mr. Benett's comfortable carriages.

It is needless to say that Joel was well acquainted with this region, having traversed it repeatedly on his way from Dal to Bamble.

It was eight o'clock in the evening when Sylvius Hogg and his protégées reached the latter village. They were not expected, but Farmer Helmboe received them none the less cordially on that account. Siegfrid tenderly embraced her friend, and the two young girls being

left alone together for a few moments, they had an opportunity to discuss the subject that engrossed their every thought.

"Pray do not despair, my dearest Hulda," said Siegfrid; "I have not ceased to hope, by any means. Why should you abandon all hope of seeing your poor Ole again? We have learned, through the papers, that search is being made for the 'Viking.' It will prove successful, I am certain it will, and I am sure Monsieur Sylvius has not given up all hope. Hulda, my darling, I entreat you not to despair."

Hulda's tears were her only reply, and Siegfrid pressed her friend fondly to her heart.

Ah! what joy would have reigned in Farmer Helmboe's household if they could but have heard of the safe return of the absent one, and have felt that they really had a right to be happy.

"So you are going direct to Christiania?" inquired the farmer.

"Yes, Monsieur Helmboe."

"To be present at the drawing of the great lottery?"

"Certainly."

"But what good will it do now that Ole's ticket is in the hands of

that wretch, Sandgoist?"

"It was Ole's wish, and it must be respected," replied the professor.

"I hear that the usurer has found no purchaser for the ticket for which he paid so dearly."

"I too have heard so, friend Helmboe."

"Well, I must say that it serves the rascal right. The man is a scoundrel, professor, a scoundrel, and it serves him right."

"Yes, friend Helmboe, it does, indeed, serve him right."

Of course they had to take supper at the farm-house. Neither Siegfrid nor her father would allow their friends to depart without accepting the invitation, but it would not do for them to tarry too long if they wished to make up for the time lost by coming around by the way of Bamble, so at nine o'clock the horses were put to the carriage.

"At my next visit I will spend six hours at the table with you, if you desire it," said Sylvius Hogg to the farmer; "but to-day I must ask your permission to allow a cordial shake of the hand from you and the loving kiss your charming Siegfrid will give Hulda to take the place of the dessert."

This done they started.

In this high latitude twilight would still last several hours. The horizon, too, is distinctly visible for a long while after sunset, the atmosphere is so pure.

It is a beautiful and varied drive from Bamble to Kongsberg. The road passes through Hitterdal and to the south of Lake Fol, traversing the southern part of the Telemark, and serving as an outlet to all the small towns and hamlets of that locality.

An hour after their departure they passed the church of Hitterdal, an old and quaint edifice, surmounted with gables and turrets rising one above the other, without the slightest regard to anything like regularity of outline. The structure is of wood--walls, roofs and turrets--and though it strongly resembles a motley collection of pepper-boxes, it is really a venerable and venerated relic of the Scandinavian architecture of the thirteenth century.

Night came on very gradually--one of those nights still impregnated with a dim light which about one o'clock begins to blend with that of early dawn.

Joel, enthroned upon the front seat, was absorbed in his reflections. Hulda sat silent and thoughtful in the interior of the carriage. But few words were exchanged between Sylvius Hogg and the postilion, and

these were almost invariably requests to drive faster. No other sound was heard save the bells on the harness, the cracking of the whip, and the rumble of wheels over the stony road. They drove on all night, without once changing horses. It was not necessary to stop at Listhus, a dreary station, situated in a sort of natural amphitheater, surrounded by pine-clad mountains. They passed swiftly by Tiness, too, a picturesque little hamlet, perched on a rocky eminence. Their progress was rapid in spite of the rather dilapidated condition of their vehicle, whose bolts and springs rattled and creaked dolorously, and certainly there was no just cause of complaint against the driver, though he was half asleep most of the time. But for all that, he urged his horses briskly on, whipping his jaded steeds mechanically, but usually aiming his blows at the off horse, for the near one belonged to him, while the other was the property of a neighbor.

About five o'clock in the morning Sylvius Hogg opened his eyes, stretched out his arms, and drank in huge draughts of the pungent odor of the pines.

They had now reached Kongsberg. The carriage was crossing the bridge over the Laagen, and soon it stopped in front of a house near the church, and not far from the water-fall of the Larbrö.

"If agreeable to you, my friends," remarked Sylvius Hogg, "we will stop here only to change horses, for it is still too early for breakfast. I think it would be much better not to make a real halt

until we reach Drammen. There we can obtain a good meal, and so spare Monsieur Benett's stock of provisions."

This being decided the professor and Joel treated themselves to a tiny glass of brandy at the Hotel des Mines, and a quarter of an hour afterward, fresh horses being in readiness, they resumed their journey.

On leaving the city they were obliged to ascend a very steep hill. The road was roughly hewn in the side of the mountain, and from it the tall towers at the mouth of the silver mines of Kongsberg were distinctly visible. Then a dense pine forest suddenly hid everything else from sight--a pine forest through which the sun's rays never penetrate.

The town of Hangsund furnished fresh horses for the carriage. There our friends again found themselves on smooth level roads, frequently obstructed by turnpike gates, where they were obliged to pay a toll of five or six shillings. This was a fertile region, abounding in trees that looked like weeping willows, so heavily did the branches droop under their burden of fruit.

As they neared Drammen, which is situated upon an arm of Christiania Bay, the country became more hilly. About noon they reached the city with its two interminable streets, lined with gayly painted houses, and its wharves where the countless rafts left but a meager space for

the vessels that come here to load with the products of the Northland.

The carriage paused in front of the Scandinavian Hotel. The proprietor, a dignified-looking personage, with a long, white beard, and a decidedly professional air, promptly appeared in the door-way of his establishment.

With that keenness of perception that characterizes inn-keepers in every country on the globe, he remarked:

"I should not wonder if these gentlemen and this young lady would like breakfast."

"Yes," replied Sylvius Hogg, "but let us have it as soon as possible."

"It shall be served immediately."

The repast was soon ready, and proved a most tempting one. Mention should especially be made of a certain fish, stuffed with a savory herb, of which the professor partook with evident delight.

At half past one o'clock the carriage, to which fresh horses had been harnessed, was brought to the hotel door, and our friends started down the principal street of Drammen at a brisk trot.

As they passed a small and dingy dwelling that contrasted strongly

with the gayly painted houses around it, Joel could not repress a sudden movement of loathing.

"There is Sandgoist?" he exclaimed.

"So that is Sandgoist," remarked Sylvius Hogg. "He certainly has a bad face."

It was Sandgoist smoking on his door-step. Did he recognize Joel? It is impossible to say, for the carriage passed swiftly on between the huge piles of lumber and boards.

Next came a long stretch of level road, bordered with mountain ash-trees, laden with coral berries, and then they entered the dense pine forest that skirts a lovely tract of land known as Paradise Valley.

Afterward they found themselves confronted and surrounded by a host of small hills, each of which was crowned with a villa or farm-house. As twilight came on, and the carriage began to descend toward the sea through a series of verdant meadows, the bright red roofs of neat farm-houses peeped out here and there through the trees, and soon our travelers reached Christiania Bay, surrounded by picturesque hills, and with its innumerable creeks, its tiny ports and wooden piers, where the steamers and ferry-boats land.

At nine o'clock in the evening, and while it was still light, the old carriage drove noisily into the city through the already deserted streets.

In obedience to orders previously given by Sylvius Hogg, the vehicle drew up in front of the Hotel du Nord. It was there that Hulda and Joel were to stay, rooms having been engaged for them in advance. After bidding them an affectionate good-night the professor hastened to his own home, where his faithful servants, Kate and Fink, were impatiently awaiting him.