

## CHAPTER XVIII.

"Good-morning, Mr. Benett. It is always a great pleasure to me when I have an opportunity to shake hands with you."

"And for me, professor, it is a great honor."

"Honor, pleasure--pleasure, honor," laughed the professor. "One balances the other."

"I am glad to see that your journey through Central Norway has been safely accomplished."

"Not accomplished, only concluded, for this year."

"But tell me, pray, all about those good people you met at Dal."

"Excellent people they were, friend Benett, in every sense of the word."

"From what I can learn through the papers they are certainly very much to be pitied."

"Unquestionably, Mr. Benett. I have never known misfortune to pursue persons so relentlessly."

"It seems so, indeed, professor; for right after the loss of the 'Viking' came that miserable Sandgoist affair."

"True, Mr. Benett."

"Still, Mr. Hogg, I think Hulda Hansen did right to give up the ticket under the circumstances."

"Indeed! and why, if you please?"

"Because it is better to secure fifteen thousand marks than to run a very great risk of gaining nothing at all."

"You talk like the practical business man and merchant that you are; but if you choose to look at the matter from another point of view, it becomes a matter of sentiment, and money exerts very little influence in such cases."

"Of course, Mr. Hogg, but permit me to remark that it is more than likely that your protégée has profited greatly by the exchange."

"Why do you think so?"

"But think of it. What does this ticket represent? One chance in a million of winning."

"Yes, one chance in a million. That is very small; it is true, Mr. Benett, very small."

"Yes; and consequently such a reaction has followed the late madness that it is said that this Sandgoist who purchased the ticket to speculate upon it has been unable to find a purchaser."

"So I have heard."

"And yet, if that rascally usurer should win the grand prize, what a shame it would be!"

"A shame, most assuredly, Mr. Benett; the word is not too strong--a shame, unquestionably."

This conversation took place while Sylvius Hogg was walking through the establishment of M. Benett--an establishment well known in Christiania, and indeed throughout Norway. It is difficult to mention an article that can not be found in this bazaar. Traveling-carriages, kariols by the dozen, canned goods, baskets of wine, preserves of every kind, clothing and utensils for tourists, and guides to conduct them to the remotest villages of Finmark, Lapland, or even to the North Pole. Nor is this all. M. Benett likewise offers to lovers of natural history specimens of the different stones and metals found in the earth, as well as of the birds, insects, and reptiles of Norway.

It is well, too, to know that one can nowhere find a more complete assortment of the jewelry and bric-à-brac of the country than in his show-cases.

This gentleman is consequently the good angel of all tourists desirous of exploring the Scandinavian peninsula, and a man Christiania could scarcely do without.

"By the way, you found the carriage you had ordered waiting for you at Tinset, did you not, professor?" he asked.

"Yes. Having ordered it through you, Monsieur Benett, I felt sure that it would, be there at the appointed time."

"You are a sad flatterer, I fear, Monsieur Hogg. But I judged from your letter that there were to be three of you in the party."

"There were three of us, as I told you."

"And the others?"

"They arrived here safe and sound last evening, and are now waiting for me at the Hotel du Nord, where I am soon to join them."

"And these persons are--?"

"Precisely, Monsieur Benett, precisely; but I must beg you to say nothing about it. I don't wish their arrival to be noised abroad yet."

"Poor girl!"

"Yes, she has suffered terribly."

"And you wish her to be present at the drawing, though the ticket her betrothed bequeathed to her is no longer in her possession?"

"It is not my wish, Monsieur Benett, but that of Ole Kamp, and I say to you as I have said to others, Ole Kamp's last wishes would be obeyed."

"Unquestionably. What you do is not only right, but always for the best, professor."

"You are flattering me now, dear Monsieur Benett."

"Not at all. But it was a lucky day for them when the Hansen family made your acquaintance."

"Nonsense! it was a much more fortunate thing for me that they crossed my path."

"I see that you have the same kind heart still."

"Well, as one is obliged to have a heart it is best to have a good one, isn't it?" retorted the professor, with a genial smile. "But you needn't suppose that I came here merely in search of compliments," he continued. "It was for an entirely different object, I assure you."

"Believe me, I am quite at your service."

"You are aware, I suppose, that but for the timely intervention of Joel and Hulda Hansen, the Rjukanfos would never have yielded me up alive, and I should not have the pleasure of seeing you to-day?"

"Yes, yes, I know," replied Mr. Benett. "The papers have published full accounts of your adventure, and those courageous young people really deserve to win the capital prize."

"That is my opinion," answered Sylvius Hogg, "but as that is quite out of the question now, I am unwilling for my friend Hulda to return to Dal without some little gift as a sort of memento of her visit to Christiania."

"That is certainly an excellent idea, Mr. Hogg."

"So you must assist me in selecting something that would be likely to please a young girl."

"Very willingly," responded Mr. Benett. And he forthwith invited the professor to step into the jewelry department, for was not a Norwegian ornament the most charming souvenir that one could take away with one from Christiania and from Mr. Benett's wonderful establishment?

Such at least was the opinion of Sylvius Hogg when the genial merchant exhibited the contents of his show-cases.

"As I am no connoisseur in such matters I must be guided by your taste, Mr. Benett," he remarked.

They had before them a very large and complete assortment of native jewelry, which is usually valuable rather by reason of the elaborateness of its workmanship than any costliness of material.

"What is this?" inquired the professor.

"It is a ring with pendants which emit a very pleasant sound."

"It is certainly very pretty," replied Sylvius Hogg, trying the bauble on the tip of his little finger. "Lay it aside, Mr. Benett, and let us look at something else."

"Bracelets or necklaces?"

"At a little of everything, if you please, Mr. Benett--a little of

everything. What is this?"

"A set of ornaments for the corsage. Look at that delicate tracery of copper upon a red worsted groundwork. It is all in excellent taste, though not very expensive."

"The effect is certainly charming, Mr. Benett. Lay the ornaments aside with the ring."

"But I must call your attention to the fact that these ornaments are reserved for the adornment of youthful brides on their wedding-day, and that--"

"By Saint Olaf! you are right. Mr. Benett, you are quite right. Poor Hulda! Unfortunately it is not Ole who is making her this present, but myself, and it is not to a blushing bride that I am going to offer it."

"True, true, Mr. Hogg."

"Let me look then at some jewelry suitable for a young girl. How about this cross, Mr. Benett?"

"It is to be worn as a pendant, and being cut in concave facets it sparkles brilliantly with every movement of the wearer's throat."



"It is very pretty, very pretty, indeed, and you can lay it aside with the other articles, Mr. Benett. When we have gone through all the show-cases we will make our selection."

"Yes, but--"

"What is the matter now?"

"This cross, too, is intended to be worn by Scandinavian brides on their marriage-day."

"The deuce! friend Benett. I am certainly very unfortunate in my selections."

"The fact is, professor, my stock is composed principally of bridal jewelry, as that meets with the readiest sale. You can scarcely wonder at that."

"The fact doesn't surprise me at all, Mr. Benett, though it places me in a rather embarrassing position."

"Oh, well, you can still take the ring you asked me to put aside."

"Yes, but I should like some more showy ornament."

"Then take this necklace of silver filigree with its four rows of

chains which will have such a charming effect upon the neck of a young girl. See! it is studded with gems of every hue, and it is certainly one of the most quaint and curious productions of the Norwegian silversmiths."

"Yes, yes," replied Sylvius Hogg. "It is a pretty ornament, though perhaps rather showy for my modest Hulda. Indeed, I much prefer the corsage ornaments you showed me just now, and the pendant. Are they so especially reserved for brides that they can not be presented to a young girl?"

"I think the Storthing has as yet passed no law to that effect," replied Mr. Benett. "It is an unpardonable oversight, probably, but--"

"Well, well, it shall be attended to immediately, Mr. Benett. In the meantime I will take the cross and corsage ornaments. My little Hulda may marry some day after all. Good and charming as she is she certainly will not want for an opportunity to utilize these ornaments, so I will buy them and take them away with me."

"Very well, very well, professor."

"Shall we have the pleasure of seeing you at the drawing, friend Benett?"

"Certainly."

"I think it will be a very interesting affair."

"I am sure of it."

"But look here," exclaimed the professor, bending over a show-case, "here are two very pretty rings I did not notice before."

"Oh, they wouldn't suit you, Mr. Hogg. These are the heavily chased rings that the pastor places upon the finger of the bride and the groom during the marriage ceremony."

"Indeed? Ah, well, I will take them all the same. And now I must bid you good-bye, Mr. Benett, though I hope to see you again very soon."

Sylvius Hogg now left the establishment, and walked briskly in the direction of the Hotel du Nord.

On entering the vestibule his eyes fell upon the words *Fiat lux*, which are inscribed upon the hall lamp.

"Ah! these Latin words are certainly very appropriate," he said to himself, "Yes. *Fiat lux! Fiat lux!*"

Hulda was still in her room, sitting by the window. The professor rapped at the door, which was instantly opened.

"Oh. Monsieur Sylvius!" cried the girl, delightedly.

"Yes, here I am, here I am! But never mind about Monsieur Sylvius now; our attention must be devoted to breakfast, which is ready and waiting. I'm as hungry as a wolf. Where is Joel?"

"In the reading-room."

"Well, I will go in search of him. You, my dear child, must come right down and join us."

Sylvius Hogg left the room and went to find Joel, who was also waiting for him, but in a state of mind bordering upon despair. The poor fellow immediately showed the professor the copy of the "Morgen-Blad," containing the discouraging telegram from the commander of the "Telegraph."

"Hulda has not seen it, I hope?" inquired the professor, hastily.

"No, I thought it better to conceal from her as long as possible what she will learn only too soon."

"You did quite right, my boy. Let us go to breakfast."

A moment afterward all three were seated at a table in a private

dining-room, and Sylvius Hogg began eating with great zest.

An excellent breakfast it was, equal in fact to any dinner, as you can judge from the menu. Cold beer soup, salmon with egg sauce, delicious veal cutlets, rare roast beef, a delicate salad, vanilla ice, raspberry and cherry preserver--the whole moistened with some very fine claret.

"Excellent, excellent!" exclaimed Sylvius Hogg. "Why, we can almost imagine ourselves in Dame Hansen's inn at Dal."

And as his mouth was otherwise occupied his eyes smiled as much as it is possible for eyes to smile.

Joel and Hulda endeavored to reply in the same strain, but they could not, and the poor girl tasted scarcely anything. When the repast was concluded:

"My children," said Sylvius Hogg, "you certainly failed to do justice to a very excellent breakfast. Still, I can not compel you to eat, and if you go without breakfast you are likely to enjoy your dinner all the more, while I very much doubt if I shall be able to compete with you to-night. Now, it is quite time for us to leave the table."

The professor was already upon his feet, and he was about to take the hat Joel handed him, when Hulda checked him by saying:

"Monsieur Sylvius, do you still insist that I shall accompany you?"

"To witness the drawing? Certainly I do, my dear girl."

"But it will be a very painful ordeal for me."

"I admit it, but Ole wished you to be present at the drawing, Hulda, and Ole's wishes must be obeyed."

This phrase was certainly becoming a sort of refrain in Sylvius Hogg's mouth.