THE SPELL-BOUND FIDDLER:

A NORSE ROMANCE.

By KRISTOFER JANSON.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL

By AUBER FORESTIER,
Author of "Echoes from Mist-Land," etc.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY RASMUS B. ANDERSON.

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TO

KRISTOFER JANSON,

THE AUTHOR OF "THE SPELL-BOUND FIDDLER,"

THIS VOLUME

IS DEDICATED AS A SOUVENIR OF HIS FIRST VISIT
TO AMERICA DURING THE FALL AND
WINTER OF 1879-80.

THE MILLER BOY.

BY J. S. WELHAVEN.

[TRANSLATED BY AUBER FORESTIER.]

By the mill beneath the Hauk'li mountain,
Sat the Miller Boy one day,
And he heard, above the plashing fountain,
Halling-strains amid the water's play.
O'er his harp the Forcegrim's hand is sweeping,
While the foaming torrent whirls and springs;
Save the Miller Boy, none knew 'twas keeping
Time to those enchanting, tuneful strings.

And his bow thenceforth was often swaying
In the Forcegrim's wondrous dance;
Never yet had there been heard such playing
As his parish list'ners now entrance.
Through the cottage, o'er the green, resounded
Hallings such as were not heard before;
Yet with melodies his strings abounded
That would send a hush th' assembly o'er.

And there came—he could have dream'd it never,
Tho' his life of dreams was full,—
Word and letter from the far-famed, ever
World-wide honor'd master Ole Bull.

He at royal courts, in mighty cities,
Matchless bowing often had display'd;
He remembered that his sweetest ditties
In a little mountain nook were play'd.

And the Miller Boy a change he offer'd
In a stately concert hall,
Where a boon to thousands might be proffer'd
Through the magic tones his strings let fall.
As one bowed o'er some majestic river,
Musing sat the Miller Boy; his seat,
As a bridge 'neath heavy tread, did quiver
With his rapid, eager rhythmic beat.

But his music, like the force now falling,
Onward rush'd, with mighty bound,
Ev'ry thought and feeling thither calling
Where the Forcegrim's dulcet harp did sound,
Far away to valleys ever vernal,
Fed by fountains from a snow-clad peak,
Where our art its crystal source eternal
Ever may in song and story seek.

PREFACE.

THE name of Ole Bull has been for a large part of the present century a household word with us. The important rôle assigned to the great violinist in the ensuing volume will, therefore, doubtless secure for it no small share of the reader's interest.

"The Spell-bound Fiddler" is one of the latest works from the pen of Kristofer Janson, one of the most noted poets, novelists and public speakers of Norway, and a leading worker in the movement to establish an independent national language in his native land. As he is now in America, studying our institutions, and visiting his countrymen in our northwestern states, the time seems opportune for introducing him to our public as a writer.

To Prof. R. B. Anderson, author of "Norse Mythology," etc., whose recently published "Younger Edda" is increasing the number of those to whom he has unfolded the old Teutonic world of thought, are due hearty thanks for his valuable assistance

in the preparation of the English translation. His introduction will be found to contain more about Ole Bull than has ever been published at any one time in English, comprising incidents that have never before appeared in print. It states the facts on which the story of "The Spell-bound Fiddler" is based, and also other similar and thrilling anecdotes, showing how lavishly the peasants of Norway are endowed with musical talent.

It is hoped that the reader's interest in the book will also be enhanced by the poem of the famous Norse poet, J. S. Welhaven (1807–1873).

AUBER FORESTIER.

January, 1880.

[See page 162 for note to new edition and sketch of Kristofer Janson.]

INTRODUCTION.

BY RASMUS B. ANDERSON.

EVER since 1814, when Norway became separated from Denmark and united with Sweden, strenuous efforts have been made by the patriots of that country to reëstablish a genuine Norwegian national spirit in the government, customs, art, literature, and especially in the language, of the country. Norway must be made independent of foreign countries, not only by political treaties, but also by a return, on the part of the people, to the manners, sentiments and speech of their fathers. In fact it may be said that it was the awakening of this sentiment among the Norwegian students at the Copenhagen University, in the latter part of the previous century, that prepared the way for the separation in 1814. The leader in the movement to restore a national language to Norway is the distinguished scholar and linguist Ivar Aasen (born 1813). Being by birth a peasant, and having learned from his parents one of the most antique dialects of Norway, he had peculiar advantages for studying the grammatical and etymological features of the Norse dialects, and their relation to the Old Norse tongue which is still spoken in Iceland. The

results of his studies were published, and attracted much attention among scholars, for it was observed that the author must be in possession not only of a perfect familiarity with all Teutonic languages, old and modern, but also of a vast amount of knowledge in regard to most of the Aryan forms of speech. His next work was to construct out of all the antique dialects, with the aid of the Old Norse, a new Norwegian language; and the fame he had already acquired secured him at once many talented adherents. He became the natural standard-bearer among those desiring to give Norway her own tongue in place of Danish. Several writers immediately began to study the new language constructed by Aasen, and the result was that the whole country was soon filled with songs and stories written therein. The Danish is still the language of the government, of the university, of the schools, and of the pulpit; but the reform is steadily advancing and can already show a fine literature.

The most prolific and the most talented writer of belles-lettres in this new Norway tongue, is the author of this book. He is a lyric poet of a high order, and as a dramatist and novelist he does not fall far below the famous Björnstjerne Björnson. His novels are pen-pictures of Norse peasant life; and the language in which they are written, being so nearly like that spoken by the peasants themselves, gives a peculiar flavor to his descriptions of men and things. There is apparently but little effort at

composition and artistic grouping, but throughout his novels we find a broad and spicy representation of Norse peasant life. The sympathetic humor that is so marked a peculiarity in the character of the Norse peasant, and Janson's wonderful power in making those weird personages develop their easy-going natures without any apparent effort on his part, make his books, especially his novels, exceedingly delightful, as well as wholesome and instructive reading. In many respects he is to the Norwegians what Fritz Reuter was, and through his imperishable books still is, to the Germans.

In the book now offered to the American public Janson has departed somewhat from his usual broad, realistic style, and given us the story of the Spell-bound Fiddler in a more artistic and concentrated form. Many have pronounced it his best novel, and there can be no doubt that Auber Forestier has acted wisely in selecting this one with which to introduce him to the American public, both on account of the intrinsic merits of the work, and on account of the popularity in this country of one of its heroes.

Kristofer Janson is yet in the prime of life, having been born in Bergen, Norway, in 1841. He is a man of liberal religious views, a republican in politics, a true patriot, and a man of excellent social qualities. He has also won distinction as a public speaker. He is now in America, partly for the purpose of visiting the numerous settlements of his countrymen in the northwest, but chiefly for the

purpose of making observations in regard to the practical results of republican institutions, so as to be able to speak, on his return home, of the blessings of democracy as one who knoweth whereof he speaketh. We hope Auber Forestier will soon be able to give us Janson's "American Notes."

The name of Torgeir, who figures as the hero in this book, is a household word in every Norse family. His whole name was Torgeir Audunson, but he was more commonly known as the "Miller Boy:" * He was born in the last decade of the previous century, and died in the summer of 1872, being at that time, according to his own statement, seventy-five years old. His home was in Thelemark, one of the most picturesque mountain districts of Norway. Torgeir Audunson's education is hardly worth mentioning. An itinerant schoolmaster taught him to read his catechism, that was all. He never learned to read written music — did not even know what notes meant,— and yet he was one of the greatest prodigies in music that Norway has produced. He was not only able to repeat everything that he had ever heard played, but was also a most wonderful composer of the weirdest and most fantastic Norwegian national dance-music, such as Spring-dances, Hallings, etc. Many of his compositions have been published, having been written, while he was playing

* His father was a miller, and, having frequently, as a boy, listened to the waterfall, the Forcegrim, no doubt taught him his first melodies.

them, by Ole Bull and other Norse musicians. Ole Bull, as this book shows, took a deep interest in the Miller Boy, and made several efforts to bring him to the attention of the public. He was brought to Bergen, where he played his weird mountain-airs in Ole Bull's theater, giving endless delight to his hearers. Later, Ole Bull brought him to Christiania, the capital of Norway, where he gave a few concerts and reaped a harvest of applause, and a sum of money large enough to buy him a farm in Thelemark and make him an independent man. Ole Bull would have liked to take him abroad, but the odd genius did not seem to care for worldly fame; and moreover he was so wholly unmanageable, in every way, that it is doubtful whether he would have succeeded outside of his native country. He never knew when to begin or when to stop playing, and besides he had an unfortunate fondness for the glass, which made it utterly impossible to depend upon him for any advertised concert. Norway abounds in interesting anecdotes and episodes from the life of the Miller Boy; and the following, which is told by Prof. Monrad, will give our readers some idea of his peculiarities:

About fifty years ago the Kongsberg Fair was the occasion of the gathering of vast multitudes of people from the surrounding country. It was an event of far greater importance than the fairs of the present day. Fifty years ago extravagant stories were told far and wide of what had happened at

the Kǫngsberg Fair,—stories that now only linger in the memories of the past. Kongsberg now has its railroad, it has been united in commerce with the rest of the business world, and the transactions there have lost that weird halo with which they were surrounded in days of yore. In olden times were gathered at the Kongsberg fairs from Sandsver, from Numedal, from Thelemark, and various other adjacent districts, everything that seemed in any way likely to attract attention: the "best fellows," that is, the strongest fighters, the smartest dancers, the finest fiddlers, came there to exhibit their strength and skill. The finest and fastest trotters were brought there to win prizes on the race-course. In short, Kongsberg was to the unsophisticated people of this part of Norway the world's center, where every parish celebrity had to win his honors in order to obtain recognition from his fellow-parishioners. A Kongsberg market prize was to those mountaineers what a medal from a world's fair is to us. The hero who at the Kongsberg Fair had "cleared a dance-hall," he whose "Bay" had won a victory on the race-course, nay even he who had emptied the largest number of bowls without getting under the table, their fame spread far and wide through the parishes, and they were looked upon with profound awe wherever they came.

This sort of life was of course rude in its way, but it was national, and it contained far more poetic flavor than the matter-of-fact life of to-day.

At one of the fair-booths, at the time of which we are speaking, a fiddler from Lislehered, Olaf Olafsson, widely known by the name of "Daave-dokken," had gathered around him a crowd of listeners to the melodies which he was able to call forth from his Hardanger fiddle. His Spring-dances and Hallings were rewarded with enthusiastic applause, and by coppers, that at the end of each performance were "given to the fiddle." The money given to the fiddle was slipped into the instrument through the sound-hole, so that the tones of the fiddle, in addition to the well-known chords from the metallic strings under the finger-board, were gradually accompanied more and more as the fiddle was moved by a rattling of the coins, a music that no doubt was heard with great delight by the fiddler himself. Now and then some young chap would be fired by the musical strains to try a Halling and see whether he could touch the beam in the ceiling overhead with his foot.

In the midst of this entertainment there comes a strange young man. He stops, listens to the playing for a moment, and then asks those standing near him who the fellow was who was "tearing to pieces every thread in the web,"— that is to say, who so piteously murdered the airs he was playing. This stinging remark could not but cause indignation; bitter words passed from one to the other, and these finally came to the ears of the fiddler himself. He speedily addressed himself to the new-

comer and asked him, in a subdued tone indicating that more powerful arguments (blows) were in reserve:

"Do you mean me, sir?"

The stranger, who was not one of the timid kind, but one who in genuine Thelemark fashion desired to make his word good, answered with an assumed modesty:

"I do not know that I meant anybody. I only asked who was tearing to pieces all the threads in the web. There can be no harm done by asking, can there?"

Olafsson: "Do you know how to play, you who are so ready to find fault with others?"

The stranger: "No, I do not know how to play. I am no fiddler."

But Gjermund Ramberg, from Hitterdal, who was present, and had begun to recognize the stranger, declared that he knew the man could play, and requested "Daavedokken" to lend him his fiddle, so that the crowd could hear what he amounted to. Daavedokken was at first unwilling, either for the reason that he began to suspect a defeat, or because he did not want to trust his valuable fiddle to the hands of strangers; for it was an instrument of the first order, made by Jon Helland in Bolherred, inlaid with silver and pearls; it had a Turkish head and was covered with the finest arabesque figures carved on the back. But the number seconding the proposition of Gjermund Ramberg grew larger and

louder. They did not hesitate to tell Daavedokken that perhaps he did not dare, and the clamor soon grew so threatening that the master from Lislehered found it advisable to surrender and hand his instrument to the stranger.

The latter was no less unwilling to take the instrument, while he kept persisting that they were quite in the wrong in supposing that he knew how to play the fiddle. Finally he had to take it. He began turning the keys and tuning the strings, touching them softly and listening, but seemed never to get the fiddle tuned as he wanted it. Finally he made a few strokes with the bow as a prelude, which gradually, as it were accidentally, passed into a regular Ganger (a Norwegian dance) with its characteristic decided rhythm, distinctly beaten with both the feet of the performer. The air ended, as it had begun, with a few careless strokes, undefined as to character of tone and rhythm, as if the player desired to efface the appearance of definite effort on his part and make it seem like the result of accident. The Ganger was like unto the bright nucleus of a rustling comet with its soft coma and tail vanishing in the surrounding atmosphere.

Well, all had to admit that this was not badly played. Those present, and especially the owner of the fiddle, had from the very first stroke listened with an attention which they could scarcely account for. The strokes, it is true, were light and distinct, and the tones were clear as bells, but there did not

appear to be any particular fire or power in the execution, rather a peculiar evenness and restraint, — a sort of modesty that fears to go beyond the ordinary well-defined limits. Hence the more they afterward thought about the matter, the less of real merit and excellence they found in his playing, and they could see nothing to justify the insolent remark the stranger had made in regard to Daavedokken, when he first joined the crowd. Had not Olafsson beaten the rhythm with more power and decision, had he not gotten more "voice from the fiddle," had he not performed many more feats with the bow? etc. etc. Yes, indeed he had, and this was Olafsson's opinion, too, and he was now already feeling sure of an Olympian victory.

But after a brief intermezzo of tuning the instrument, and after another prelude, the rival again began, and now he played a Spring-dance, increasing in brilliancy with every measure. Soon the younger members of the audience began to feel as if transported into the lively dance; amid the whirling notes they felt a sensation as though they were swinging the prettiest girls; a keen desire to dance crept over them, and they began involuntarily to keep time to the music with their bodies and by snapping their fingers. Olafsson partly grows suspicious, partly he is, like the rest, carried away by the light, jubilant tones. Two spirits struggle within him; and then, after a short pause, a Halling was begun. Now at length the fiddler had become thoroughly warmed

up, or, as they say in Thelemark, limbered up. All the concentrated, buoyant elasticity that is so characteristic of the mountain boys when they dance the Halling, the master knew how to put into his music. It seemed as if the bow itself were dancing Halling on the strings; at times it would cling firmly to them, as if bent on extorting from them the most penetrating and powerful tones; at times again it would leap merrily from string to string, as if it, too, were going to turn a summersault and kick the beam. The fiddler himself was being more and more carried away by his own playing. He was no longer at the Kongsberg Fair, winning for himself a victory over his rival. He was at home in his own parish, playing at a wedding on one of the finest and richest farms, while the nimblest boys, one after the other, were touching the beams of the lofty ceiling with their toes, amid the enthusiastic applause of all the lookers on. On his hearers this intensified illusion had the remarkable effect of subduing every indication of dance movement; on the contrary, they became perfectly quiet, and almost held their breath while they listened to him. It seemed that the images that flashed before their minds, and the emotions in their hearts, lifted them above all physical influence and physical manifestations of it.

And Olafsson? He had disappeared toward the close of the Halling, and did not reappear until after it was finished. In each hand he had a glass,

which he had purchased at a counter near by. He handed one glass to his rival, saying: "You are either the devil himself, or the Miller Boy, for such a Halling no one else can play; but be you who you may, I must now drink with my master. He who can weave so fine and so strong a web shall have full permission to say, both of me and of all the other fiddlers, that we only tear to pieces and destroy."

The Miller Boy (for it was he) took the proffered glass and emptied it, with tears in his eyes. He was already then, as he was found to be ever after, extremely tender-hearted, and he exhibited his feelings rather more than is customary for people in Thelemark. They are not usually very demonstrative, and have great delicacy about showing the inner man. The recognition of this superiority by his rival was so unequivocal and hearty that it touched him and made him regret the impudent manner in which he had at first expressed himself. This he also confessed, and the two artists — they had at least an artist's passions, and perhaps no small amount of artistic talent — did not embrace each other, it is true, but they most heartily shook each other's hands, and promised to be faithful friends forever.

The story is told of Lafont, that at a concert in Italy he played with the young Paganini, who was yet unknown to him. When Lafont discovered Paganini's superiority, he quickly went and laid his

violin at the young artist's feet. It was a beautiful act, and evoked an almost interminable shout of "Bravo!" from the brilliant audience. But did not Daavedokken do the same thing, although the act did not take place in the celebrated theater *della scala*, but in front of a booth at the Kongsberg Fair, in the presence of some peasants from Numedal and Thelemark, who neither shouted "Bravo!" nor applauded with their hands, but who still, in their way, thoroughly enjoyed the scene?

Certain it is that Olafsson did not sink in their esteem, even though the unveiled Miller Boy was greeted with unfeigned admiration. And Gjermund Ramberg kept chatting with endless complacency, and talked so knowingly. He had grown immensely in his own estimation, because he, from the beginning, had felt that there was something great in this *incognito*, and had been instrumental in bringing him out.

But by this time the Miller Boy had become inspired, and now he was bound to play for his own and his new friend's gratification. From his immense stores he brought out the most precious pearls,—pieces that he did not usually play, either because he did not wish to desecrate them by making them too common, or because they affected him too powerfully. He also tuned the strings of his fiddle into intervals not commonly used, whereby weird, strange sounds were produced. He first played the Kivlemaid March, with which, as tradi-

tion has it, the three heathen valkyries in Silgjord (in Thelemark) had broken up the Christian Sunday service, for which reason they had been changed into stones. It was variations upon an old popular melody, handed down from generation to generation. Out of this music was echoed, in sweetest tones, the soft murmuring of the reeds by the lake, the song of the winds upon the waves. It was the old heathen sacrificial song, in which was embodied all the sweetness, all the tempestuous strength, all the fragrance, to be found in the forests of old Norway. Then came "Bordstabelen," the air that the devil hummed while he, in the night, sat on his wagon hauling home his loads of boards, in Slemdal. And the fiddler, having by this time gotten into the demon's corner, finally began to play the Devil's March. This is an air that the devil plays to the witches' dance on Bloksberg* on St.

*Our readers will understand the witches' dance on Bloksberg better when they have read the following Norse tradition: A girl once by chance saw her mistress take a pot from the cupboard, in which there was an ointment, and with this she anointed a broomstick, and, mounting the latter, suddenly flew away up the chimney. The girl, full of wonder at what she had seen, took the same pot out of the cupboard to see what it contained, and rubbed a little of the ointment on a brewing-vat, when instantaneously she, with the vat, also flew up through the chimney straightway to the Bloksberg, where there was a numerous assemblage of old women with bass viols and fiddles before them. The devil himself, whom they called Old Erik, when he had danced out a polonaise and paid the musicians, came to the girl with a book, in which he desired her to write her name; but she, instead of her name, first wrote the

John's night, while he beats time with his horse-foot. Whenever the Miller Boy played this wonderful, wild, entrancing music, he became completely carried away with emotion. He would close his eyes, let his head drop down on his breast, and seemed completely transported. Doubtless he saw and heard all the tumultuous excitement of the enjoyments on Bloksberg roaring around him. His bow would make the most astonishing leaps, and his feet, wherewith he kept time, would fall with a certain weird weight on the floor, so that one was tempted to look and see whether it really was a common man's foot that was beating time. The spirit of the music acted like a charm over

words with which it is usual to try a pen: Den som mig föder, etc. The devil consequently was unable to take the book back, and would not dance again the whole evening, although he had previously been never off the floor. Early on the following morning, which was St. John's day, all the old dames rode back on their broomsticks, and the girl in her brewing-vat, until they came to a brook, across which the old women sprang very nimbly, but the girl hesitated, and thought within herself, "It surely won't do to make such a jump with a brewing-vat." But at last she said: "I can at any rate try." So, giving the vat a kick, it sprang as lightly as the broomsticks themselves, at which the girl, laughing, exclaimed: "That was a devil of a jump, for a brewing-vat!" But scarcely had she uttered the devil's name, when the vat stopped, the brook was away, and the good lass had to find her way back home on foot.

In this story, which is quoted by Thorpe in his Northern Mythology, the old women are represented as playing the fiddles, but in many of the Bloksberg traditions the devil himself plays. "Go to Bloksberg!" is a common expression in the North, like our "Go to Halifax!"

him,— like a magic spell, from which he was unable to free himself. This was especially true of the Devil's March, which he was utterly unable to cease playing before some one forcibly freed him from this spell-bound condition. For this music has no finale, but continues in an endless, restless whirl around the ever-returning never-satisfied motives. In this respect it resembles Paganini's celebrated *Motum Perpetuum.*

Thus it was this time at the Kongsberg Fair, when his artistic passion had been roused to its utmost capacity. His hearers, who for a long time had listened to him with ever growing wonder and ecstasy, at last became alarmed and terrified. Carried away by the illusion, they felt as though all were not as it should be around them — as if it were not a natural man who sat there playing. But when they reflected and observed that he had lost his self-control, and was clearly suffering from a supernatural exaltation, they began to pity him and to think of some means of saving him. A pair of strong arms seized him firmly, but carefully, while Olafsson himself took the fiddle out of his hands, thus putting an end to the demoniacal fiddle-playing for this time. The fiddler instantly fell into a swoon and was carried senseless to his lodgings.

As stated, stories of this kind abound in Norway, both in regard to the Miller Boy and in regard to Ole Bull, and we have retold this in order to give

the readers of this book a better insight into the character of this extraordinary genius.

The son of Torgeir is still living. He plays the fiddle with some degree of excellence, but can in nowise be considered a master in his art; but it is a beautiful idea on the part of Janson that he makes the son surpass his father, thus making the peculiar gift of the family develop into fairer and fairer blossoms from one generation to the other.

Ole Bull is another prominent character in this book. Who has not heard of the wizard of the bow,— of Paganini's successor? The story told of him by Janson in this volume is based on fact, and, as previously indicated, Ole Bull, with his genuine warm heart, took great pains to assist the Miller Boy, and was instrumental in securing for him an independence.

We do not intend to write a biography of the great violinist in this introduction, but only to give a few leading points in his wonderful and eventful life, and then to close with a couple of episodes that we think are not generally known to our American readers.

Ole Bornemann Bull was born in Bergen, Norway, February 5, 1810. While yet a mere child he showed a startling talent for music. Having studied a short time at the university in Christiania, he turned his whole attention to music, and won distinction as a virtuoso before he was twenty years old. In 1829 he went to Germany for a short time, and in 1831 to Paris. In Paris he met with one

disappointment after the other, until he finally succeeded in playing in a concert, from which he realized twelve hundred francs. Being encouraged by this he proceeded to Italy, where he was likewise unsuccessful, until, by a fortunate circumstance, he was requested by Malibran to play in a concert in place of Beriot, who was sick. He produced an indescribable enthusiasm, and from that evening his success was established. This was in Bologna, in the year 1834. Since then he has traveled extensively in all European countries and also in America, winning victory after victory, and has been twice crowned king of violinists, once in San Francisco and a second time in Florence, Italy. Of the latter event we are able to give a brief account. On his way to Rome from France in 1874, Ole Bull stopped in Florence, where he had been forty years before, but where he knew he had warm, old friends, especially Prince Poniatowski and consort, with whom he had been well acquainted in Bologna. Through these he found other old friends and admirers, and also acquaintances from his more recent tours through Europe, for lovers of art often gather in Italy from all parts of the world. A general wish was expressed to hear him, and Professor Sbolczis availed himself of this opportunity to get him to assist at a concert which his celebrated orchestra was about to give. It is the people of Florence who, most of all Italians, appreciate the fine arts. No other city in Europe has, in proportion to its population, so many theaters,

and these so well attended every evening. In addition to this they every fortnight, or every week, hear some distinguished musician in their instrumental concerts, which are given by two excellent orchestras, the one led by Sbolczis and the other by Brizzi. The latter is a very wealthy man in Florence, and forms a musical center in the city by the Arno. When the announcement was made that Ole Bull was to play at the concert, the tickets were taken by storm, and the hall was so crowded that the performers suffered considerable inconvenience therefrom. But such things do not trouble the minds of the Italians. The more confusion the better, is literally true of this nation. Then Brizzi put in his claim, and requested that what Ole Bull had done for Sbolczis' musical company he must also do for the other still greater musical society, the Orfeo. They would postpone the concert already announced in order to give him four complete rehearsals; they would take the largest hall and secure good assistance. Ole Bull consented. The result was the wildest enthusiasm. Those feelings of friendship manifested themselves which, in Italy, overleap all considerations of rank, age and convenience. In the orchestra sat old men who had heard Paganini. "And here he is again!" they shouted. Although the hall accommodated about five thousand people, it was packed. We give below an account of the concert from the *Corriere Italiano*, of April 25, 1874, as it is a fair specimen

of the manner in which the press of all countries has spoken of Ole Bull ever since his brilliant dèbut as Beriot's substitute:

Teatro Pagliano (says the *Corriere Italiano*) yesterday presented an imposing scene. The most distinguished families, and the ladies of the highest circles, including Her Highness the Grand Duchess of Russia, whose frequent applause showed how intensely she enjoyed the fine music, were present at the concert. Commodore Peruzzi, with his educated and intelligent lady, Mrs. Larderell, Princess Strozzi, Princess Carolath, and an immense throng of musical amateurs of our artistic and aristocratic society, were also in attendance.

Having given an account of the other parts of the concert, the *Corriere Italiano* continues:

But the great honor of the concert, last night, was given to the *Norse Paganini*,—that original, inspiring, great violinist, Ole Bull, who kindly contributed his valuable assistance to the musical entertainment and paid his respects to the Florentine Society, Orfeo, led by our excellent Professor Brizzi. His artistic nature prompted him to this graceful act of fraternal courtesy, the value of which was extraordinary, because he himself is extraordinary,—he the prince of all violinists of the present time,—the old, formidable rival of Paganini. In the fantasia called the *Nightingale* (his own composition) he gave us an idea of his charming and wonderful skill, the fullness of each stroke and the perfection in execu-

tion. In *Carnevale di Venezia*, the frantic dance of the notes, combined with the most graceful execution, could not be excelled. Both pieces produced a storm of long, deafening applause. The audience desired to have the latter repeated, but in place of it the old, powerful musician gave them the celebrated fantasia of Paganini on the no less celebrated song of Paisiello, *Nel cor non piu mi sento*, and in this we heard from Ole Bull the most secret beauties of the song, the sweetness of the flute, the transitions from the violin to the viola and to the sadness of the violoncello. In *Polacca Guerrierra* (another of his own compositions) burst forth the exciting and violent tones of war. As a composer, he is graceful, wild, full of imagination, feeling and originality; as an executor, he is mighty, wonderful, indescribable.

At this point a golden crown was presented to Ole Bull, while the whole audience, enraptured with enthusiasm, did not grow tired of applauding and encoring, and again and again applauding and encoring. The old and handsome hero gave visible evidence of gladness, awakened by the enthusiasm with which he was surrounded.

Volumes of this kind of praise have been written of Ole Bull in all languages. We would like to say something about Ole Bull's theater in Bergen; about his colony in Pennsylvania; about his interest in erecting a monument to Leif Erikson, the Norse discoverer of America; of his playing on the Cheops

Pyramid in Egypt; of his many adventures by land and sea; of his beautiful homes near Bergen in Norway, and in Madison, Wisconsin; of his intimate acquaintance with eminent artists, scholars, statesmen, princes and kings; but all this would require more space than is allowed us in this introduction. We will, therefore, conclude our work by giving three little episodes in Ole Bull's eventful career, two of which will be new to our readers. The first describes Ole Bull's early passion for the violin. The old veteran's eyes still fill with tears when he tells of the red violin with the pearl keys:

In a comfortable little room in the quaint old city of Bergen sat one day, about sixty-five years ago, a pleasant-looking and kind-hearted man with a little boy on his knees.

"Play, uncle,—play!" the little lad whispers, with great intensity.

The man gets up and brings out a large case. He opens it and takes out a large instrument, a violoncello, as it is called, and begins to play. The little boy runs around him and watches with eager attention every movement of the performer, while his eyes sparkle with delight. At last he comes quite near to his uncle and wants to touch the strings.

"Now go into the case, Ole, and I will give you a piece of cake," said the smiling man.

Ole had to go into the case and the man shut it.

"Now I've got you, you little rogue!" said the uncle.

Then he sat down to play; the tones inspire him; the bow leaps over the strings; he forgets himself, and the child in the case.

But the boy soon announces himself; he, too, is completely enraptured by the tones, body and soul, and with his little feet he beats the time so decidedly that the thin boards begin to break. This arouses the fiddler.

"Stop! do not kick the case to pieces, Ole!" says he, as he opens the box and lets out the prisoner.

"Now Ole must go to his father and mother. He is their pet, that little light-haired fellow."

Soon after his visit to his uncle he gets hold of a piece of firewood and a wooden stick. These are his violoncello and bow.

"Mother and father, now hear me play!" and he saws away as fast as he can. Then he suddenly stops.

"Do you not hear how nice? That is fine, like the sparrow outside of the window. Now I will play low and coarse. That is the ox bellowing. And now all are together, both the girls and the boys! Do you hear, mother?"

Thus he described his playing, and his mother had to listen to him; there was no help for it.

"I think I will have to buy a violin for the boy," said the father.

"Yes, do! yes, do, father!" said Ole, running to him and clutching his knee and looking so be-

seechingly at him,—looking as only a child can look,—"buy one like uncle's!"

"No, that is too big. The case would be large enough for you to live in."

The boy runs, wild with delight, to his mother. "Father is going to give me such an one as uncle has, but it is to be a little one that will be just right for me!"

The next day Ole Bull got his first violin. It was a little yellow violin, for boys. He took it, pressed it to his breast, kissed it, and danced around in perfect ecstasy.

The father grew quite serious; said he:

"The boy thinks too much of his violin."

But his mother smiled. It made her happy to see so much joy.

"Now can you play on it?" said she to Ole.

"Of course I can," said the boy. He turned the keys a little, as he had seen his uncle do, and began to ply the bow.

"Why, bless me," said the father; "I declare the boy knows how to play!"

He was perfectly amazed.

"He is only five years old, and has never learned," said he to the man who had brought the violin, and stood there looking on.

Three years later we find Ole Bull again,—now eight years old. He happens to enter a store, and looks at some violins; a Frenchman has just brought a lot of new and remarkable instruments. But one

of them is more beautiful than all the rest. Ole cannot keep his eyes off it. He does not even look at the other violins; he sees nothing but the red violin with the keys of pearl.

How happy would be he who could get leave to play on that — to own it! thought he.

He hurried home.

"Father! father!" cried he, "buy the red fiddle with the pearl keys for me, over there at the Frenchman's."

"Why, you have a fiddle," said his father.

"Yes, but the red one! the red one! if I only had that, how I would play! Father, buy me that one!"

The tears were in the boy's eyes.

"It will not do! you ought rather to learn how to read!"

Ole stole away, so poor, so poor! He told his trouble to his mother, but she, too, spoke of the reading. He felt that he hated the book that stood in his way, and that night he cried himself to sleep. And all the night long he dreamed about the red violin with the pearl keys, that it was his; but then it was no longer a violin, but a large red book, and he had to read it through, clear through, or he would never amount to anything in this world. He awoke with a feeling that somebody was choking him. The next day he was pale and quiet. His mother saw that he was sad, and so she went to his father and asked him to buy the violin, anyway. Ole

did not say a word about the violin all day long, but in the evening he saw his father coming smiling into the room with a large bundle under his arm.

"Do you know what I have here?" said he.

The boy opened his eyes wide and looked at him. He did not know what to believe. Then his father opened the package. It was the red violin with the pearl keys!

Ole stood perfectly astounded. He was so completely perplexed that he could not speak. He could not even find words to thank his father for it.

"Now we will put the violin away," said the father, and so he put it back into the case; "to-morrow you may look at it, but now you must go to bed, my lad."

Then all retired, but Ole could not get to sleep. The thought of the red violin with the pearl keys kept him awake. It was *his*. He was the richest and the happiest man in the world, he thought.

He could hardly believe it. It was too much to be true. He must look at it so as to be sure. If only the others would go to sleep! He lay waiting and waiting. Yes, now they must have gone to sleep. Softly he crept out of bed, out through the door and into the room where the violin was put away. He found the box and opened it very carefully. There lay his precious treasure, beautiful and red, and shining on him with its pearl keys. How could he help touching it? He played just a little on the strings with his fingers. It became more

and more fascinating. He took the bow and looked at it. It would be fun to try; and so he tried a little, just a wee bit, and it sounded so beautiful. Then he stole further and further away from the bedroom, and went to playing,— at first very softly; but then he had to try a melody that he liked better, and that was in a higher key. He forgot that it was midnight, and that everybody was in bed. He played with power and brilliancy. The tones expanded. He thought of nothing; he was wholly lost in his music. Suddenly he heard a step behind him.

"What are you thinking about, boy? Such a noise as you are making in the middle of the night!"

It was his father.

How wrong Ole now had acted! He got so terrified that he dropped the violin; it fell on the floor and broke into splinters. Oh, how unhappy was that little fiddler! He thought he must die. His father got him to bed and he cried himself to sleep.

How Ole Bull, after countless disappointments and trials, finally established his success and became world-famous, has already been touched upon, and this episode in his life is beautifully told by Hans Christian Andersen as follows:

Behind the Alps is the land of miracles, the world of adventures. We do not believe in miracles; adventure, on the contrary, is dear to us,— we listen to it with willingness; and such an one as only

happens to genius took place in Bologna in the year 1834.

The poor Norseman, Ole Bull, whom at that time no one knew, had wandered thus far southward. In his fatherland some persons certainly thought that there was something in him; but most people, as is generally the case, predicted that Ole Bull would amount to nothing. He himself felt that he must go out into the world, in order to cherish the spark into a flame, or else to quench it entirely. Everything seemed at first to indicate that the latter would be the case. He had arrived at Bologna, but his money was spent, and there was no place where there was any prospect of getting more,— no friend, no countryman held forth a helping hand toward him; he sat alone in a poor attic in one of the small streets.

It was already the second day that he had been here and he had scarcely tasted food. The water-jug and the violin were the only two things that cheered the young and suffering artist. He began to doubt whether he really were in possession of that talent with which God had endowed him, and in his despondency breathed into the violin those tones which now seize our hearts in so wonderful a manner,— those tones which tell us how deeply he has suffered and felt.

The same evening a great concert was to be given in the principal theater. The house was filled to overflowing; the Grand Duke of Tuscany was in the royal box; Madame Malibran and Monsieur de

Beriot were to lend their able assistance in the performance of several pieces. The concert was to commence, but matters looked inauspicious,—the manager's star was not in the ascendant,—Monsieur de Beriot had taken umbrage and refused to play. All was trouble and confusion on the stage, when, in this dilemma, the wife of Rossini, the composer, entered, and in the midst of the manager's distress related that, on the previous evening, as she passed through one of the narrow streets, she had suddenly stopped on hearing the strange tones of an instrument, which certainly resembled those of a violin, but yet seemed to be different.

She had asked the landlord of the house who it was that lived in the attic whence the sounds proceeded, and he had replied that it was a young man from the north of Europe, and that the instrument he played was certainly a lyre; but she felt assured that it could not be so; it must either be a new sort of instrument, or an artist who knew how to treat his instrument in an unusual manner. At the same time she said that they ought to send for him, and he might, perhaps, supply the place of Monsieur de Beriot by playing the pieces that must otherwise be wanting in the evening's entertainment.

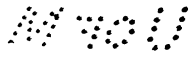
This advice was acted upon, and a messenger was dispatched to the street where Ole Bull sat in his attic. To him it was a message from heaven. Now or never, thought he; and though ill and exhausted, he took his violin under his arm and ac-

companied the messenger to the theater. Two minutes after his arrival the manager informed the assembled audience that a young Norwegian, consequently a "young savage," would give a specimen of his skill on the violin instead of Monsieur de Beriot.

Ole Bull appeared; the theater was brilliantly illuminated. He perceived the scrutinizing looks of the ladies nearest to him; one of them, who watched him very closely through her opera glass, smilingly whispered to her neighbor, with a mocking mien, about the diffident manners of the artist. He looked at his clothes, and in the strong blaze of light they appeared rather the worse for wear. The lady made her remarks about them, and her smile pierced his very heart. He had taken no notes with him which he could give to the orchestra. He was, consequently, obliged to play without accompaniment; but what should he play?

I will give them the fantasias which at this moment cross my mind! And he played improvisory remembrances of his own life,— melodies from his soul; it was as if every thought, every feeling, passed through the violin and revealed itself to the audience.

The most astounding acclamations resounded through the house. Ole Bull was called forth again and again. They still desired a new piece, a new improvisation. He then addressed himself to that lady whose mocking smile had met him on his appearance, and asked her for a theme to vary. She



gave him one from "Norma." He then asked two other ladies, who chose one from "Othello" and one from "Moses." Now, thought he, if I take all three, unite them with each other, and form one piece, I shall then flatter each of the ladies, and perhaps the composition will produce an effect.

He did so. Powerfully as the rod of the magician the bow glided across the strings, while cold drops of perspiration trickled down his forehead. There was fever in his blood; it was as if the mind would free itself from the body; fire shot from his eyes; he felt himself almost swooning; yet a few bold strokes — they were his last bodily powers.

Flowers and wreaths from the charmed multitude fluttered about him, who, exhausted by mental conflict and hunger, was nearly fainting. He went to his home accompanied by music. Before the house sounded the serenade for the hero of the evening, who, meanwhile, crept up the dark and narrow staircase, higher and higher up into his poor garret, where he clutched the water-jug to refresh himself.

When all was silent the landlord came to him, brought him food and drink, and gave him a better room. The next day he was informed that the theater was at his service, and that a concert was to be arranged for him. An invitation from the Duke of Tuscany next followed, and from that moment name and fame were founded for Ole Bull.

Those who read "The Spell-bound Fiddler" will notice that there still lingers a good deal of prejudice among certain classes in Norway against all other than church music, and especially against the violin. There are a great many so-called pietistic (puritan) priests and laymen in Norway who oppose, in season and out of season, the singing of popular airs, dance music, and the use of the fiddle; and who are, upon the whole, very precise and rigid in the observance of religious requirements, resembling in many respects the Puritans, or early dissenters from the Church of England. While the fiddle is the national instrument of Norway, these serious people look upon it as the instrument of the devil, and in many descriptions of hell the devil is represented as playing cards and the fiddle. Many efforts have been made to break down this unfounded prejudice. Thus Björnstjerne Björnson, a few years ago, wrote a powerful novel called "The Bridal March" (Brudeslaatten), in which it is shown that music and fiddling are among God's gifts to the Norse people, and that they should be cherished and developed. The tendency of Janson's Spell-bound Fiddler is, as the reader will notice, in the same direction; and in illustration of this idea the following episode from Ole Bull's visit to Tromso, in the north of Norway, a few years ago (I think in 1875), will be read with interest. The story was told to Christian Gloerson by Nils Ovre, a man who is said to have furnished Jonas

Lie with much of the material found in his novel, "The Barque Future," and in others of his stories. Nils Ovre is an illiterate man, and does not write himself, but he possesses a remarkable faculty for improvising and telling, and had he been educated he would no doubt have become one of the great novelists of the country, as the ensuing story of the power of music abundantly testifies.

He hight Sjur, and she hight Mari. Neither they nor their names were particularly poetical. They had come from the south part of Norway, like so many others, having heard that it was easier for two good hands to earn a living for wife and children in this northern latitude than further south. He was a good workman and she was an excellent housekeeper. She managed with great economy the fruits of his industry, so that they got on well.

He had built a little log house down by the strand. Within the walls it was warm and cozy; everything was clean and neat, and the floor was strewed with sand every Sunday, for both of them had come from Gudbransdal, where the people are proverbial for their cleanliness. Really the floor should be strewed with juniper, but this is a scarce article so far north, and so they had to content themselves with sand from the sea-shore.

Sjur had the peculiarity that he played the fiddle extremely well. Many said that it was owing to this fact that he had gotten the wife that

he had; for she was the daughter of a well-to-do farmer, while he was only the son of a houseman (tenant). Well, it is only down in the south part of Norway that such things are understood; in this northern clime no questions are asked about these things. How such stories originate is well known. He was disowned by his wife's family: he would have to try to paddle his own boat without any assistance from them; nor had he at any time ever asked them for any help. In his former home he had made quite a name as a fiddler. No wedding, no dance was quite complete unless Sjur was there to play. The tone of his instrument was so peculiar, and there were some who suspected that he had gotten his skill at a place that people had better keep away from. There was something very strange about it. When he had taken his violin and had played a little while he became completely changed. His eyes were very prominent, anyway, but while fiddling they stood out still more, and they seemed to see things that other people's eyes did not see. But he played beautifully, that is certain. There was never so much life in the dance, the Spring-dance and Ganger never went so splendidly, as when Sjur played.

Here in Tromso he soon found out there was not much to be made with the fiddle. It happened to be just at the time when the religious revival was at its apex in these parts. The mer-

chants walked up and down the wharves with large brass-clasped hymn-books under their arms; found a ready sale for them, and made lots of money. The purchasers thought these merchants belonged to the elect, and that they therefore could neither lie nor cheat. In the merchant's office was always found an open Bible, or some religious tracts, beside the ledgers, and that gave the people confidence. The house of prayer had just been built, the meeting-house likewise, and all who attended upon the exercises there were sure to go to heaven. The church was large and beautiful, but there it was only priests that preached.

So the fiddling money could not, under such circumstances, amount to much. But Sjur, nevertheless, was in the habit of playing at home, especially Saturday and Sunday evenings, while Mari sat listening, with smiles on her somewhat worn face, and the four little scions were dancing about on the little floor.

On one evening, when Sjur came home, he became very much astonished at seeing two very fashionable ladies sitting in his house talking with his wife. They had a very suspicious look. He looked so shabby in his working clothes, that he immediately withdrew into the kitchen. When the fashionable ladies had gone he came in again.

"What did those women want, Mari?" asked Sjur.

"They were sent by the Home Missionary Society, Sjur," answered his wife.

"What is that you say?" exclaimed Sjur.

"Yes, you see, they explained that the road we are traveling is not the right one, and they showed so thoroughly that it is a sin to play the fiddle and dance, and that it is our duty to abstain from vanity, from the lusts of the flesh and of the eyes, and from a life of gaiety," said Mari.

"Mary, Hans, Anna, Ole, come and I will let you dance," said Sjur, as he took the fiddle and began to play. And the four children, full of health and life, came in from the kitchen, where Mary had been left in charge of the fish-pot; and pretty soon all was fun and frolic, while Mari went out to attend to the kitchen.

The cloud passed away this time and once or twice more. But those fashionable women kept coming again and again, and, even though they did not happen to be there when Sjur came home, he could see that they had been there while he was gone. And Mari began to act more and more strange. Every once in a while she had to go out. When Sjur came home the children always said that their mother had gone to the house of prayer, or to the meeting-house, and so Mary had to take care of the porridge and of the children in the meantime. Then, when the mother returned, her eyes were almost cried out, her mind was worn out from the intensity with which she had taken part in the service, and Sjur thought his home happiness was departing from him.

The worst of all was that Mari began to grumble

and find fault with his fiddling, calling it deviltry and worldly vanity. Sjur was no man of great mind, but it always seemed like a holiday to him when he could take his fiddle. He had had but little schooling, but when he got his fiddle under his chin it seemed to him that all he had learned, both from his schoolmaster and from the priest, came back to him. In the airs he played were also treasured up many pleasant memories from his own and Mari's younger days, and it had heretofore been his great joy that Mari comprehended this, and had listened to him with smiles on her countenance, and sometimes, too, with tears in her eyes. Hence it was utterly impossible for him to endure the present state of things. For now Mari usually absented herself when he took the fiddle, and she frequently remarked that it was the devil that giggled between the strings.

One evening Sjur came home late. He had finished a piece of work for one of the leading business men in the town. He had gone to him to get his account settled with him, but was told that the man was bankrupt, so that he could get nothing for his work. Sjur became very depressed in spirit, and when he came home he wanted to take the fiddle in order to find solace in those tones that had so often cheered him in the midst of perplexities. The fiddle was not hanging in its wonted place on the wall. Perhaps he had hung it up in the bed-chamber, as he sometimes was accustomed

to do. He went in there. No, there lay the four little ones sleeping, two in each bed, and over his and Mari's double-bed no fiddle was to be seen. And where was Mari? He went into the kitchen. There she sat, knitting away at a pair of stockings for the Missionary Society.

"Where is my fiddle, Mari?"

"Sjur, you must not feel bad about what I now must say to you. My eyes have been opened, the truth has been revealed to me, and I now know that all fiddling is the invention of the devil. It was more than I could bear to have to think that you should travel on the broad road, or play on such an instrument of the devil, as has been so clearly explained to me; and so, this evening, when I considered the salvation of your soul, and feeling that you were too dear to me to be pursuing that course blindly, I took that wicked fiddle of yours and burnt it up."

Sjur said nothing. He stood awhile looking at the embers on the hearth, where the head of the fiddle still lay burning. Twice he opened his lips as if about to say something, but he did not speak. Mari was of course a gardman's daughter, and, in fact, greatly his superior; this he fully realized. But, —but it was hard, yes, very hard, to lose the fiddle.

Years passed away and many changes took place in Tromso, as elsewhere. But it seemed to Sjur that happiness had departed from his home since the time when Mari had joined the Puritans and

burnt his fiddle. During the good times that there had been, and that still continued, Sjur and Mari had done well and earned a comfortable living. Latterly he had especially made considerable money by quarrying and cutting stone for the many new buildings that had been erected. But there was always something going on in his house. Frequently there would be missionary society meetings, attended by a lot of fashionable married and unmarried ladies. At such times there was no end to the coffee and cake that were consumed. At other times so-called bible-messengers and lay-preachers came to the house. They addressed Mari as sister, pressed her hand, and took as many liberties as if they had been members of the household. At such times, if Sjur happened to be present, they all looked at him as if he had done something very wrong, so that he often felt very uncomfortable and depressed in spirits.

Frequently, too, when he came home at night, Mari was away either to some missionary meeting or to some prayer meeting, or to a kind of gathering that they called a love-feast; and at such times the house and the children were left to take care of themselves as best they could. Some money was spent in this way—there were contributions to this and contributions to that. Mari always assured him that the money would come back increased an hundredfold. Sjur was not quite *sure* of this. But he did not envy her those few pence, and no one

knew but that the contributions might do somebody some good.

But the result of it all was that Sjur felt himself more and more a stranger in his own house. Often when he came home and found Mari away, and the house all in disorder, he would sit down and long for his fiddle. Sometimes he thought of buying a new one, but he dared not. Especially did he suffer during the long, dark winters, when there was not much work to be had, and he grew more and more melancholy.

It finally came to the point that he once in a while sought solace and to forget his troubles in Ludvigson's shop. Mari remarked this, but did not say much about it, as it did not happen very often, and he was usually quiet when he came home in the night, although he would occasionally be somewhat merry, and take to humming snatches of the airs that he used to play on his fiddle. But she came to the conclusion that she would have to see that this was stopped, especially after one of the ladies in town had told her that this was her duty.

Then it happened one evening that Sjur came home more merry than usual. Mari was sitting alone in the room waiting for him. He was somewhat puzzled at first, since she was usually in bed when he came home late. Suddenly he smiled, and proceeded to move toward her with accurately measured spring-dance steps.

"Come, Mari, let us have a dance together again." Saying this he threw his arms about her waist. She thrust him away, red in her face with anger, and said:

"Are you not ashamed, Sjur, to come home in this manner? You ought to — " Therewith she gave him a dressing in a flood of words, that were all the more cutting for having been so long restrained. She ended by saying:

"Yes, indeed, I know what this is coming to. You have been humming these wicked dance-tunes of yours, and you have been down at Hanson's and asked the price of one of the fiddles hanging there. This I know, you see, and so I suppose we are now to have fiddling, and brandy, and all sorts of wickedness, in the house. Sjur, Sjur! consider what road you are traveling! Never had I supposed that you would come to this." Then she began to cry.

Sjur had stopped dancing and remained standing perfectly quiet. While his wife was pouring forth her flood of cutting and upbraiding words his countenance gradually assumed a peculiar expression. It became hard and threatening, and when he finally replied, although he spoke in a subdued tone, it gave Mari a terrible shock when she heard his voice.

"Who is to blame for this, Mari? You say the fiddle, the brandy, and deviltry! You should not put these in one class, Mari, for they do not belong together. Yes, brandy and deviltry, perhaps, but

not fiddling — no, I say. Who is to blame? It is you, I say. For when you burnt my fiddle you burnt more than you were aware of, and if I go to hell it is your fault, I say." Having said this he turned his back upon her and went to bed.

After this eruption there was a calm like that following a storm. Mari staid at home more than usual; but Sjur went out more than usual. Both felt that there was a chasm between them that it was not easy to bridge over. He on his part, and she on her's, occasionally tried to do something that the other should construe as a petition for reconciliation. But the one always believed that the other had not noticed it, or had been unwilling to notice it, and so it fell to the ground barren.

Then it happened one day that news had been brought to town that Ole Bull was coming to Tromso. It created great excitement. Of course everybody knew who Ole Bull was, and everybody was in like manner certain that he had at one time been a celebrity. But whether he yet was a celebrity, and whether it behooved a town like Tromso, a town that was so conspicuous in the eyes of the world,—that is, in the opinion of the town itself,— to make special preparations, such as had been made, for instance, in honor of His Majesty the King, of Björnstjerne Björnson, and of Jonas Lie, when these gentlemen visited the place;—ah, this was a question not so easy to settle. Hence it was resolved, both by the common council, to whose wisdom some one had been

naïve enough to refer the matter, and by a special committee appointed to consider the question, that nothing should be done. Ole Bull accordingly had the rare good fortune, on his arrival in Tromso, of being received just like any other mortal, and as such a mortal he had to content himself with a suite of very ordinary rooms in the very ordinary hotel of the town.

Meanwhile it was found to be no easy task to get a suitable place for his concert, for the town had no concert-hall. After considerable parleying it was at length decided that he might have the meeting-house, a matter that created much indignation, however, it being looked upon as a desecration of the house.

When Sjur found out that Ole Bull had come, and was going to give a concert,—Ole Bull, of whom he had heard that his equal in playing the fiddle was not to be found in all the world,—he made up his mind to go, let it cost what it would. But he said nothing of this resolution.

The hall was filled to overflowing, and up in the gallery, above the entrance-door, Sjur had found a place where he could easily see and hear, but where he could not so easily be seen.

Then he saw him, that tall, slender, elastic figure, youthful in spite of his threescore and ten and his snow-white hair, with strength in his arm and fire in his eye. Still these were things that did not engross Sjur's attention. It is not so very uncommon a thing in the Norse mountain-valleys to find men seventy

years old whom Time seems to have forgotten, while he put on their brethren in the city the marks of decrepitude. But what completely occupied Sjur's attention was the wonderful fiddle that Ole Bull took so carefully out of the fine case, and the bow with the sparkling diamond,—of which Sjur only knew, however, that it was something that had a beautiful luster.

And when he began to play, nay, then Sjur hardly knew where he was. Such playing he had never heard, nor even dreamed of. The "Chalet Girl's Sunday" was played, and "The Mother's Prayer," (both compositions of Ole Bull.) Sjur did not know what it was or what it was called, but he sat with his hands folded as if in church, and he was more affected than he had ever before been in all his life. The deepest impression was made upon him, however, when Ole Bull at last played some popular airs and dances. My God! was it not what he himself once had played, played so many a time for Mari during their happy days! And his lips trembled and a couple of tears rolled down into his beard; but he did not notice this; he only listened, listened with his whole soul.

But suddenly his eyes found busy employment, for through the open window, among the crowd of people that stood listening outside, there he saw Mari. She did not see him; she held her apron up to her eyes and was weeping. Then a great joy came over him: she had, then, sought this place,

too — she had been overcome by the power of the music — she remembered the days of yore, — those happy days when he had played for her and the children! Now — yes, now — he had no doubt about it, — now all would be well again. And he was hardly able to wait till the end of the concert; he thought the crowd moved provokingly slow when the people went out of the hall. At length he had gotten outdoors, and with rapid steps he hastened home, when he happened to overhear a conversation between a group of women, some of those who had stood outside.

"What a blasphemy," said a woman, "that this house should be turned into a den of thieves! No, indeed, I do not understand how the directors can answer for this in the presence of God."

"Yes," said another, "you are certainly right, Mother Jensen; and this is the opinion of those who do not belong to the children of the world. Mari Olson, down on the strand, poor woman, was so completely unhappy over the desecration, that she wept her most bitter tears."

Suddenly Sjur stopped. That was the cause, was it? Yes, of course; what a fool he was not to have thought of this at once! Then he swore a most terrible oath, turned abruptly, and went and took his seat in Ludvigson's shop.

But he found no solace in the brandy, either, this time. The feelings he had experienced had been too strong for him. The shop made him feel

qualmish, and he was disgusted with the profane and boisterous company in there. So he took his hat, paid for a couple of drinks which he had taken, and went over on the island. There he kept wandering about until late in the night. Many evil thoughts came into his mind, and threatened to get the better of him. But now and then sounded those tones that had made him fold his hands and feel as if he were in a church, and then those evil thoughts were banished. But they returned, and thus he continued for a long time at war with himself.

Tired, he seated himself and looked down upon the town, and the sound and the sea, which lay there bright and clear, while the midnight sun shone on the glaciers, giving them a reddish hue, and everything seemed so calm and peaceful in the mild summer night.

Down there on the sound lay a large steamer. A pale smoke arose from its smoke-stack. It was to depart early in the morning. A thought crossed his brain, and suddenly his mind was made up; yes, he must leave, go far away, perhaps to America. But the children; it pained him to think of it — but he would take care to provide so that neither they nor Mari should suffer any want. But he must go away — far away. He had some money in his chest; of this he would take a part, and then start at once. With rapid steps he went home to carry out what he had resolved.

He reached his little home, and entered quietly.

He had no sooner come inside of the door than he stopped, and stood as if nailed to the floor; for there on the wall, in exactly the same old place, and just now illuminated by the rays of the midnight sun, there was hanging a fiddle, and a bow beside it. Sjur drew his hand over his eyes, he thought it must be a delusion; but no, the fiddle hung there still. He went and took hold of it with trembling hand. But it was the very one that had been left for sale at Hanson's store, and which he had asked the price of, and it had bran new strings on. He had to try it a little. He tuned it, touched the strings lightly with his fingers, then took the bow and played a few strokes, and soon was so completely absorbed by his playing, that all else was forgotten. Gangers, Spring-dances and Hallings came rushing on, one after the other, and every now and then little snatches of what he had heard Ole Bull play. Finally he got hold of the bridal march which he himself had composed for his and Mari's wedding. Then his attention was suddenly arrested by a peculiar sound. He thought he heard some one weeping. He turned round. There stood Mari; she was weeping, but her eyes shone, and she was, in fact, both laughing and weeping at the same time.

"Mari! — you — you have —"

More he was not able to say. He laid down the fiddle, took Mari and set her on his lap, and amid tears and smiles they came to a complete and sweet reconciliation.

She then told him that she had passed the meeting-house just as Ole Bull was playing. The music had drawn her with a strange power. She had tried to resist, but had not succeeded, and then she had been completely overcome. All her life as a child and as a young girl, all her happy years, had passed before her vision, and, as it were all at once, she had discovered all the wrong she had done to Sjur and to our Lord. And now she was so certain that it was He who had spoken to her through the music and through the fiddle,—such was now her opinion; it could be no instrument of the devil.

"But how did you get hold of the fiddle, Mari?" asked Sjur, when they had become more composed.

"Oh, I ran down to Hanson's immediately, when the concert was over; and although it was pretty late I got in, and so I got him to take—yes, to—to let me have the fiddle; you understand," she added, somewhat embarrassed.

"But the money?"

"Yes, you see,—but you must not get angry at me,—you see, that shawl which you recently gave me,—ah, it was mere vanity on my part that I had so long been wishing to get it; you see—I got him to take that instead."

Sjur said nothing; he only looked a little while at Mari, who sat picking at her apron; then he went away, opened the chest, took out some bills and placed them in her hand.

"You are much better than I am,—God bless

you, Mari! You shall have another shawl, and it shall be a fine and nice one, too. And then there is only one thing I want to say to you: this evening I was in Ludvigson's shop — for the last time, so help me God!"

When the boat, a few days later, steamed out of the sound with Ole Bull on board, six ponderous shots resounded from the quarry, the echo of which rolled like thunder from the mountain side. They were blasts that had been ignited. Sjur had charged them with gunpowder, and fired them off himself.

This was his greeting and thanks to Ole Bull, who had caused his domestic happiness to return to his little house on the strand.

The evil spirits had been driven out, and the good had been charmed forth by the power of music.

There is still much prejudice against the fiddle and secular music in Norway, but Ole Bull, Björnstjerne Björnson, and the author of "The Spell-bound Fiddler," are doing much to drive out the evil and to coax the good spirits into the hearts of the people.

THE SPELL-BOUND FIDDLER.

CHAPTER I.

AMONG our peasants we often find families who possess extraordinary talent for art or handicraft, and this gift has been handed down from father to son through many generations. Thus there are families noted for singular dexterity as smiths. They attain their highest pinnacle of glory as constructors of machinery, or something of that sort. Others have been remarkable carvers in wood. Among them there is born into the world at last a sculptor. Others are families with musical taste; and so forth.

He whom I am going to tell about here came from one of these musical families. His name was Torgeir. His father was named Jon, and was one of the best fiddlers in the parish, but he never went beyond the parish limits with his fiddle. He was always on hand to play at feasts and dancing parties, when he was asked to do so, but otherwise he stayed about his own little place.* It was a freeholder's

*A large estate is in Norway called a gard; a small estate, a place (plads). The owner of either is called a gardman or freeholder; a tenant, a houseman.—TR.

place, and lay some distance up the mountain slope. It was very small, but nevertheless large enough to furnish the necessaries of life. And then pennies were dropped into his fiddle the year round. The family had once been of more account in the parish than now. Just below the place there lay a valuable gard, and here lived the wealthiest man in the parish; his name was Sylvfest. A rich meadow separated the gard from Jon's place. This meadow had once upon a time been common property, but the family at the gard had, through all sorts of roguery, driven the family at the place from their rights, and now the meadow belonged to the gard. People said that the grandfather of this Sylvfest had practiced the same piece of rascality as the devil on two sticks. He had laid earth from his ground in his shoes, and when he came to the half belonging to the place, he swore that it was his ground that he was standing on. This was not the sole rascality folks had to charge Sylvfest's family with. They had worked their way up in the world by horse-dealing, and had cheated many a one, and people said there could not be any great blessing on their money. All this could not hinder Jon from often drawing a sigh, when in hard times he looked down over the gard and saw what a rich growth of grass there was on the meadow. But when he took his fiddle in his hands and struck up a tune, and the children fell to playing and dancing on the floor, he soon forgot all his troubles; for Jon was good-

natured and childlike. His wife was a bright, capable woman. She took to fretting and scolding, and said he would do better to bring up the children to work and toil. But Jon would not allow anything to come between the children and the fiddle. The fiddle had belonged to the family as long as could be remembered. The elder branches of the family had *made* fiddles; later they had commenced playing on them. Son had learned from father and added a little for himself, and thus they had built up the art, one after the other.

Jon soon saw that it was Torgeir who ought to inherit the fiddle, and none of the other children; he was forever aching to get hold of the fiddle; work he would not. If he only had to go out and rake a little he gave out at once, and he was dull and slow with all else besides; but when he got leave to sit down with his fiddle, he forgot both to eat and to go to bed. His father had been to a fair, and bought a child's fiddle for him; but he was almost sorry for it. Torgeir was so happy that he could not sleep for several nights, and was quite feverish; he thought of nothing else. When he had grown accustomed to looking at it and using it, he grew quieter; but he must always have the fiddle with him when he went to bed. At school he did but poorly. He was shiftless and uncertain there, as in all else that lay beyond his fiddle. The schoolmaster complained that he never knew a word of his lesson, but Jon only replied, "Oh, he

will learn to write his name, I fancy." It was not long before he knew nearly all the tunes his father had learned, and now he began to make new ones; but these he did not play when any one could hear them. He would often sit dreamily on the stool holding his fiddle, and, with a rocking motion of his head, keep time to the melodies which were surging up within him. His father knew what ailed the boy when he sat there dreaming. He then drew him to himself, and repeated to him all he knew about hulders and fair princesses, about the Forcegrim, and people who were bewitched; and in the lad's mind all this blended together with the dewy, fresh morning, with the sunshine, and the birds that were singing, with the mist curling about the mountain peaks, with the lowing cows and the sportive young colts, and with the schoolmaster, and the mother scolding behind the whole herd of cattle.

"What is to become of you, Torgeir?" the boy's mother often said, and sighed.

"A master fiddler," was Torgeir's answer.

Then Jon would laugh. Now Torgeir had heard from his father that any one who wanted to become a master fiddler must learn of the Forcegrim, and give him a good leg of dried meat for his playing. So one day he stole into the storehouse, where hung bacon and other meat. Torgeir looked longingly at a fine fat shoulder of mutton, but he did not dare take it, so he took one that had been cut from. With the dried meat hidden under his jacket he

made his way stealthily up to the force and threw it in. He stood and stared, and waited, but there came no Forcegrim. "That must have been too lean," thought Torgeir, and now he went about several days pondering upon whether he should venture on the fat shoulder. At last he took it, too, and into the force it went. Thereupon he sat down on a stone close by the mill-race and waited, but the Forcegrim would not come. The birch foliage was so fresh, and kept dipping down into the force; the goats bleated at him from the cliffs; the sun shone so warm and peaceful, full in his face, the lad grew drowsy as he sat there. Before he knew it his head sank backward on the grass and he fell asleep.

Suddenly he awakened with a start. In the midst of the foaming white force there arose a man with a harp in his hand. The rosy sunbeams fell on his golden crown, on his hoary beard, on his silvery white mantle, on the glittering strings, and Torgeir was overwhelmed by a din and a roar; it was as though the woods, and the fields, and the mountains, were dissolved into quivering tones. The lad was so terrified that he started to run with all his might. It was late in the evening when he reached home. He did not dare say a word about where he had been, he did not dare mention that he had heard the Forcegrim play.

"I will tell you what it is, Jon, you must have the storehouse lock fixed," said the mother, as she stood cooking the porridge. "If thieves were not

there last night, my name is not Mari. I hung up eight pieces of dried meat, and now there are but six."

"Oh, if thieves want to get in, no locks will keep them out," was all that Jon answered. But Torgeir sat there feeling like a poacher, and soon quietly made his way off to bed.

Once when Torgeir sat on a hillock playing for the haymakers, there appeared a young girl before him as suddenly as though she had started up out of the ground. She was gazing at him with such a wise look in her two great round eyes. She had her hands behind her. Torgeir first looked at her, then he nodded. The girl did not seem to see this; she was now gazing with equal gravity at the fiddle. The next day she stood on the same spot, with her hands behind her as before. Torgeir was about to approach the girl, but she sprang away. After this he could always be sure of finding her among those who gathered about him of evenings when he sat on the door-step. She always stood quite alone, and there was something so strong and self-reliant about her as she stood thus with her hands on her back. She never talked with any one. Torgeir thought this was strange, and so one evening he followed the girl. Then he saw her glide into old Sylvfest's gard. He asked his father about it, and then he learned that the step-daughter of the house was said to have come home. She had spent some years on a gard north of there,

where she was being brought up by her mother's sister. Her name was Kari, and this must be she.

Afterward she came to school, and then he became acquainted with her. She talked very little there, too, and seldom took part in the play. But she was eager for her books, and soon she stood first both in reading and writing. Once when they chanced to be alone she spoke to him.

"Are you going to be a fiddler, say?" she asked.

"I suppose so," he replied.

"Do you not think that is very nice?"

"It is, indeed. Should you like to be a fiddler?"

"Hm—why I shall be a woman."

"Do you think that is very nice?" asked Torgeir roguishly.

"Hm!" said Kari, and laughed.

"Do not you think it is very nice to listen?" he asked again.

"Yes, indeed it is, and especially when you play."

"You will have to come up in the evenings and I will play for you."

"Thank you. If only father does not come up after me—"

"Is your father strict with you?"

"He says I shall have nothing to do with you."

Another time Kari said to him, "You are poor at reading."

"Do you think so?"

"Shall I help you?"

"Thank you, I am quite able to help myself. But I would rather keep to my fiddle. It is not every one who can be a priest, either."

"But it is possible to do two things, and 'knowledge is the mother of wisdom,' the schoolmaster told us to-day."

Kari nodded so earnestly and knowingly as she tried to imitate the schoolmaster's book speech, that Torgeir had to smile. But from that day forth he grew more diligent in learning to read, and the result was that he managed to pull through the confirmation examination, although, to be sure, he stood lowest in his class. That day Kari stood first, and Torgeir thought to himself, "A person can get higher up in the world with books than with a fiddle."

CHAPTER II.

TORGEIR had now reached the age when boys begin to think a great deal about the girls; but he thought still more about tunes. Friendly voices called to him, and sang to him both from wood and field; and, most of all, he heard them within himself when he closed his eyes. He remembered the Forcegrim's tune, and he had this for his ideal when he made his own, but he was never able to grasp it. Sometimes he thought he had got it, and the last tune he made was always the best; but there was something wanting, for all that. He felt, therefore, that there was still something unsolved within himself, and this the deepest of all. But he was very happy. Life lay so sunny bright before him, and he no longer had to tug away at the tasks for school or for the priest. His father allowed him to do as he pleased, and so he wandered about with his fiddle in wood and field; and the sunbeams and the birds, the sighing of the birch-trees and the mountain breezes, the roaring of the force and the babbling of the brook, the cattle and the shepherd's dog, ay, even the little pigs, gave him tones for his fiddle and materials for new tunes. And now he was no longer ashamed to let his father hear what he had made, and old

Jon smiled and thought of his own youth, and kept time with his head to the strains his son drew forth from the strings. He rejoiced to see the wings growing on the young eagle. Torgeir was now allowed to accompany his father when he went out fiddling, and then these two sat and played together. And Torgeir seemed to grow taller when the parish folk began to say, "I think the lad will soon get ahead of Jon." Alone, however, he was never allowed to go out playing, nor to wander beyond the parish borders. "He will come soon enough out into the wide world," his father said.

And the girls began to fix their eyes on the sprightly young fiddler, with his thick curly hair and glittering eyes. There was always a group of girls about the stool he sat on, and Torgeir thought he could play best when the girls were looking at him. But Kari never pressed forward, she rather shrank into a corner where he could not see her. He had not had any talk with her lately, and he thought no more of her than of all the rest, unless it might be that there were moments when he wondered whether there was not something superior about her.

Torgeir was just now struggling with a tune he could not get hold of. His father had told him about a mountain-taken princess who was set free by the ringing of the church-bells, and this must be worked into the tune. It was a Saturday evening, and his father asked him to look after a sheep that

had gone astray, as his brothers were tired. Torgeir set forth; he searched for the sheep almost the whole night long but could not find it. All tired out, he sat down to rest on his old seat in the mountain notch by the force. He had not been there very often, for he had felt almost a terror of it since the evening he thought he saw the Forcegrim. But now it lay there so peacefully in the dim summer night. It was as though the force had subdued its speech and was only murmuring a lullaby for him. He thought of the Forcegrim, of the princess in the mountain, of the church-bells and the tune; it all glided together into tones, and then the lad fell asleep.

All at once he was lifted up and carried on invisible hands; the mountain was torn asunder with a terrible crash; onward and inward he was borne, and then the mountain walls rushed together again with such violence that they trembled. It was plain that it was *he* who was mountain-taken, and not the princess. There was a cool twilight within. He saw no mortal; he heard only the hollow sound of dripping water, of rolling stones. He felt his way onward by the damp mountain walls. Then there struck up a sound that came floating toward him; the walls gave way; the roof was uplifted, and he saw afar off hall after hall, glittering with silver and with gold, supported on pillars, as it were, of flaming fire; and forth from the walls and forth from behind the pillars there pressed a swarming mass of hideous dwarf-

trolls, howling, making leaps, turning summersaults, thronging toward him. They almost all had fiddles, and they scraped away on these and shook their red pointed caps, and seemed ready to devour him with their eyes.

"Ho! we shall teach you to play! Ho! we shall teach you to play!" Torgeir crouched up against the wall and prayed, in his anguish, for deliverance—there they came thronging about him. Then, suddenly, he heard a church-bell ringing; the mountain was rent in twain; day burst in; the trolls grew pale, and there in the opening stood a young girl. He knew her. It was Kari, and it was she who rang the church-bells. At the same moment he shuddered; he rubbed his eyes; had he dreamed? There stood the sun already high in the heavens; the force sang merrily its vigorous song; the dew glittered on the birch foliage and on the flowers; the sound of the church-bells floated up once more through the notch; the people were going to church, hymn-book in hand; and up yonder, on the mountain peak, right against the deep blue background of sky, there stood a girl. It was she; it was Kari. She was shading her eyes with her hand from the sun and gazing over the parish, her white linen garments glittering in the sunshine; then the tune he had so long been seeking started up within him as by a miracle, and he grasped the whole at once: the sunshine, the Sabbath peace, the joy of life, gratitude for his escape from the mountain, the girl on the mountain peak, the hymn-book.

Never had Torgeir been so happy. He breathed the pure mountain air with a sense of deliverance; tones streamed from his fiddle, and the girl drew nearer and nearer to him as the strain went on. Firmly and securely she stepped from stone to stone, and suddenly it darted up before Torgeir that it must be she if it were any girl.

"Father, you must go down to Sylvfest and propose for his daughter for me," said Torgeir, when he had fairly reached home.

Jon looked at the lad in sheer amazement; then he laughed. "There never was a pig so small that he did not know how to curl his tail," said he.

"What of it, if I am young? I can earn money with my fiddle if I only am allowed to try, and now I mean to try." And Torgeir gave his head a toss.

"But you do not know very much about the girl," replied the father. He saw that Torgeir took the matter seriously.

"I know at least this much, that she is the only one who understands my playing," said Torgeir.

"I have nothing against the girl," said the father; "you might have chosen a worse one. But you know Sylvfest, and know how it stands between us. I should not like to have anything to do with that fellow."

"Kari is not of his blood," replied Torgeir. "You know she is only the step-daughter, and I think he will be glad of a chance to shake her off."

"That may be, but not on us."

Torgeir sat still awhile. There ran through his mind all the long years of injustice that separated the two gards. "Then I must leave home and go shift for myself, father. I cannot bear it any longer here in the parish."

Jon bit his lip. "You may go if you will promise what I now tell you: You must repeat the Lord's prayer morning and evening; you must not touch strong drink; you must not use a knife when you are excited to wrath; you must not let yourself be made a fool of by words of praise; you must not spend too much time with the girls."

Torgeir promised this, and then he set forth, with his fiddle-box on his back and his knapsack over his shoulder.

Some time after Jon met Kari in the road.

"I have greetings for you from Torgeir," said he.

"Thank you. Is he ill?"

"He has gone away."

"Ah, indeed!"

"He is earning lots of money with his fiddle out in the parishes," said Jon. "He has been having a fiddling-match with Luraas and with Knut Harding, and has exchanged tunes with them."

"He was good at playing."

"I am going to write to him to-morrow."

"You may greet him."

"Thank you, I will. Farewell."

That winter Jon tried to meet Kari as often as he could. He asked others about her, too, whenever he

had an opportunity, and he heard everywhere that she was a fine girl in all respects. The only fault to be found was that she was perhaps too quiet and reserved. She was evidently not in her element at home; so people thought, for both her step-father and his sons were unkind to her, and her mother was a mere cipher in the house. She had really only taken Sylvfest for his money. She had been a widow, and did not know how to support herself and her little girl.

As spring approached, and the air became filled with yearning, Jon got a sorrowful letter from his son, saying that he longed so much to be at home, but did not think he could come so long as there was any uncertainty about Kari. He had now learned from experience that the more girls he saw the less he could help thinking of Kari. She was now so old that there was danger of her being captured by some one else, and then he would never know another happy day. Besides, his father must consider how good it would be for him, who went floating around out in the world so much among the girls, to be bound to one.

Jon sat for a long time with the letter in his hand. He thought there was sense in all this, and especially in the last remark. But his son begged him to go down to Sylvfest's place and get a decisive answer that Torgeir might have something to hold to in case he should come home. This was the hardest of all. Last spring Sylvfest's sons had dammed up the creek so that it had overflowed Jon's lands; they had every

little while left the gate ajar so that Sylvfest's cattle got into the neighbors' lands, and Jon's wife had to go after them and drive them out many times a day. And even this was not the worst. Sylvfest had put himself in Jon's way, and injured him in every possible manner. There was talk of getting Jon elected into the parish board. Sylvfest had prevented it. Jon had undertaken to buy several hundred fatted oxen to be sent to England. Sylvfest got wind of it, offered to do it for a few dollars less commission, and got the whole job.

Jon sat with the letter in his hand and pondered. He locked it up in the chest and took it out again. Not until a week later did he take his best clothes out of the chest one evening and go down toward the great gard. On the way he kept wondering whether it might not be possible to stir up the affair about the meadow. He was sure that the whole parish would take his part and be willing to swear that one half had belonged to his family until Sylvfest's folks had gotten it by perjury.

Then he knocked at the door and entered. A scornful smile passed over Sylvfest's face, as he arose and said: "Are you out taking a walk?"

Jon took a seat. Sylvfest whispered something in his wife's ear, and she came in with some beer, but brought it in the great silver tankard with a gold coin inlaid on the lid. The men then slowly began to chat about the weather, and last year's crops; about all the cows that had calved, etc. Finally Jon came out with his errand, as delicately as he could.

Sylvfest drew up one corner of his mouth to a grin: "It is a great honor to me to have such an offer," said he. "He is said to be a remarkable fellow, that son of yours; he stood so high in his confirmation class, as I have heard."

"It is not reading that makes the man," said Jon. "Torgeir is good at his fiddle."

"Ah, yes, it is well not to be wholly lacking. I hope he will always find some one ready to dance," answered Sylvfest. "And then it is plain to see that Kari would get among well-to-do folks."

"It is possible to be happy with less than you have, Sylvfest," said Jon.

"Yes, that was just what I was thinking," answered Sylvfest. "How much is there to come to your children, Jon? Will there be a pair of breeches apiece?"

Jon grew red, but he swallowed his vexation. "No one knows better than you that I might have owned more than I do, and you ought not to be so sure about the meadow, Sylvfest, I may yet be able to get my rights; but if you will give me my way in this, I will promise never to stir up the matter again.'

Sylvfest laughed. "You do well to threaten," said he; "your words are so alarming."

"Yes, you may mock," said Jon, indignantly, and arose. "The Lord shall one day judge between me and you, Sylvfest."

"You had better go to Him for help," said Sylv-

fest, "there is surely no one else who will restore the meadow to you."

Jon was about to go; just then the sons came dashing in, flung themselves down on the long bench and took up their spoons.

"Look here, this man has come to propose for your sister," said Sylvfest. "What do *you* think of it?"

The lads looked askant at their father. "Hm!" they said, merely, with a freezing smile, and commenced eating. But the derision that lay in that cold sneer Jon did not forget. He hastened out, and as rapidly as he walked up the slope that evening he had never walked before. The moon played with such a golden light over the snow-drifts, which still lay an ell deep everywhere around, but Jon heeded it not; there was, too, such marvelous unrest and sultriness in the air. In the horizon beyond there lay thick masses of coal-black clouds, which came rolling forward. There would surely be a tempest to-night. Jon looked to see if all the doors were well fastened, and then he went to bed. He was unable to say a single word to his wife about what had occurred.

The mighty man at the great gard looked out through the window after Jon with a smile of supreme satisfaction. He too saw the moonbeams playing over the white earth, and thought: "All this that I see from the window is my own." Then he ate a hearty meal, unlocked his chest and looked to see

if the shining silver dollars were all there, and after that he went to bed.

Far into the night Jon was awakened by a fearful, loud, rumbling noise. The thunder roared, the rain poured down in torrents, the wind howled through the notch, the landslides broke loose and swept downward. It sounded like the firing of cannon far away. Jon lay trembling in his bed, and no sleep would come to his eyes. Suddenly there came a gust of wind, which lifted the whole house; the glass was shattered, everything hanging on the walls fell down, the beds shook — then a dreadful crash, as though heaven and earth were blended together. "Good Lord!" cried Jon, and sprang out of bed. He looked out through the window, and saw how a mighty serpent was wreathing and winding its coils, flaming as fire. Then all grew still.

When the sky had cleared sufficiently, Jon stood by the window and looked out. Where was the great gard? Sylvfest, his whole family, his money, all the cattle, the very land itself,— swept away, wiped from the face of the earth in a single night. But one half of the meadow, that which by right belonged to Jon, lay unscathed, sloping up toward Jon's fence; the slide had begun just beyond the stream which from time immemorial had been the dividing line. Very pale Jon stood there; he clasped his hands about the window post,— a tear rolled down his cheek. It was the Lord who had judged between him and Sylvfest.

CHAPTER III.

FOR a long time nothing was talked of in the parish but this occurrence, as might have been expected. There were many who had suffered from damage to field and meadow, but all put together was a mere trifle compared with what had happened to the great gard. And the peasants reflected upon the family history for ages past, and they found wrong heaped upon wrong.

The only one who had escaped was Kari. That same evening, before Jon came in, she had been oppressed by such strange forebodings. It seemed to her that her mother's sister must surely be ill, and she begged leave, therefore, to go to her. Now she had been summoned home.

They were at work digging in the slide, searching for the bodies. Nearly the whole parish had turned out, horses and people. Not many words were spoken over the work; if they found anything they only pointed at it, and drew it silently forth. The slide lay there full and satiated, like a monstrous mountain troll, gloating over its treasures. But little was found.

Upon a great stone in the midst of the slide sat a young girl; it was Kari; she had her hands in

her lap, and was gazing fixedly at something lying at her feet. It was the silent form of her mother, which had been dug out. She lay there so peacefully, just as though she were sleeping; not a limb was bruised; nor had she, in all probability, objected much to the change that she had just made. The sun shone so mild and warm on the young girl, and glided over the pale face which lay on the stone. It was like mercy after judgment. And the spring brooks began to murmur; softly the snow was melting; some of the migratory birds had already come; new life, with summer and song, was now at hand. But Kari was still sitting there in the midst of the slide.

Then there came a young lad, rapidly walking along the mountain path. He was in great haste, as it appeared, and, staff in hand, he made his way toward her. He slackened his speed as he approached the slide. He stood still and gazed at her awhile; then he drew off his shoes, and went on tip-toe over the stones. He sat down at a little distance from her. "Are you sitting here alone?" said he.

Kari turned. "Have you come home?" was all she said.

"Yes, I have," answered Torgeir. He wanted to say more, but could not give utterance to it.

"I thought your father said you expected to stay away longer," said she.

"Yes, so I did," answered Torgeir, "but —; it was a dreadful accident that," he added.

Kari's eyes grew moist; she drew her hand over them.

"And you are all alone again," said Torgeir. "Poor you!" He spoke so warmly and looked so kindly as he said this. His hand groped tremblingly for her fingers. "What do you think of doing with yourself now, Kari?" Torgeir continued.

"I do not know."

"Are you going to your mother's sister?"

"I do not want to go there. There are enough there already. I suppose I shall have to go away and work for my living."

"Can you not come to us? Oh please come to us. Father takes such delight in you, and all of us —"

"Are *you* going to be at home?" asked she.

"I do not know; I suppose so."

"Then I will *not* go to your house."

Torgeir was startled. "Are you afraid of me Kari?" asked he. "And I mean to be so kind to you— I who am so fond of you. It was for your sake I came home now."

Kari did not answer.

"Yes, for although there may be many fine girls out in the world, you see there is no one who understands my playing as you do. You have understood me from the first moment. You can make something of me, Kari; that is what none of the others can do, and I am very weak in myself. It seems to me the Lord has ordered everything so

wonderfully. You are not ashamed of a poor fiddler, are you? You do not mean to marry a gard and money?"

Kari looked down at her mother, and said, "Oh no; so long as she lies here, no gard shall tempt me. She sold herself for the dollar, and she did it solely for my sake." And Kari burst into tears.

Torgeir drew nearer to her and tried to console her. "Come home with me now, Kari," said he; "here you only keep tearing open the old wounds."

Kari arose and brushed the earth from her skirts. "No, I cannot leave her," said she, and pointed to her mother. Then she sat down again.

"Would you like me to go ask father whether you can stay with us this winter?" asked Torgeir, gently. "You need not be afraid; *I* shall go away. Come, let us carry your mother up to our place."

Jon was standing in the yard, and was not a little amazed when he saw Torgeir come staggering up the hill with a human body in his arms, and a young girl by his side supporting it. He soon saw what it was. As they approached the house, Jon uncovered his head and at the same time opened the gate for them. He took Kari by the hand and led her in.

After they had been digging for a whole week they unearthed the dead bodies of Sylvfest and his three sons. His money-chest it was impossible to find, much as they searched. "It's a pity for the girl, poor thing; she might have use for it now," said the parish folks.

On one day Sylvfest, his wife and three sons were buried. The priest spoke touching words at the graves, and there was scarcely any one present who did not shed tears. And on that day there was many an one who made amends for old wrongs and forgave his debtors.

But Jon got matters so arranged that Kari was to remain with him as his ward, and the meadow was to be the fee for his guardianship. Torgeir must promise to try his luck away from home this winter, too, but he set forth with a light heart, for he knew of a surety that his wanderings would lead him home again to a happy bridal feast and endless bliss.

CHAPTER IV.

AY, to-day there was indeed sunshine! To-day, truly, there was music in old Jon's fiddle, as the bridal procession, pair after pair, wound down through the birch woods! And this day the priest was not called on to pronounce God's blessing on one who had married an old boat, or a bag of money, or a fine gard, for it was very evident that the two young people who stood before the altar were united by love, and nothing else. And, as evening drew near, Torgeir took up the fiddle himself, and such playing they had never heard before. He threw all his life's courage and happiness into it. It was the melody that had surged up within him the morning he saw Kari on the mountain top, and felt that it must be she and no one else, and Torgeir christened it the Kari tune. The wedding company was not a large one, but was very sociable and pleasant. There was no drinking and carousing,—for Jon was opposed to that,—but the young people were allowed to dance as much as they chose. And the next day the young married couple went up to their new home, a small place they had hired, not far below the notch, near the force. There Torgeir could breathe freely, he thought, and "here I can take lessons every day from the Forcegrim," he playfully added. Besides

the house, they had a little patch of ground where they could pasture a couple of cows and raise a few barrels of potatoes. For Torgeir was now like his father, he did not care to go beyond the parish precincts. He preferred to stay at home with Kari. No one understood his playing as she did, and he could talk over with her all the tunes he made. She had read so much, was so wonderfully wise, and had such good sense, that she could teach him from her knowledge, and all that he learned he gave out again in the tunes he made. And she firmly believed that Torgeir was the first fiddler in the world,—and this put such courage into Torgeir.

For a couple of years these two lived as birds in a nest. Never did Torgeir laugh so heartily as when Kari tried to make music. She had taken it into her head that she would like to play the fiddle, and so Torgeir had to teach her. But her fingers were too stiff; she soon had to give it up, but she went far enough to understand how to hold the instrument and bring out a few little tones. This was something these two had for themselves alone. No one in the parish knew anything about it, and they did it more for amusement than anything else.

Every Sunday evening in summer, the young people of the parish gathered together on the playgrounds, and Torgeir sat on the wood-chopper's block and played for them. And they danced and their parents looked on, chatting away. And Torgeir always earned enough with his fiddle to live on

half the week through. And even the priest and his wife joined them sometimes, and the priest praised the playing, and invited Kari to come up to the parsonage and borrow books, as she used to do. Indeed, every one was so extremely kind to them. It was such an old-fashioned, true-hearted parish, so much was thought of playing and singing, and the people always loved to help one another. They were very proud of Torgeir, and thought it a fine thing to be able to support a fiddler so that he did not have to go tramping about in other parishes. So they frequently sent him a whole veal, a few pounds of butter, or a pail of milk, and so on. And Torgeir was always so bright and pleasant that every one liked to help him. Thus it came to pass that the first years Torgeir laid up money. Kari was an excellent manager, and she earned money, too, by going out to do baking and cleaning for the great festival days. The flowers behind the glass in the little room throve so well; and if you should drop in there of a Sunday morning, when Torgeir took down his fiddle from the wall and struck up a psalm, while Kari, in full church dress, sat and sang to it, you would feel that it was good to be there.

The first sorrow which overtook them was the death of their little year-old girl. Torgeir was inconsolable, and was not able to touch his fiddle for several days. Kari took it more calmly, and she it was who had to comfort her husband. A couple of years later Kari held in her arms a plump, rosy

boy, to whom was given the name of Jon. The grandfather just got a glimpse of him, for old Jon had been taken suddenly ill. There passed through the parish a dangerous epidemic, and Jon fell victim to it. Torgeir and Kari went down to him with the little boy, and he died happy and contented. His wife, who had watched faithfully over him to the last, took the contagion, too, and a month later she followed him. The last thing she said to Kari was, that she must take good care of their earnings, and lay by all she could in the good years, for there would be but few of them. And if she could get Torgeir to turn to something useful, she said, it would be well. Kari, however, thought it was better to give the spare pennies away to those who needed them more than they, and the Lord would continue to help them as he had done thus far. As for Torgeir, God himself had made a fiddler of him, and a fiddler he should remain. Then the old woman sighed and shook her head. Kari repeated this afterward to Torgeir, and he could not help smiling as he said, "Yes, mother was herself to the last."

It was Torgeir's eldest brother who got the homestead. He had for a long time been engaged in the sheep trade, and could not give it up at once. But Torgeir remained contented and happy in his little place, and he laughed aloud every time little Jon sprang up and down on his mother's lap, when he was playing the fiddle. "There is surely the stuff

fiddlers are made of in that little fellow, I think," said he.

Thus things went on for some years. Kari took care of the little field and meadow when Torgeir did not happen to be at home; and she did it well, for she was not afraid to put her hands to any kind of work. No poor man went unaided from their door, for so Torgeir wished to have it: if others were kind to them, they must be the same to others.

It so happened one evening when Torgeir came home that Kari seemed more quiet than usual. "Is anything the matter, Kari?" he asked.

"Oh no, nothing except that your brother was here lamenting his trouble. He has been unlucky in a trade he has just made,—has lost much money, and now he must raise thirty dollars within a week, or else he will have to mortgage the farm."

"Is it possible!" cried Torgeir. "Mortgage the farm! what will he do now?"

"Ay, that is just what he does not know."

"We must help him, Kari."

"Yes, there is no one nearer to him."

"It is very clear we must help him. We have fifty dollars in the saving-fund now, have we not?"

"Yes, we have."

"What if we were to give them to him?—I have no use for them just now, and—"

"I have been thinking of the same thing," interrupted Kari.

"Yes, that is what we will do," cried Torgeir,

pleased. "You go up to the lensman, Kari, and get them out, but do not say anything about it, and then take them up to my brother."

"It would be more proper for you to do that, because you are his brother."

"Yes, that is so, I suppose, but—it is rather unpleasant, you know. Could we not write: 'To Mr. Olaf Jonson, gardman, to redeem our homestead?'"

"Why, he would know that it came from us."

"Yes, that is true;—no, *you* will have to go, Kari; you are so good at explaining matters, you are."

"And I shall give him the whole fifty?"

"Yes, I think so, and then he will have something to get started with again."

And Kari went, and the brother got all Torgeir owned.

CHAPTER V.

THERE had come a new priest to the parish. He was one of those who believed he was preaching christianity, while he was only soundly chastising the people with the stone tablets of Moses. Every Sunday he preached to christians as though they were mere heathens. In his youth he had led a wild life, then he had suddenly become converted. It was a serious time for him. His friends believed that he had lost his senses, for every once in a while he would fall on his knees on the floor and pray and weep. At night he lay tossing in his bed and awakened in terror; he dreamed the devil came and took him alive. He sat reading the Bible and singing psalms most of the time both day and night. He scarcely allowed himself time to eat, and he took but little food indeed. When it began to grow calm within him, and he felt at peace with God, he was seized with such a desire to bear witness that he was compelled to go forth and preach, preach to all those misguided ones who carelessly walked on the broad road, as he had done. There was such fire in his words that he carried many with him, and this made him still more zealous. So the young man moved from bible-lesson to prayer-meeting, and from prayer-meeting to bible-lesson. Scarcely twenty years old, he

preached of Him who first came forth as a teacher when he was thirty. It seemed as though he had not a moment's rest or peace. He did not think he had done his day's work until he was so weary that he was almost ready to drop. When he rested ever so little he was afraid that he would be overcome by the old temptations; he was afraid of being called slothful in the service of his God. And when he thought of the thousands of human souls that were lost because their fellow-creatures forgot to bear witness to them of the way of life—oh! then, indeed, he felt compelled to work. His friends warned him that he must not take hold too vigorously in the beginning, lest he should too soon become weary, but he would not listen. He laid this in God's hand, he said, and the young apostle felt within himself an inexhaustible strength. He worked day and night while preparing for examination, and after that he continued with the same unflagging zeal. For several years he lived at the capital, entered the service of the "Home Mission," and gave addresses and bible-lessons often three times a day. Then came the reaction. He had been a man of gigantic strength, but now the mortal frame could continue no longer with this health-destroying labor. He felt, too, that the spirit had grown duller, thought heavier, the memory less vigorous; his words no longer flowed so freely, nor fell with such power. He had begun to repeat himself. He had sung the same tune so long that the people knew it by heart. They no longer gathered

together by the hundreds to listen to him. Then the doctor ordered him to the country, and he got a call from one of the rural districts; but the country air could not entirely transform him. When he perceived that the old zeal was gone, he tried to fan the embers by increasing his efforts. He began more and more to preach sermons of terror, with hell fire glowing in the background; he dealt crushing blows to all that he had called life's joys in the days when he was yet unconverted. Every man and woman had to be tested in the same fire that he had passed through before they could gain any hope of salvation. On Sundays he must be satiated with sighs and groans and tears from the congregation. Otherwise he believed the sermon had been profitless. He did not know that it was rather his own honor than that of God he was now seeking. Years passed on and he fell into the humdrum daily routine; the hundred petty details belonging to his office tormented him; all that might have been gentle and mild in him was entirely dissipated, and he became dry and hard as a flint. He grew imperious, too, and bitter. He could not tolerate any other opinion than his own, and was angry when the people opposed him. The peasants he looked upon as a flock who should be led whither the priest pleased.

He had a wife,— a young, refined, sickly woman. She was pale and still, and moved about quietly, taking care of the children, and hushing them if they trod too heavily on the floor, because father was pre-

paring his sermon. People never heard her utter a word when he was by. There was a gloom over his whole household life.

Such was the man who had now become the priest of the parish. He was forty years old, tall and broad-shouldered. He was bald, and wore black horn spectacles. His countenance was dejected; his eyes usually downcast. A dog always trotted after him, and barked and showed his teeth when any one approached.

The old priest who had now gone away was a gentle, kind-hearted man. Great talents he did not possess, it is true,—but child-like piety; and he was so well suited to the child-like parish he had been in. He went about doing his work like a father among good children.

Now they would find it quite different. Among the first things they heard was, that the former priest had not been a man of God. The parish folk thought this strange, but it must be so if the priest said it, for he was surely an excellent man. He had such a gift of speech that the church trembled when he preached.

It was soon curiously still in the parish. The people became so strange and shy. They even took to *walking* differently than before. There was no longer the brisk, firm step when they walked along with sack or bundle on their backs; there was no longer the joyful clasp of the hand and the cheerful greeting. Now they timidly shrank away from one

another and sighed. There was something discontented, sour and cross in the countenances that were once so gentle. The people were not as helpful to one another as they used to be. They shut themselves more up within themselves, as snails in their shells. Conversation had to be carried on in such a roundabout way: it was deemed proper first to talk with a sigh about this sinful world, before coming out with the business in hand; and the latter was quickly dispatched. It was like an epidemic spreading from gard to gard.

"Can you understand how this is, Kari?" said Torgeir. "Formerly, when I visited the people in the southern part of the parish, I found their houses so large and cheerful; and now they seem so narrow and close that I can scarcely breathe. And the people — why, it is just as though they had other eyes put into their heads."

"That comes, no doubt, from their letting too little of God's sunshine into their rooms," answered Kari.

Among the first things the priest did was to forbid playing and dancing on Sunday evenings. He put such terror into the owner of the pleasure-grounds, that the latter did not dare to let Torgeir cross his threshold. Even those who wished to keep up the old customs were afraid to do so on account of the others. They did not want to get a bad name. The whole parish stood as it were defenseless before the mighty sword the priest wielded in the name of the

Lord, and they bent in terror beneath it, as a child-like people is apt to do.

There was one who did not bend, and that was Kari. She went to attend service one day, and Torgeir with her; and the priest enlarged upon the sin which lay in the playing and singing of worldly music, and sent those who engaged therein, as well as those who encouraged them, down into a burning hell. People turned and looked at Torgeir, who sat on his seat, pale, and with downcast eyes. When they went out of church, they drew away from him and whispered. Kari walked straight up to him, in the face of everybody, took him by the hand and led him home. On the way she said to him:

"I will never listen to the priest again, for it was not God's word he preached to-day."

"Do you think so?"

"You know it as well as I, Torgeir."

"It does not look as though he would thank me as the old priest did."

"He does not understand you, Torgeir."

"It will not be easy to live here after this day."

"No, it will not; but we shall be able to earn our living. If it becomes too hard, we can go away."

"I am not happy elsewhere; and, besides, we have bought this home now."

Not quite all the people were at once ready to follow the priest. Those who lived nearest the parsonage were the first; then it spread like rings in

the water after a stone has been cast in, farther and farther north. The people in the north part of the parish continued in the old ways; they did not have the priest continually prowling around, ready at any moment to cross their threshold; they did not have his sharp, keen eyes over all their daily actions. Thus the parish was divided into two groups, each going its own way. Between these groups was a large number wavering from one side to the other.

But the priest kept his eye on the north parish. He had his spies out, and they carried to him both what was said and what was done. He thought it would not be long before it also would tremble in his hands.

"Say, what shall we do now, Kari?" said Torgeir one day. "The new strings for my fiddle have come to the dealer's, and I have not a farthing to claim them with. And then, you know, we are somewhat in debt already, so in all it will amount to a dollar."

"You must go to your brother and borrow, for the present; we shall soon be able to pay it back."

"Do you think so? It is so hard to ask for anything."

Torgeir went to his brother. "Will you not be so kind as to lend me a dollar, for new strings to my fiddle, and a few other trifles, brother?"

His brother looked sharply at him; then he went over to see whether the door was quite closed; then he sighed and said, "Repent! repent and turn from your sinful ways, Torgeir."

Torgeir stared at him.

"Life here below should be a cross and a struggle, and you act as though it were nothing but pleasure. You wallow daily in the mire of sin, and do not see that it leads straight to hell."

"I helped you last time you were in trouble," Torgeir merely said, quietly.

"I will help no one forward into sin," answered his brother.

Torgeir seized his hat and left. When he came to his own room he flung himself down on the bench.

"Well, did you get the dollar?" asked Kari.

"My brother growls at me, just as all the rest do," said Torgeir, with sobs in his voice. "Every one used to be so kind and good that they clung to me wherever I went; now there is scarcely one that does not cast stones at me. What have I done that it should be so?" And Torgeir laid his head down on his arms.

"Calm yourself, Torgeir," said Kari, and she gently stroked his hair. "You know the grass grows best when there comes a little thunder and rain. We should grow tired of living always in the sunshine."

"But what shall we live on? There is scarcely any one here who cares to own us."

"Oh, we have still many friends here in this part of the parish; they will surely help us, and time will make it all right," answered Kari.

"Just at that moment there came a knocking at

the door, and in walked a sprightly young lad with a smiling countenance. When they had exchanged greetings, he said, "I hope you will come and play at my wedding, Torgeir; it is to be on Thursday, and we are going to have it in the old style; but do not say anything about it, lest the priest should put his finger into it, and we dare not have the fiddle on the way to church."

"I do not know that I can come," said Torgeir, "for my fiddle-strings are about worn out."

"You carry our greetings and thanks to the folks, and say he will come. I will get strings this evening," said Kari.

In the evening Kari went to the dealer's and claimed the strings. She had her best apron on when she went: she came home without it.

CHAPTER VI.

THE wedding went off splendidly. All the people danced and laughed and enjoyed themselves. Torgeir was once more in good spirits, and was lively and full of humor as he had seldom been seen. Kari was not there. Some hindrance arose just as they were about to start, so that she had to remain at home. If she got through in time, she would follow later.

The priest had appointed a bible-lesson that same evening at one of the neighbors'. They knew this, but did not trouble their heads much about it. There were many at the feast whose faces were drawn into serious folds when they came, but gradually the wrinkles were smoothed away and they became themselves again. Thus it continued into the night of the first day. The Spring-dance went on with full vigor, and Torgeir sat on his stool playing away with a light heart and keeping time with his feet. Before they were aware of it the priest stood in their midst. He said not a word, but went straightway to a bench, stepped up on it, and opened the Bible he carried under his arm. Then he read in a voice that rang through the room: "Thus saith Jesus, 'I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold

nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and repent.' " * And now he proceeded to expound this until the room was all aglow with it. The bridal guests stood as though rooted to the spot; each lad still held his girl by the hand, after the dance. They looked, first at each other, then at the priest. There was perfect silence in the room. The priest stood there with flaming face; he clenched his hand, and shrieked, and beat the book. It was a doomsday's sermon. The floor was uplifted, as it were, with those who stood upon it, and over the brink they went. Every blow that fell left its painful impression; and the priest saw how the people quailed before him, how the straight backs became bowed, how many sank down on the benches and covered their faces. At last there arose a groaning and a weeping in the group of women. But the priest continued: "Life should be a pilgrimage; we should follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Do you do so? Do you follow this evening in the footsteps of

* Revelation iii, 15–19.

Jesus? Do you believe that Jesus took part in fiddling and dancing? Do you believe that Jesus filled himself with beer and brandy, and staggered around drunken? No! Woe, woe upon you, if ye do not repent! Woe, woe upon him who entices you to sin, he who sits over yonder, overwhelmed with his evil conscience!" All eyes were turned thither, where the priest pointed. There sat Torgeir on the bench, white as a sheet, with his teeth clenched. The fiddle lay in his lap. "Yes, woe upon him, for he is in the dominion of the powers of evil. They fill your minds with superstitions about people who are mountain-taken by hulders and trolls. Ah no, there is but *one* who can bewitch people, and that is the devil himself. And *he yonder* is bewitched; the devil has so turned his vision that he believes evil to be innocent and good; he has so crept into his fingers that they itch and grope after the bow and strings; he has so tainted his ears and his mind that he believes the sinful tunes to sound almost like strains from God's angels. But anoint thy eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see; for know thou shalt, thou poor, blinded man, that until thou art rung out of the mountains by the church-bells, until thou dost dash thy fiddle to pieces and lead a useful life, there is no hope of redemption for thee. Yea, until ye all give up playing and dancing, and turn to that which is better, Jesus will not hearken unto you. Ye are spued out of his mouth. And remember the great day of judgment: then it will not be asked how

many dances thou hast danced, and how many drams thou hast drunk; it will be asked whether thou art a child of God, or no." Therewith the priest closed the book and went hastily out; he looked neither to the right nor to the left.

There was a death-like silence in the room. No one dared be the first to stir. A pin could have been heard to drop on the floor. Then Torgeir sprang up from the bench. "Ho, bring me a dram!" he cried; "—and yet another, and still a bigger one to wash down the priest with! If a devil I am to be, I will play devilish well!" Therewith he seized his fiddle, laid his head against it and began to play. And that was playing! The like had never yet been heard. It began softly, as a wailing and a beseeching, then it abruptly changed to a restless, laughing strain, which grew stronger and stronger, wilder and wilder. It sounded as though the autumn wind were howling in the notches, as though the thunder were roaring and the landslides dashing downward; and at last it was as if all the demons of hell were let loose and were chasing and lashing around with whips; or it sounded like the groaning shriek of one who might be in need. And Torgeir neither heard nor saw anything about him, for he was once more in the mountain. And they came springing and rolling toward him, at last, all those little devils of the nether world. And they laughed and tugged at him as though they were about to devour him, and they shrieked, "Ho! now we

have him! Ho! now we have him!" Torgeir made a spring, they after him; there was a chase round and round. Torgeir groaned for help, and then he saw Kari standing up on a mountain top. He longed and longed to go forth,— forth to her; then the mountain walls burst open, and in the middle of the cleft stood the black man in flaming garments. And he laughed at him, and stretched out his hairy arms with outspread claws and cried, "Ay, now you can play, my lad!"

The next morning at sunrise the priest sat smoking his morning pipe in the garden of the gard, where he had passed the night. He had failed to get sleep, and had therefore arisen earlier than usual. He sat on a bench, poking at the ground with his cane. The dog lay growling at his feet. It was a clear summer morning. The sun swept so softly over the grass, the birds sang in the shrubbery, the swallows flew twittering up and down beneath the roof. It was as though God's peace and mercy shone over the whole parish. But those were not mild thoughts which played in the mind of the priest. He was weighing within himself the words he should use in his Sunday's sermon,— considering how they might best strike. The wagtail came hopping close to his feet, and looked at him, but the priest sat gloomily brooding there with his lips protruding, thrusting his cane into the sand.

Then the rumbling of a cart was heard close by the garden fence, and it was driven slowly and cau-

tiously, as though sick people were being drawn in it. The priest went over to the fence. On the cart lay something beneath a cover. The priest asked what it was. They drew the cover aside, and there lay Torgeir the fiddler, pale as a corpse. As he felt the cool morning breeze about his temples he awakened, moved, and stared about him. As he did so he saw the priest standing over him. A shiver ran through his frame. He rose up on one elbow, turned his ghastly-pale face toward the priest, and defied him with clenched fist. Then he sank back again and closed his eyes. "He fiddled so long last night after you were gone," whispered one of those who drove him, "that at last we had to snatch the fiddle out of his hands, and then he fell down on the floor and swooned away. We poured some more liquor into him, but could not arouse him at all."

"Poor wretched man," said the priest, staring at his victim and sending forth a puff of smoke. "God look down in mercy upon him, and grant that one day he may lead a better life."

When Kari heard the cart draw up in front of her little home she came out. She grew pale the moment she saw who it was, but she quickly controlled herself. "Lay him in on the bed, and I shall be much obliged to you," said she. They did so. Kari arranged everything comfortably for him, then she asked the men about everything that had happened. When she was sure of all she wanted to know, even to the words the priest had used, she thanked them

for their help and went in. She went over to the bed-post, laid her hands about it and prayed silently; then she wiped away a tear from her eye, took up her knitting and seated herself beside her husband's bed.

When Torgeir awoke he was lying in his own room. The sun shone in on the painted cupboard. Kari sat knitting; the little boy went trotting about the floor. Everything was going on as usual, as though nothing had happened. He gave Kari a strangely long and hard look. Kari said not a word; she only took the child and held it to him.

"Take away the boy!" said Torgeir, crossly, and pushed him away. A moment after he buried his face in his pillow. "I am cast off by God and men, Kari," said he, and began to weep aloud.

"I know nothing about that," said Kari, calmly, and she picked up a stitch she had dropped.

Torgeir stopped weeping. "Have you not heard what the priest said yesterday?"

"Yes, I did indeed; but the priest has not become our Lord."

"Yes, yes, I am a child of the devil, Kari."

"Don't talk such nonsense, Torgeir, but sleep a little; then I will make you a good cup of coffee."

Torgeir was silent. Kari's words seemed so refreshing to him; she spoke with so much assurance, and everything went on in the customary way.

"You drank too much yesterday, Torgeir," she said, as she handed him the coffee.

"So I did, Kari."

"That is the worst thing you can do. Do you remember what your father said?"

"I remember it well; but I could not control myself."

"Oh no; I must talk to the priest about that."

"You are surely not going to the priest!"

"Yes, that I am; for once he shall hear the truth."

"Oh, Kari! he must not take you away from me," said Torgeir, in alarm.

"He had better not try it," answered Kari, proudly, and laughed as she pressed Torgeir's hand. Torgeir gazed into the glowing, true-hearted eyes of his wife. Thus she had looked when she rang him out of the mountain, with the church-bells.

"The best thing for me would be to give up music and all that belongs to it, and turn to something else," said Torgeir by-and-by, and sighed.

"Oh no, you certainly shall not do that; everyone should be what he is made for, and you are the first fiddler in all Norway,— that I can tell you, Torgeir."

"But then you were wiser than I, for you took to the book," said Torgeir.

"Yes, there might have been made a mighty fine priest out of you, Torgeir," answered Kari.

Torgeir could not help laughing.

"Listen now to what I say to you," said Kari. "You may lie here until later in the day, for you

need rest, and to-morrow morning early you can go out horse-hunting."

"Horse-hunting!"

"Yes; Gudbrand was in here yesterday, while you were gone, and wanted you to go horse-hunting with him, and I promised to speak to you. It will brighten you up to go about a little in the mountains, and then I will go to the priest, and in the evening we will talk seriously together."

And Torgeir went up on the mountains, and Kari got ready to go to the priest. She had stroked away all the shadows of the night with her soft hand, and Torgeir had found peace once more.

CHAPTER VII.

THE next day the priest sat in his study, when there came a soft knock at the door. "Come in!" and Kari came in. She was dressed in her best, and she held a white pocket handkerchief in her hands. She remained standing at the door, for the priest sat still and went on with his writing. Finally he raised his head and looked at her.

"Is there anything I can do for you?"

"I would like to talk a little with the priest."

"Oh, wait a little; be so good as to sit down for awhile," and the priest began to write again. Kari still remained standing. Her heart had beat so violently as she came up the steps; now it grew quiet. She looked around the room. On a cupboard opposite her stood an hour-glass. On the wall hung a large descriptive picture of the Day of Judgment. And then there was an immense lot of books.

"Well, who are you, my good woman?" asked the priest, in measured tones, when he had finished writing.

"I am the wife of Torgeir, the fiddler."

"Indeed!" The priest took up his spectacles, which lay on the table beside him, and gazed long and sharply at Kari. "Your husband is fond of the bowl?"

"Not that I know of, and I have been married to him now seven years."

"Have you a message from him?"

"No, but I want to ask for peace for him."

"Peace no mortal can give, my good woman; he must ask God for that, after he has repented his sin and become converted."

"That is not what I mean," answered Kari, firmly. "He would be at peace with God if you and yours gave him peace."

"What do you mean?" asked the priest, turning in his chair, and fixing his large eyes on her.

"I mean that if any mishap befalls him, you will have his life on your conscience, priest!" said Kari, with quivering voice.

"I do not speak of myself, good woman, answered the priest. "I am here as the servant of the Lord, and my duty of bearing witness may sometimes prove hard."

"I do not believe it is so hard for you," answered Kari, courageously; "if it were, you would not dare look on all the harm you have done."

The priest was still more amazed. Thus no one had ever spoken to him before. He composed himself as far as possible, and said: "Sit down, my good woman, and speak out freely what is in your mind."

"Thank you, I can just as well stand," answered Kari. "Yes, I mean that you believe you can say to us and do with us what you please, because we are peasants and not learned. But this much we know

now — that it is not true christianity you bring to us!"

"And what is true christianity?" asked the priest, and a derisive smile played about his face.

"Ay, I will tell you if you do not know," answered Kari, calmly: "it is that which can comfort and console me, and make me better. But you only frighten people, and do not make them better. It used to be better here in the parish before you came. Then the people were kind, helpful to one another, and happy; now they are bitter, cross, distrustful; now they go to you with complaints of one another; now they play the hypocrite about many things. If you think they believe in their hearts everything they say 'yes' to you about, you make a great mistake."

"'Think not that I am come to send peace on earth, but division,' saith Jesus. And there is something which is called the narrow way, my good woman, and it is impossible to walk there with smiles and fiddling and dancing. And if dancing and carousing and boisterous merry-making be the happiness this parish had before I came, we ought to thank God that we have put an end to it."

"There has never been any carousing and boisterous merry-making here; we only had innocent amusement. And the old priest always said that our highest duty here below was to believe as children, and to be happy as children. And Torgeir and I were never so happy and thankful to God as after one of our old Sundays."

"Do you, then, wish that I should take sin under my protection? — that I should preach open sin, like dancing and fiddling?"

"Where is it written that dancing and fiddling are sins?"

"It is written in the Bible."

"Not in the one I have read. In my Bible it says that Jesus went to the wedding-feast and gave the guests wine when they had drunk all they had before; it says that David danced, and that he was a musician. And Martin Luther was a good player; and many others, who, perhaps, were as good christians as any one here."

"Oh, that old story about David," said the priest, contemptuously; "that was spiritual dancing, my good woman."

"Was it spiritual dancing? It says that he leaped and sprang so that his wife thought it was unseemly, and was ashamed of him. Yet it was *she* who was punished, and not *he*. And if that was spiritual dancing, the dancing in this parish must have been very spiritual."

"Did you come here to quarrel with me?" said the priest, and frowned.

"No, I came here to tell you the truth; for no one would dare do it but I, and I would not dare either, only for Torgeir's sake. You may be learned, priest, and understand many things; but the people you do not understand at all. You judge all by yourself, and want every one to be like you. This I know

cannot be right, for just as God has not made two leaves alike, I believe that he has created one for this and another for that. And had you seen Torgeir, how he has handled the fiddle from the time he was a tiny lad,— had you seen how innocently happy he was over every new tune he made, and how he thanked God, and how gentle and good he was,— had you heard him play Sunday psalms for me,— you would surely say that he was made for a fiddler, and you would not have injured him as you have done." And Kari buried her face in her handkerchief and wept.

The priest was touched at seeing her weep; he rose, went to her, and laid his hand on her head. "Poor woman," said he, "I do indeed believe this may be honestly meant; but we must often renounce that to which flesh and blood clings most tenaciously, and there is no one who can be made for sin. You need, then, to have your eyes anointed with eyesalve, and to repent."

Kari tossed her head. "You have no need to call me poor, priest," said she, angrily; "for I will not beg mercy at your hands, as they all do here. I will find my way to the Lord without you. But you, who preach repentance to others, should consider whether you may not need repentance yourself."

The priest turned pale, then colored. "*You* want to convert me, perhaps?" said he at last, derisively.

"I am not thinking of that. I only say what is true. And when you tell about Jesus, you tell that

He blessed little children, and would not cast stones at the adulteress—"

"And He drove out with scourges all those who profaned His house, and cried, woe! woe! over those who expected to enter the kingdom of heaven merely by saying, Lord! Lord! whose houses were built upon the sand."

Kari grew calmer as the priest waxed more intense. "I do not wish to quarrel with you, priest. I only know that I have been baptized, and in baptism I was made a child of God; and then the priest promised me salvation through the faith I professed, and prayed that the peace of God might be with me. In that faith will I live and die, and that peace will I have."

"That is precisely the peace I offered, good woman," said the priest, "but it does not harmonize with fiddling."

"Ay, *for Torgeir* it does harmonize with fiddling; all that is good is bound up with fiddling in him. And therefore, I beseech you, do not destroy our household peace,—do not cause him to change from a worthy man to a miserable wretch."

"I must answer to God for every soul in this His fold," said the priest, solemnly; "it is not for me to make distinctions among people. Have you anything more to say?"

"No, I have not. But do you not think that you are assuming a grave responsibility, priest?"

"That is my business, and not yours," answered the priest, in a hard tone.

Kari left. A long while afterward the priest was heard pacing the floor with a heavy step, and talking aloud to himself.

When Torgeir came home again Kari tied up his scrip, and said: "Now you must go out, Torgeir, and pick up something for the house. This is no longer the place for a man like you. And meanwhile I will look after things at home."

CHAPTER VIII.

WITH a heavier heart than now Torgeir had seldom made a journey. It was no doubt a fact, that whenever he was at home in his own house, with Kari for his constant companion, he felt free and happy again. Her strong faith and her calm manner strengthened him. But when he was alone the words of the priest came back to him. That hour at the wedding-feast had been such a terrible one that it was not easily forgotten. It gave Torgeir a misgiving that some evil would befall him on his trip. He who had such strong desire to be at home was now no longer allowed to remain there. It seemed to him as though he were now beginning a long, sorrowful life. Hitherto it had been only sunshine, happiness and peace. On the mountains, thoughts came rushing in upon him so overwhelmingly that he was glad to turn his steps homeward. When, after this, he walked with his fiddle-box on his back through the rocky waste, the mountain peaks lifted their angry heads before him in the mist, and he thought of Sylvfest and his family, whom the Lord had wiped out of the earth because they had sinned. He got as far down as to the spruce forest. There he seated himself on a log and wiped the sweat from his face. Should he go home and begin a new life,

and labor with his hands, like all the rest in his parish? But what then should become of Kari and the little boy? They must have food and clothing, and he was not such a good workman that people would be likely to employ him much. No, he would have to keep his fiddle; and if it was true, as Kari said, that it was his calling in life to be a fiddler, there could be no sin in it. Thus he sat revolving these things in his mind. Then he sighed, placed his fiddle-box again on his back, and pushed onward. He went from gard to gard where he had formerly been a welcome guest. Now he dared not so much as go in and ask for a bowl of whey. The parish was purified from all that was impure, and he was the impure that must be swept out. And now he was actually taking flight.

This deep melancholy hung over him until he came over the mountain, down into the neighboring parish. Here there was more space; it was easier to breathe; the people were more friendly. Now he must press forward; he could not return. It was soon heard that Torgeir, the fiddler, had come to the parish, and people vied with one another to get hold of him. Torgeir heard the old tone in his fiddle; the happiness it created about him did him good, and he earned money. And it seemed as though memories from home roused him to cast all his power and strength into his playing. People should hear that it was this he was made for, and nothing else.

One day there came word to him from the district judge to come up to his house, for there was a stranger there who wanted to talk with him. He must bring his fiddle with him. When he reached the judge's house he was shown into the sitting-room, and there sat a stranger talking with the ladies. He was a tall and straight man, with a pair of lively, sparkling eyes, and a genial smile about the mouth. As Torgeir entered he sprang from his seat. "Ah!—so this is the master fiddler! Well, now, you must play for me; for I too am a fiddler." Torgeir looked at the man. Who and what could he be, he wondered. He took his fiddle from its box, and asked for a stool,—for that was what he was accustomed to sit on,—and then he began to play. "Bravo! bravo!" cried the stranger, and clapped his hands. "More! more!" And Torgeir played "The Northfjording."

"Did you make that yourself?" asked the stranger.

"No, I did not," said Torgeir.

"Then play something of your own," begged the stranger.

Torgeir became embarrassed. "You shall have the 'Forcegrim,' said he. And he began to play the 'Forcegrim.'" And now it seemed as though there had come life into his arms. He could not stop; one tune blended into another, and at last he burst into the "Kari Melody"—the force, the mountain, the rushing of the stream, home, and her who

had rung him out of the mountains with the church-bells.

The stranger sat there as one entranced. As the last stroke of the bow sounded he sprang up, darted forward, and grasped Torgeir by both shoulders. "Ah, but this is matchless! Has anything like this ever been heard before!" And he turned to the others: "It is this natural expression, this strong under-current, this sighing and rustling of forest and force,—I could never get it; never, were I to study for a hundred years. How old are you?"

"Thirty years."

"And have you taught yourself?"

"My father taught me, and he learned of his father. We have been fiddlers as long as the family can remember."

"And to think you must go about here in a peasants' parish, and only play at weddings and dances!—oh, it is too bad! You must go out into the world. Have you never thought of going out into the world?"

"No, I cannot say I have. I do not think I can become a better fiddler than I am."

"Ha ha! Yes, you can become a better one. Come, bring me my fiddle. Now I shall play for you." And his own instrument was brought to him. Torgeir gazed at him in wonder. Such a fiddle as that he had never seen before. The delicately fashioned instrument was so finely polished that it sparkled like a mirror.

"Who and what are you — if I may ask?" said Torgeir.

"My name is Ole Bull. Have you ever heard of him?"

Torgeir opened wide his eyes. "What! are you really Ole Bull! Well, I should think I had heard of him!"

And Ole Bull played. It was the "Sæterbesög."* He wove into it old tunes and folk-songs,—now tearful, now ringing with laughter. Torgeir's mouth opened wider and wider, his eyes grew more and more bright and large, and when Ole Bull drew the last stroke he sat there speechless, staring at him. His hands were clasped about the head of his instrument, and a tear came trickling down into his lap. And Ole Bull struck up a new strain. It was a wail, the prayer of one in distress, and tears were mingled with the prayer, and sorrow was dissolved into tones.† Tears streamed down Torgeir's face; he thought of himself. It seemed as though the ice about his heart was melting — as though a great weight was being removed. Now no one should come and say that music was the work of the devil.

Then Ole Bull drew the bow across the strings with a long, lingering stroke, and he had finished.

"Well, what do you think of my playing?" said he.

* "Visit to the Mountain Pasture," one of Ole Bull's most popular compositions.— Tr.

† No doubt this refers to Ole Bull's well-known composition, "The Mother's Prayer."— Tr.

"I did not believe any mortal could play like that," answered Torgeir, quite pale.

"Would you like to play so? Will you go abroad with me?" asked Ole Bull. "It is rather late, but still it may do."

Torgeir looked at him so wonderingly; then he said: "Hm — I suppose you are making fun of me now!"

"No, I am in earnest," said Ole Bull. "In about a week from to-day I start from this place. Then you can meet me here. I shall pay all expenses. This is a genius," he whispered at the same time to the judge; "it would be a pity for him to be buried up here. If Norse music is ever to attain its proper place in the world of art, it is just such people as this Torgeir who must develop it."

Torgeir felt as though he were uplifted from the earth. The mountains sank from view; the clouds burst, and he looked out over a broad, sunny land. There he saw his life's path marked out from this day forth. Then suddenly there came rushing into his mind Kari, the little home, the child. There passed a cloud before the sun.

"I have a wife and child," he said quietly.

"We shall not forget them," said Ole Bull. "If you will come into town with me, you shall play at my concerts, and you shall earn a hundred dollars an evening as easily as you now earn three dollars."

"Is that really so!" said Torgeir, with glittering

eyes. "God bless you!" And, crossing the floor, he kissed Ole Bull's hand.

"And now we will all put something into Torgeir's fiddle; out with your purse, if you please, judge — and you too!" he said to the ladies. They laughed and hesitatingly produced their pennies, and Ole Bull put in a blue bank-note.* Tears of joy came into Torgeir's eyes; he went round, took each one by the hand, and gave thanks.

"And now I must go home right away and tell my wife of this," said he.

"Yes, go; and meet me here on the day I said, punctually; do not forget it."

"No indeed, I shall not forget."

So light of foot as now Torgeir had not been since the day when he was on his way home to ask Kari to be his wife. He rather ran than walked. He shouted and sang as he went up through the woods. When he got up on the mountain ridge he had to rest a little. He sat down on a moss grown stone and took out his fiddle. He played a bridal march. It was his young life's happiness; he was taking his bride to the church. His fiddle did not seem to sound right up there; he looked at it and drew his bow across the strings — no! Then he laid it down in the box again. "This is nothing but boy's play," said he. "Never will I touch the fiddle again before I can play like Ole Bull."

* Five dollars.— TR.

He came running in to Kari so unexpectedly that she was startled. She was stirring the porridge.

"Well, I am no longer worth anything as a fiddler, Kari," said he, and flung his fiddle-box on the bed. "Ugh! I have walked myself all into a sweat."

Kari looked at the smiling face; she could not make it accord with his words. "What kind of a priest has been preaching to you now, Torgeir?" said she.

"Ay, it was Ole Bull this time; I have heard Ole Bull!"

"Why, you don't say so — do you?"

"Yes indeed; and you never heard anything like it. It was as if the birds were singing in the tree tops; and then the girls came to the pasture,—it was still early in the morning; and then they let loose the cattle, and you heard the bell distinctly, and the herdboys calling to one another with their loors; and then the fiddler came strolling along with his fiddle, and struck up a tune, and the milkmaids laughed and danced; and the stranger came sauntering that way with his knapsack, and sat down by the hearth and told them stories and sang to them — Oh, you never heard anything like it all the days of your life. And the high tones were so sweet you could have tasted them, and the low ones were so round you could roll them along the floor."

"But he cannot come up to you, Torgeir, when you play the 'Forcegrim,' I am sure."

"Well, I should say he could; you just ought to have heard him! I am a mere boy to him. It seems to me as if I get nothing but squeals and whines out of my fiddle now. And I understand it so well. There was always something wanting in my tunes — something I could not bring out as I had it in my mind. And now it seems to me that I have never brought out anything. But he brought it out; he gave expression to all the thoughts that have so long been oppressing me, and that I did not know how to set free myself, and now I am to learn to do this too."

"I think you are splendid as you are, I do, Torgeir."

"Ah, but I shall be more splendid, you see; I shall be so splendid that even the priest shall dance when he hears my music. For do you know what he said, Kari?"

"Well?"

"He asked me if I would go with him to foreign lands and learn, and said he would pay all the expenses."

Kari grew quite pale. "That cannot be possible, I know."

"Yes, you may depend upon it; for I was a genius who must be brought out, said he, even though I was pretty old."

"I knew, myself, long ago, Torgeir, that you were extraordinary."

"For there is no use in staying here, you see, where one only crawls in a circle about himself."

"And you accepted the offer?"

"I said I must first talk with you and get ready. What do you think about it, Kari?"

Kari looked straight before her. She saw herself sitting alone in the long winter evenings — she saw herself toiling and striving to earn a livelihood for herself and the boy.

"There is but one thing to think," she said, quietly. "Go, in God's name; I shall be able to care for myself and the child."

"No indeed; I never would leave you in such a beggarly way as that. See here you have something to begin with." And he laid before her all that he had earned on the way. "And then I was to go to the city, said he, and earn a hundred dollars an evening, as easily as I now earn three; and all this I will send home to you."

Tears came into Kari's eyes. "No, that is too much," said she. "God is good to us, and now light is coming to you, too, Torgeir. Now you surely will no longer doubt that you were made for a fiddler."

"No, I do not doubt it; and I shall play and I shall make tunes. It seemed to me that melodies came rushing over me as I listened to him."

In due time Torgeir set forth. His provision-scrip was well stored for the journey. He had his best jacket on, and a pair of new shoes. Torgeir was so full of all the great things awaiting him that the

parting was not so very hard for him. Kari strove to swallow her tears as she stood with the boy in her arms on the threshold and watched him go down the slopes, lithe and gay; then she dropped down on the doorstep and wept aloud. Yet she thanked God for everything, and prayed earnestly for her Torgeir.

All went well until Torgeir reached the mountain ridge; then there set in so dense a fog that he could not see his hand before his eyes. Torgeir thought he could find his way nevertheless, but, though he went on and on, he did not reach any human habitation. He saw that nothing remained for him but to pass the night on the mountains, and patiently wait for the fog to lift. Food in plenty he had with him, and he could easily make a fire with the juniper-wood. So he sat down and waited. Late in the morning the fog was still heavy, and Torgeir looked around on every side to see if he could make out where he was. He must start now if he would not be too late. He started off haphazard, until he felt quite sure. Then the fog broke, and he found his way. He had been going round in a circle, and working his way north instead of south. Now he had come to a sequestered valley, and it was impossible to get through in time.

As though life itself were concerned, Torgeir dashed forward, with his fiddle-box on his back and choking with tears. All dripping with perspiration,

and so tired that he could scarcely stand, he reached the judge's.

"Ay, now you have come too late. Mr. Bull started a good hour since. He waited for you until the last possible moment.'

It seemed as though Torgeir would sink into the ground. "Where did he go?" he stammered.

"To Italy."

"Is that far away?"

"Yes; first through many parishes, then over a great sea, and then across many foreign lands."

Torgeir had to cling to the doorpost.

"But it is doubtless the best thing for you after all, Torgeir," said the judge. "It is not so easy to get on in foreign lands, you see, and you are too old to begin to learn now. You could never endure all the struggling and trouble, and you would grow very homesick."

"Yes, that I should," whispered Torgeir, as white as a sheet.

"What! are you fainting?" cried the judge, alarmed.

"I ran too fast," said Torgeir. "It does not matter; I shall soon be all right again. Ay,—Ay! farewell; I thank you for your information."

Torgeir tottered out through the door. The judge stood watching him from the window. "Poor fellow! It was a pity for him," he said, and went into his office.

Torgeir made his way to the barn. The door

stood open. He went in and cast himself down on the hay. How long he lay there he did not know. There was a buzzing in his ears, a mist before his eyes; he could not weep. Life's happiness, his future,—all lost, wrecked. After he had reflected awhile, he sprang up, seized his fiddle, and felt like dashing it to pieces against the wall. He had already lifted it up, but he could not destroy it. He only threw it away from him, cast himself down, and buried his face in the hay.

CHAPTER IX.

THREE weeks after that day, an acquaintance from the mountains dropped in to see Kari. After they had exchanged greetings and chatted awhile, and the man was about to take his leave, he said: "You must look after your husband, Kari; he seems to be in a very bad way."

Kari dropped what she had in her hands. "He has not started on his journey?" asked she.

"No, he is reeling about drunk nearly every day from gard to gard down in the parish."

In the twinkling of an eye there rose up before Kari all that had happened. She got up at once, did up some food in a bundle, and started off. When she had crossed the mountains she set to work to find traces of her husband. She made inquiries from gard to gard, and found him at last in a barn. There he lay, pale and weak, looking almost as though he were asleep. She threw herself over him: "Torgeir, Torgeir, have I found you at last?"

Torgeir roused up: "Is that you, Kari? Do not come near me, I am not worthy of you!"

"Ah, do not talk so, Torgeir! See, here is your little boy!"

"Do not let him touch me. Do you know, I have been staggering about among the gards like a

common drunkard; and God knows how long this might have gone on if you had not come. And to think that you did come!—to think that you did come!"

"See here, Torgeir; get up now and take a little food. Then we will go home, and all will be well again," said Kari, and she tried to help him up.

"Ah no, it will never be well again! I am mountain-taken, Kari,—spell-bound by the evil powers. My last hold is gone; I shall never escape; I am lost." And Torgeir's head sank into his wife's lap.

Kari stroked his hair, while the little boy nestled up to his mother and looked wonderingly into her face.

"You should have come home to me at once, Torgeir," said she.

"I could not; I was ashamed both before you and the boy, and before all the world. It seemed to me that I wanted to put an end to myself."

"How well I understand that! And then you had to take to drinking to get strength to forget and strength to play."

"Why—do you understand that, Kari? O my God! do you understand that?" said Torgeir, and raised his head again. "Yes; you see, when I drink I get so excited and raving that I see everything as great and strong as though I were dreaming, and then I grow daring, and then I can play; the rest of the time my playing is mere trash. But it is a sin; that I know, and I am ruining myself with it."

"It is only while you are in such distress, Torgeir; when you grow calmer, and everything falls into the old routine, you will not want to drink. All fiddlers do not drink,—Ole Bull does not drink!"

"No; that is because he has mastered his art; but I shall never reach that point,—I am too old, folks say. So I must drink if I am to play. And therefore you must burn my fiddle, Kari, for I am not fit for it,—or hide it so that I can never see it any more. My fiddle is at the bottom of all my ill luck."

"Well, well, we can talk it all over on the way," said Kari.

"And then I shall begin a new life, and try to become a respectable man. And you must not be ashamed of me, Kari."

"That I have never yet been, Torgeir," said she.

"Ah, you are so good — so good. If it had not been for you I should have been a wreck long ago. And you are the only one who understands me."

Kari took him by the hand; then she placed the boy on his back, and took the fiddle-box herself, and they wended their way homeward.

Kari saw that Torgeir was in earnest this time — that he really did not want to see the fiddle; so she hid it away in a press, of which she alone had the key, and she ceased to speak of it to him. Torgeir offered his services as a mower, but no one cared to employ him. They knew of old that he was not good for much as a workman. At last he got work for twelve

pence a day and board. Indeed, all went pretty well the first few days, and then he gave out. In the midst of his mowing he would suddenly stop and, scythe in hand, stand gaping about him. The others pointed at him and laughed. They did not know that Torgeir saw visions — that he heard strains of music in the air. Soon the saying, "to work like Torgeir, haymaker," became proverbial, when any one was wretchedly slow and worthless. Torgeir grew mopish and melancholy. It seemed as though they were shutting him out from this, too, and it was the only thing he had to take hold of; for the fiddle he would have nothing more to do with, he was fully determined upon this. He could not understand, though, how the little he earned held out; but Kari understood it. She sat up of nights sewing and knitting; in the daytime she spun when she had finished her housework and had looked after the cows. But Torgeir did not know this. When he was at home she was always at work by the hearth, singing softly to herself, and Torgeir got new courage when he saw how easy everything seemed to Kari.

There was one thing more Torgeir did not know, and that was, that Kari took out the fiddle whenever he was well out of the way and gave it to little Jon. "Now you must try, little Jon, to be as good a fiddler as your father," said she, and the child took the fiddle and began to scrape away. But the fiddle was so large and heavy that he had to rest it on the floor, and take hold of the middle of the bow. His mother

taught him how to place his fingers, for she remembered the right way from the time when she had tried to learn, and it was not long before he could play all the tunes and cradle-songs his mother sang to him of evenings.

A long time passed in this way, and Torgeir grew gloomier every day. He sighed so heavily as he sat there on the bench. Then it chanced on a Sunday morning that Kari came to him with the fiddle in her hand. "Will you not please play the Sunday psalm for me?" said she, calmly.

Torgeir looked at her and slowly took the fiddle. He held it awhile in his hands, and then finally took the bow. He struck up the psalm, and then another, and then he got lost in his music. One tone glided into another; he no longer knew what he was playing. Kari sat on the bedside and listened, and the little boy lay on the floor in front of his father, staring in blank amazement at Torgeir's fingers, watching how swiftly they moved. Torgeir played without stopping until noon; then Kari went over and took the fiddle from him. "Now we will put it away for awhile again," said she. Then Torgeir bent his head over the table and wept.

One day he happened to come home unexpectedly, and saw the little boy standing on tiptoe on a stool, trying to reach something in the press. "What are you after here?" said Torgeir, harshly.

"The fiddle," stammered the boy, and trembled in alarm.

"I will teach you to touch that fiddle!" said Torgeir, as he snatched the child from the stool and shook him.

"Mother says that I must grow up to be as good a fiddler as you," faltered little Jon.

"What is the matter?" said Kari, coming in at that moment from the stable.

"You are not bringing the boy up in this deviltry?" said Torgeir.

Kari did not answer; she only calmly took the fiddle down from the press and gave it to the boy. "Now you must show your father how nicely you can do," said she, and thereupon the boy began to play "Kom Kalven til Guten, kom Kua til Mo'r." *

Torgeir recognized the bowing he had had himself as a little boy. He went over and struck the fiddle out of the child's hands. Kari was very angry, and it was the first time Torgeir had seen her so. "Are you not ashamed, Torgeir," said she, "to act so? When you cast away the best thing you possess, it is no more than the boy's duty to take it up again. And if God has shown us that he is to be a fiddler, he shall be a fiddler."

"Do you not think it is enough to be tormented with one such as I?" answered Torgeir. "Shall we bring up our only son to the same ill luck?"

"Do use your wits, Torgeir," said Kari. "As far back as any one can remember there have been fiddlers in your family, and no one ever heard of their

* Come Calf to the Boy, Come Cow to the Mother.

being unhappy. The parish has been proud to have you in it, until this priest came with his new notions. And you have never had ill-luck, Torgeir, in your whole life, and it is ungrateful in you to say so. Do you not remember how you went roaming over the hills, as a boy, with your fiddle? Do you not remember the first years we were married — in fact, until the priest came — how happy you were; and how good you thought it was to be able to play when we lost our little girl; and how it lightened your heart, you said? And then the Sunday evenings on the pleasure-grounds! Ay, Torgeir, you have had many good hours that you ought to thank the Lord for."

"But they did not see what I now see; neither my father, nor all of those who went before," said Torgeir. "Do you think I have less desire to play the fiddle than I used to have? When I touch the strings it seems as though my fingers were burning, but the flames that start up with forked tongues along the strings are of hell-fire. Now my eyes are anointed with eyesalve."

"That eyesalve you would do well to send back again to the priest," replied Kari, calmly. "No, fate has dealt roughly with you, Torgeir, and you were too weak to resist it — that is what is the matter. Your misfortune is not that you are a fiddler, but that you have higher aims and greater longings than the rest, without means of carrying them out. You ought to have gotten away from here before, Torgeir. But

if you became too old, our son shall not, and what we must strive for is to make a master of him. For a fiddler he is born, and a fiddler he shall be. He is not full of restlessness, as you are; he is calmer and deeper. He shall reach the goal of your dreams."

Torgeir stood leaning against the side of the hearth, his heart beating violently. He hurried out, without saying a word.

A few months passed by and winter had come. The first snows had already appeared on the mountain tops. Torgeir had been so gloomy of late that Kari felt heartsick. She could not help stealing after him whenever he went toward the force; she was afraid that he would cast himself into it. He often stood gazing into the force, or sat down below the mill where he had dreamed his happiest melody; but he always ended by going his way quietly. Kari knew that life among the people of the parish wore on him, and that every day the priest's curse was called up afresh. She knew they were trying to convert him; but she was powerless, she would have to submit.

Then it happened, one morning, that when she awakened Torgeir was gone. She had worked so late the night before that she slept heavily, and had not heard him get up. With palpitating heart she sprang out of bed, and was about to hasten to the force. Then she saw the boy sitting on the floor, crying. "Mother, the fiddle is gone!" Kari tore open the press-door. Yes, it was gone; and the bow, and the fiddle-case, too. "Thank God! It is your father who

has taken the fiddle," said she. "He will surely come back by-and-by."

"But then I cannot play."

"Hush my boy, mother will find a way." And thereupon Kari brought out Torgeir's child's fiddle. "See, you shall have this fiddle; and mother will go to the store to-day and get new strings for it."

The winter was far gone, and Torgeir had not returned. Kari was not anxious about him. So long as he had the fiddle she knew there was no danger. If he could only keep from drinking! That winter Kari learned what it was to be a widow and be left without support. But she asked nobody for help, nor did she complain. On the contrary, if any one called on her she seemed to be so contented with everything, and she always had a cup of milk to offer, and her room was always neat and tidy. But that winter Kari might often be seen drawing the heavy sled over stumps and stones. The rope was fastened about her shoulders, and a little half-frozen lad, with thick woolen mittens on his hands, was pushing behind. She had been to the wood after fuel. No one would have predicted this of rich Sylvfest's step-daughter. Every pound of meal and every grain of salt she carried or drew home. The people of the parish thought she was a brave woman; but it would be almost a sin to help her, for she it was who kept her husband on the broad way; she was his greatest misfortune; had it not been for her he might, perhaps, have repented. This was what the priest said, at least. The priest

had wanted to talk with her several times after it had been reported that Torgeir had laid aside his fiddle, but she avoided him. Finally their good hearts got the better of the people, and one day Gudbrand Nedre-Bakken came driving up to the cottage with a load of wood, and Marit Lidheim sent a barrel of potatoes; but Kari must not mention it to any one. Kari was so pleasant over her work, so neat and handy and rapid; and they did not see but that she, too, said grace at table, and enjoyed taking part in the evening devotions; nor did she sing national patriotic songs or other nonsense when she was working out.

Near the middle of March Torgeir returned. He walked in quietly, flung down his fiddle-case, and said with a heavy sigh: "Well, the devil has kept me in the mountains awhile again, but now I think I can behave myself once more. You will have to put away the fiddle." Kari did not ask a single question about where he had been. In the evening he laid twenty dollars on the table. "See — here is something to pay for what you have gotten on credit while I have been gone," said he.

"The most of it is paid," answered Kari; "but still I may find some use for the money." Then she opened a drawer in the press, took out a handkerchief with many knots tied on it, and laid one ten-dollar bill carefully in it. Afterward she learned that Torgeir had been through many parishes and played. He had wanted to get all the way to Christiania, but it was too far. He had kept from drinking

for a long time; but then there would come over him spells of carousing when he had to compete with the noted parish fiddlers. At such times he would have hours of bitter struggling and tears of repentance, and it was in one of these moments that he had suddenly turned and rushed home to Kari.

CHAPTER X.

TEN years! That may seem a brief period to him who dwells in sunshine and happiness, accomplishing his life's work peacefully and contentedly in a pleasant home; but to him who must struggle and toil,— to him who must watch unceasingly by night and by day,— to him who must contend with great aims, and strive to root out that which is best in him,— to him ten years is a long, long time!

Torgeir was no longer the elastic, happy fellow, with flashing eyes and merry songs. He was a sick, gloomy man; he walked with stooping shoulders and bowed head; he usually avoided people when he was at home; in his eyes there was a piteously wistful look; it was only now and then, when he took up his fiddle and wove himself into the web of tones, that his eyes regained the old glow. What most broke him down was the ceaseless strife between what he wished and what he felt compelled to wish. This strife was fresh every morning. He had to tell himself that the only thing he desired, and the only thing he was fit for, was to play the fiddle, and this was the very thing he must abstain from. It was a forbidden thing; our Lord had not given place to it in His kingdom. And in this devil's net-work he had

been entangled from the time he was a little child; now he was powerless to break its meshes.

He often thought of what his mother had said about going to work at something useful. It would have been the most sensible thing to be like all the rest: a beast with claws clutching everything within its reach, and gathering it for itself and those belonging to it; carefully locking its well-filled chests, and having besides the kind of piety that happened to be the fashion. If he now had all the dollars he had lent and given away they would be a good help to him.

Kari saw that it was useless to talk reason to Torgeir any longer. If he had nothing to oppose to what she said one day, and was quieted by it, there was the same despondency the next. Nevertheless she found it to be her duty to keep Torgeir's doubts and struggles alive; she feared that else he would lose his senses. Finally she tried another method; she read the Bible to him whenever she could find a suitable opportunity, and she always selected the most soothing passages. She especially read the epistle of John. And then she talked to Torgeir of God's great love for sinners. Torgeir sighed and answered: "Ay, those words are not for me." But he always longed to have her read, and sometimes asked her to do so. He would often say: "Yes, you explain it in that way; but the priest would explain it in another way; and he is learned, so he must know what is right."

One day she said to Torgeir: "Do you not think it would give you strength to go to the Lord's table?

It seems to me I have so strong a desire for it, that it cannot be right to keep away, even if the priest is offended."

Torgeir looked at her with bright eyes. "You surely cannot think it possible for me to go there!" answered he.

"God's table is for all who need God's mercy," said Kari.

Late in the evening she stood in the priest's study. "I want to enter my husband's name and mine for the sacrament next Sunday," said she.

"And so you have come at last," said the priest. "Has he at length laid aside the fiddle?"

"He lays it aside when he is frightened into doing so; but when it goes too badly with him, he takes it up again, and that eases his heart."

"Then he must wait until he can give up fiddling entirely."

"That he can never do."

"Then he can never come to the Lord's table."

"You are hard, priest."

"No fiddler shall come to the Lord's table so long as I am priest here, unless he repents."

"You have no right to close the kingdom of heaven to those who seek to enter."

"When the rich young man asked the way to the kingdom of heaven, Jesus said: 'Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor.' So your husband must sell his fiddle: God will have all or nothing."

When Kari sat down on the slope of the hill north

of the parsonage, all her strength seemed to give out. It was the first time it had happened in the parish that any one had been refused admittance to the Lord's table. Had they not been wholly shunned before, they certainly would be so now. She looked toward the church. Solemnly it stood there, its spire pointing heavenward. Kari gave way to convulsive weeping; but after it she was able to lift her soul in prayer to God; then she arose with strength to bear her cross. That evening she was even more mild than was her wont. She told Torgeir about the interview, but only said that the priest did not care to have them come, as he did not believe fiddling to be right.

"Was not that what I thought?" was all Torgeir replied.

If Torgeir grew gloomy and fretful, as he was the time he wandered away from her, Kari knew not what else to do than to take the fiddle, put it into his hands, and say: "Now, Torgeir, you will have to go out roving for a time; here you are growing ill both in body and soul." And Torgeir was like the pliant reed swaying to and fro before every wind; he went. First he played himself well; then he thought his playing did not amount to anything; then he straightened himself up with a drink, then with another, and ere he was aware of it he fell into his old habits of intemperance; then repentance burst upon him; he slung his fiddle across his shoulders and sought his way home to Kari, just as the little spar-

rows gather under the eaves seeking shelter from the storm. This story was as sure to repeat itself as the periodical return of the seasons.

Kari never let him perceive how this strain on her body and soul wore upon her. She had grown thin and old-looking of late. Torgeir once said: "I think you are wearing yourself out with toil, Kari."

"Ah, do not worry about me," she answered, laughing; "I have never yet been sick a day in my life."

It was not only the constant anxiety she felt for Torgeir that wore upon her, or the quarrel with the priest, who lost no opportunity of trying to capture Torgeir in his meshes; it was also the struggle for the necessaries of life. What Torgeir was able to earn was not enough, and she had to earn the rest; and she went out harvesting, she dug potatoes, and she spun for people as before.

There was one thing that sustained her during this long trying time, and that was the thought of Jon, her son. He should reach the goal his father had dreamed of — he should one day heal the father's deep heart-wound. When thoughts of her son became very vivid in her mind, Kari would go to the press, take out the knotted handkerchief, and count penny by penny to see how much her savings had increased. One might almost think that she had inherited her step-father's miserly nature.

Torgeir seemed to have given the boy entirely to Kari. He knew he was safe in her hands, even

though she did bring him up to the fiddle. So Kari could do with him as she pleased. She prayed over him every morning and evening, she took him in her lap and told him, not about hulders and trolls, but about our Saviour Jesus, and the Virgin Mary, about Adam and Eve in paradise, and about little Moses in his ark of bulrushes when the king's daughter found him in the flags by the river's brink. And little Jon took most delight in being with his mother. Kari had been right when she said that he was calmer and deeper than his father. He had inherited much of her character, but one thing he had from his father, and this was, that he had but little taste for reading, but a great deal for listening and fiddling. And Kari tral-la-ed his father's tunes for him while she sat spinning, and he worked away trying to find the notes on the fiddle. But when his father came home in the evening the fiddle was hid away, and the boy had crept into bed.

Now, when Jon got to be a growing youth he could be made useful in one way and another, and he accompanied his mother when she went out to work. Little Jon became quite a man with his fiddle. He sometimes saw his mother sit quietly weeping; then he would get close up to her, and she would tell him of her youth,— about how sprightly a young man his father had been; and her weeping and struggling and silent prayers became blended with and idealized in his playing.

When Jon was old enough to prepare for confirma-

tion, Kari arranged for him to read with the priest of the neighboring parish. He was to live at the parsonage and get his board for going on errands for the mistress of the house.

When Kari bid good-by to Jon, she whispered: "Your fiddle lies at the top in your scrip."

It had been Kari's custom to go every Saturday, during all these ten years, down to Nedre-Bakken's and ask to borrow "Almuevennen," and she read it from cover to cover. She had been so fond of reading before, that no one considered this strange. But one day she came home with sparkling eyes. She had found what she had been looking for these many years.

"Now Ole Bull is come to Christiania," said she, "and is to remain there for some time. Would you not like to make a short visit to town, Torgeir? And then Jon might go too." Jon had come home, and had grown to be a fine-looking youth. He was now sixteen years old. Torgeir started at the sound of the name; old memories streamed in upon him; he hid his face in his hands.

"How shall we poor creatures get money for that?" was the first thing he said.

Kari brought out the handkerchief with the six knots, and showed him twenty bright dollars.

"Where did you get them?" asked Torgeir, and opened wide his eyes.

"They are your drops of sweat and mine from

year to year," answered Kari. "With them we will build up our son's happiness, or we shall never do it."

There is nothing to be said about them before they reached the city. With staff in hand these three trudged from parish to parish, made inquiries in regard to the shortest road, and slept in barns and under old boats, as they had to save their pennies. Torgeir had his fiddle-case on his back, Jon carried the big provision scrip, Kari walked between them. The cool morning air, the sight of new parishes, and the fact of their being on a journey of adventure, brightened up Torgeir. It lightened his heart to get away from everything connected with home, and Kari could now easily control him.

When they reached the city they asked for Ole Bull's house. The people laughed and showed them the way to the hotel where he was staying.

Ole Bull was not a little startled when a rather elderly peasant-woman unceremoniously entered his room, leading a man by each hand, and that so early in the morning that he had not yet arisen. She stepped over to the bed.

"Are you Ole Bull?" asked she.

Yes, that he was.

"Ten years ago you promised to take this man of mine with you to foreign lands, but Providence interfered and he did not go. Now I come to-day with my son, and ask if you will take him."

Ole Bull looked astounded at Torgeir; he had never seen a man change so much in so short a time.

But suddenly he remembered the whole circumstance.

"Are you Torgeir? — was it you I waited for at the judge's nearly half a day?" asked Ole Bull.

"It was; the fog interfered so that I could not get through; and so I suppose I was too old, and that it was my son who was to accomplish what I failed to attain. But I tell you that playing of yours was dear, that time; for before then I believed I was the master, but after that day it seemed as if my fiddling was mere stuff and nonsense. And if a man cannot get further on than that, he had better dash his fiddle to pieces, for then it is nothing but a devil's tool."

Kari stopped her husband, and Ole Bull said: "Ah, you shall yet be a man, Torgeir; but now you must play a little for me, both you and your son."

Torgeir gave the fiddle to Jon, and he sat down. Ole Bull looked at the boy's deep eyes and dreamy expression while he sat tuning his strings. Then he played "Ifjor gjætt' eg Gjeiti,"* and "Aa Ola, Ola, min eigen Unge,"† and others of the most melancholy, plaintive popular airs; and he ended with a psalm his mother had taught him. There was such a deep, tearful, singing tone in his fiddle that old Torgeir was completely transported. Tears came into his eyes, and he gazed at his son. "I did not think you were such a man, Jon," said he.

* Last year I tended goats.—Tr.

† Oh Ole, Ole, my own child!—Tr.

Ole Bull only lay there and nodded. "He can be made use of; he is the man," said he.

Then Torgeir must try. He dashed off a few tunes; then he flung down his fiddle. "Give me a drink, then I will play," said he; "else my playing will be mere trash."

"Then we had better wait," said Kari, and looked imploringly at Ole Bull.

"You are still matchless," said Ole Bull; "you are like the force, you are; but your son is like the mountain lake."

"That is precisely so," said Kari.

"Listen now; I am to give a concert here on Friday; then you shall play with me, Torgeir," said Ole Bull.

"But Jon?" asked Kari.

"He shall wait," said Ole Bull. "And now you may come here again at three o'clock to-day; then you can eat dinner with me, and I shall be able to talk further with you."

Friday came. Torgeir was to play. He had not slept all night; his hands were bathed in perspiration. With a fluttering heart he came to Ole Bull. "You must pour something strong into me, or I shall faint," said he. Ole Bull brought him some champagne, and Torgeir emptied glass after glass, as though it were a cooling drink. It seemed to him so sweet and good, and such wine he had never seen before. He forgot all his timidity and became quite brave.

When Kari came leading him into the hall, there was a shouting and clapping of hands that shook the house. But Torgeir heard nothing. Kari had seated him on a stool and placed the fiddle in his hands; and now he was sitting by the force at home. And then he played. It was as though all of Torgeir's dammed-up energies broke through the flood-gates and overflowed. It was a springing and leaping, a soughing and roaring, an unrest and a chase, as when the force dashes down from the mountain, crushing into atoms everything before it; and the fiddler's heel beat the floor like the clatter of the mill-wheel. And one tune glided into the other like the cogs of wheel-work, and onward it went with ceaseless motion. Then Ole Bull gave a sign, and Kari, who saw it, laid her hand on Torgeir's strings. He stared vacantly at her, and followed her passively. Then there burst forth a storm of shouting and applause. Torgeir and his wife had to show themselves once — twice — before the applause would die away.

During the rest of the evening Torgeir lay behind the scenes and wept; for now he heard Ole Bull's playing once more, and it was, if possible, even finer than before. He played the same pieces as that time at the judge's. But Kari stood looking at his tall, straight, lithe figure; how firm and perfectly easy his attitude was, and how gracefully he wielded his bow; and she thought: "Wonder if *that* is the way Jon is to look when he gets that far?"

The next day Ole Bull asked Kari to come up and see him. He held something in his hand. "I promised your husband a hundred dollars ten years ago," said he; "here they are. But you must manage to get him away from here; in this place he will be ruined. Your son I shall care for. He will become a great artist."

Kari could scarcely suppress her tears sufficiently to say "Thank you!" She kissed Ole Bull's hand. "God bless you!" was all she could say.

It was easier said than done, this getting Torgeir away from the city. The Christiania people fought for him. It was just at the time when enthusiasm for everything Norse had been awakened,—when they were beginning to make collections of Spring-dances and Hallings, popular airs, staves and ballads. This was something new; it was the first time a peasant fiddler had been in town. Now they took him from place to place; they wanted to write out his tunes in notes. They invited him to dinner parties and to evening parties; they proposed toasts to him, and drank his health. They said he was one of those who was now founding the Norse school of music. Torgeir was completely bewildered by all this praise; he went about as one intoxicated from morning till evening. He had never thought it possible that people could be so kind. They offered him large sums of money if he would play at Klingenberg* and other places during the autumn. And Kari and Jon

* A theater in Christiania.—Tr.

had all they could do to get him out of the hands of all these people. But now he wanted to earn a new fiddle for his son, and provisions for the home journey. Ole Bull promised to help him on condition that he should leave the next day. The house was full to overflowing the evening Torgeir played. It was advertised that it was to be a benefit for his son. Torgeir played encircled with a halo of force-spray, and Jon's fiddle drew tears from the eyes of the people.

The next day Torgeir stood there with a fiddle in his hand, selected by Ole Bull himself, and with two hundred dollars, which he handed to his son. It was the proudest moment of his life. But Kari wept when she parted with her son, and was scarcely able to tear herself away from him. The last words she whispered to him were: "Promise me one thing, Jon,—you must not touch strong drink, and you must say the Lord's prayer morning and evening."

When Torgeir was on his way home with Kari, he said: "My playing is done, Kari; my son is now to commence. Henceforth there is nothing for me to do but to lie down and die."

CHAPTER XI.

FOR three years Jon studied abroad. His parents often received letters from him, and then they had a holiday in the little cottage by the force. He wrote about how many hours a day he had to keep sawing away at the scales, and how he never was allowed to play anything but exercises. "I should not have had patience for that," said Torgeir. And then he wrote about how frightfully people were given to drinking wine and beer, and especially the latter, but he never tasted either except at his meals. "It was a good thing I did not go down there; what do you think, Kari?" said Torgeir. And then he wrote about all the nice things he saw and heard; and when he began to talk about music, and how grand it was to be a fiddler, it seemed as though he could never say enough. Then Kari cast a glad smile at Torgeir, and saw how his eyes caught the old glow.

In fact, these two old people lived chiefly in the expectation of their son's return. When Torgeir came home that time from the city, his fame had preceded him. The newspapers were filled with eulogies on his playing. The parish people also stared at him, and he felt himself a foot taller than before. But the next Sunday the priest talked about

the Sodom and Gomorrah to be found in large cities, and how many simple-hearted people bit on the baited hook. The parish people thought of Torgeir.

Torgeir kept more at home than before, and was no longer so gloomy. The money he had earned in the city did so much, that they no longer had to work themselves to death. But he could not be induced to go out fiddling any more. His fiddle hung on a nail on the wall, and sometimes he would take it down and coax from it a few melodies, when Kari asked him to play; but that did not happen often, for he felt as it were a dread of it.

Toward the end of the third year Torgeir began to grow old and feeble. He often had to lie down, and then the old melancholy came over him. He sat long hours wrapt in his own reflections, but he said nothing to Kari. Kari inquired whether the parish people were annoying him again, but he only evaded the question. Torgeir was thinking whether his time had not come to prepare to die; and then, when in his fancy he stood on his own grave, the curse of the priest arose before him again like a dark, threatening cloud; the priest became an avenging angel of the Lord, who with flaming sword had driven him out of paradise. Torgeir did not sleep at night; he lay turning and twisting in restless dreams. The priest's words—"Thou art spued out of His mouth!"—rested like a nightmare on his breast. He did not dare to accept the consolation Kari gave him. She meant it well, that he knew; but the very fact that

she thought so much of him made her blind in this matter. And now he must take the responsibility of his son, whom he had lured into the same path of error as he had himself followed. In his distress Torgeir thought of going directly to the priest and confessing to him, but he got no further than to the force; here it was, also, that he had been mountain-taken. When the priest saw that he could not succeed in winning Torgeir so long as Kari stood at his side, he talked with several of his friends among the parish people, and tried to get them to persuade him at least to come to church. Now, when they saw Torgeir growing feebler and more poorly every day, they gained more courage to make an attack on him. They asked him why they never saw him in church. He answered that Kari took no comfort there, and that he did not like to leave her. But then they began to preach to him, that he who now was so feeble should think of the great day of judgment, and, while there was yet time, seek the place where God was to be found.

The next Sunday Torgeir went to church. He had not been at home the night before, but had slept at one of the gards, where he had been working. When he crossed the threshold it seemed as though all the images in the church turned, and he thought of the ballad about Agnete and the merman. He who all his life had been in the mountain and did not want to get out, could well give them a shock of alarm. And then they struck up the psalm:

This is the day of grace;
To-day his God he gaineth
Who striveth; and a place
In His great heart attaineth.
Up! seek the better way,
And after Jesus soar;
But soon — heed what I say,—
To-day will come no more.

Oh, see how gloriously
The rays of God's salvation
Shine forth! Now let there be
No more procrastination.
Perchance thy hour may sound
Its final stroke to-day.
Here's balm for ev'ry wound;
Come, there is no delay.

Torgeir grew deathly faint, and everything began to swim before his eyes. He came tottering home, and dropped down on the bed. "Burn up my fiddle, Kari; burn it up, I say, or *I* will have to burn through all eternity!" Kari endeavored to talk him to reason, but then Torgeir sprang up out of bed, snatched the fiddle from the nail, and flung it into the fire. Kari stood there shocked; it sounded to her like the wailing of infant voices as the strings snapped in the flames. But Torgeir lay there with clenched hands and watched how the tongues of fire licked the dry wood. When the last red coal was extinguished, he grew calmer. "I have been a fool, Kari; mine has been a wasted life; I wonder whether there still is time to repent?"

Kari did not answer; she only wept. Now she, too, believed that Torgeir's end could not be far off. She only kept longing to get a letter from Jon before his father died; it was he who now had the greatest influence over him.

For several days Torgeir lay still. He gazed before him with a fixed stare, as though he saw visions. His lips moved, but Kari did not hear a word. One day he said: "I wonder whether there is room in the kingdom of heaven for one who has been a fiddler?"

"There is room for every sinner who believes in Jesus Christ, whether he be a fiddler or a priest," answered Kari.

"No, do not say that,—do not say that, Kari!" exclaimed Torgeir, in alarm. "You nourish the old doubts in me. And still the visions pursue me—I hear tunes in the air. There was no need of burning up my fiddle; I am still in the mountain, and will never be released!" And Torgeir buried his head under the down coverlet. Kari laid her hand on him and consoled him as well as she was able; but he thrust from him her words of comfort. "You must run after the priest, Kari!" said he at last; "he has such a powerful voice, he can surely drive out the black devils." Kari rose. Should she go? Hitherto she had managed the struggle for his life's calling, and had the upper hand. Should she now lose her last hold? Should he die with a curse over the best there had been in his life—with a curse over that

which the family had built up stone by stone even to him?

Then a strange, loud knock was heard at the door. Kari started, went to the door, and was just opening it when she stopped in surprise and then slipped out. A little while later she came in leading a handsome young man by the hand. He was clad like the town people, but carried his fiddle-case on his back, like Torgeir in days of yore. "He is very ill — your father," whispered Kari. "I am not sure that he will know us now. Oh, but sit down on the stool, Jon, and play for him your very best; then he will pass away in peace, perhaps." And Jon sat down quietly on the stool beside the bed and took up his fiddle. He gazed upon the strong, pale face lying in the bed; he remembered what his father had been, and what he had become; and then he began to play. The sick man opened his eyes. Was it a dream? The air was, as it were, laden with melodies; they were the melodies from Ole Bull's fiddle that time when all that was hard and cold melted, and when all that could weep did nothing but weep. And there was somebody sitting on the stool. Who was it? There came the "Forcegrim" reeling, and the "Kari-tune." Oh, that could only be one — it was he — his son; he had come to his father in his darkest hour and borne him on the wings of song into the land of light and peace. For it was Torgeir's whole life that the son conjured up, — not blundering and coarse and rough, as Torgeir had himself played

in the old days on his fiddle. No; these tones were so soft, so melting, that weeping and wailing and bursts of gladness were all blended together. And Torgeir's mind wandered back to the home of his childhood; he saw his father sitting on the wood-chopper's block with a cutty in his mouth, and nodding to him; he saw himself sitting on the hay-mow fiddling so the hay-makers forgot their work; he saw all the hills and hillocks where he used to ramble as a boy, with his fiddle; and he joined the parish gatherings on the pleasure-grounds; and the parish was set free from the clutches of the troll that held it spell-bound, and became again kind and gentle as a child; and he moved among them, leading Kari by the hand, proud and happy; then all nature came bounding toward him, offering itself to be woven into his tunes. There came the sighing of the streams and the soughing of the woods; there came the goat and the colt; there came the anemone and cowslip; and up on the very brink of the force sat the Forcegrim himself, and the sun still shone on the golden crown and on the white beard; and up on the mountain-top Kari came walking along,— not gray-haired and careworn, as now; no,— young and bright; and flowers sprang up in her footprints, and the church-bells rang wherever she went; and he no longer lay in the mountain; no,— he lay beside the mill, in the midst of God's beaming sunshine, and all living things came and thanked him who had woven them into his tunes. But then the tones began to mount

upward. They dashed against one another like foaming billows, and they seethed like roaring waters, and through all there was a weeping as when the breakers dash against the rocky shores on moonlight nights. How well he knew it! It represented the gloomy years of his manhood,—the strife, the doubts, and the sin; the hours of repentance with tears and prayers, and cries to the Saviour for help in his great agony. But now his son gathered up all his gloom and sorrow into a flood of melody, and carried him into God's own bosom without asking leave of any one. They were psalm-tunes that now were played,—songs of praise to God, thanksgiving for all his struggles and sufferings; and they seemed to Torgeir to swell like organ-tones through the room. And the mountain walls burst asunder, and the roof was lifted, and he was in a church; and angels in white robes fluttered through the room; he heard the rustling of their garments as they floated through the air, and above him and around him he saw numberless faces of little children; and the room was filled with melody and song, so that at last he did not know whether they came from his son, or where they came from. But to the Lord be praise and thanksgiving! there was salvation to be found for a sinner who yearns for God. His had not been a wasted life; music had entered into a covenant with God and His angels,—was created in God's honor; and it was only *he* who had betrayed his calling—who had so sorely misused the great gift God had bestowed upon his

family. But now all was forgiven and forgotten in the name of Jesus, and his son should lift the stone that *he* had neglected to raise. He stretched out his arms, as though he saw something; he smiled; "Jesus Christ!" he exclaimed, and his spirit took its flight.

But mother and son stood by the bedside; they pressed close to each other, and wept tears of sorrow and of joy.

NOTE TO NEW EDITION.

SINCE this translation first appeared, Kristofer Janson has become a citizen of the United States. It has always been his aim to uplift the peasants of his native land into the genial atmosphere needed to develop their rich natural gifts. When a young graduate of the University of Christiania, he turned from the brilliant career that was open to him, to aid in establishing, in the parish of Gausdal, a school for the higher education of the peasant youth, in whom he strove to kindle an enthusiasm for all that was noble and good. The same spirit has led him, at the cost of many sacrifices, to take up his abode in America, where he sees a still larger field of usefulness among our Scandinavian settlers. Under the auspices of the American Unitarian Association, he has established a mission in Minnesota, with Minneapolis for his headquarters, and, in addition to his Sunday services, he gives his people frequent public readings and lectures, as well as home musical evenings, all of a nature to refine and cultivate the taste

for literature and art, and to enlarge the understanding. In short, he is engaged in a grand educational work, and is doing much to make valuable American citizens of these children of the North that are under his charge.

During the past few years Mr. Janson has published a series of lectures on his impressions of this country; a historical novel, called "Our Grandparents;" and a collection of hymns, many of them from his own pen. A recent tornado, through which he suffered severe losses, destroyed his manuscript of a story of western life, and other important works.

In conclusion, I would state that specimens of the popular songs and dances of Norway, the Hallings, Spring-dances, etc., referred to in this volume, besides two of the favorite melodies of Ole Bull, whose death the world has mourned since the publication of the "Spell-bound Fiddler," may now be found in the "Norway Music Album," edited and furnished with English text by Prof. R. B. Anderson and myself, and published by Oliver Ditson & Co., Boston.

AUBER FORESTIER.

ASGARD, MADISON, WIS.,
September, 1888.