

sleigh, and bring your company along safe; but I feared you might lose your way and perish this wild night."

"Don't say another word," said Carl. "You had better come into the sleigh and drive: you know the road better than I do, and I want to enjoy my cigar after all my fatigue. These horses are not so fresh as yours were, Eric. I suppose terror, poor brutes, has taken it out of them."

So Eric got into the sleigh, and the manservant who had been thrown out in the first encounter with the wolves, rode his horse back. Carl reclined lazily, and smoked a cigar, in spite of the snow and the raging wind; though it was not quite so bad when their backs were turned to it. Eric, with a heart bounding with joy, and every nerve tingling with emotion, leant towards the horses, and urged them on with voice and hand. They sprang forward as if imbued with his own energy. At the entrance of Stettin they met a party despatched to their help. Right glad they were to return, for it was almost impossible for men on foot to advance against such a storm.

CHAPTER III.

Arrived at the hotel, the bruised servant was led up-stairs, and got into bed. Carl and Eric, ushered by the landlord, found themselves in a room prepared for them, and with cigars and spirits on the table, and slippers by the fire, sat down to enjoy the repose they had well earned.

"Carl," said Eric, between the whiffs of the meerschaum he was smoking, "do you know who the ladies are whom we rescued to-night?"

"No," said Carl, knocking the ashes off his cigar with his finger. "I was just going to ask you." And he leant back in the deep arm chair, and stretched his feet out before the fire.

"I don't suppose you will ever guess. It is she!"

"Who?"

"The lady of the Sistine Chapel!" answered Eric; "my dream—my vision! I knew her at once as she stood there, her golden curls streaming in the wind, and her beautiful blue eyes raised to Heaven. As we came along, I think she recognized me."

"And what is her name?"

"I did not ask her. I must find out to-night."

"Not ask her name," said Carl, raising his eyes in astonishment. "What were you talking about so earnestly, that you forgot to ask her name?"

"Nothing," said Eric. "She said a great deal to me about taking her back, so that I might help you, and wait till you were ready to come back with us."

"Much obliged to her, I am sure, for taking such interest in me. And what did you say in answer to her proposal?"

"Nothing," said Eric.

"Nothing, Eric—nothing? What were you thinking about so intently, that you could not answer her?"

"I am not sure," said he, looking puzzled.

"Well, this must end in love, I should think, if it is not already begun," said Carl. "She must, out of pure gratitude, love the handsome knight who so gallantly came to her rescue, and is yet so daunted by her eyes that he cannot speak to her."

"I suppose it is fate," said Eric.

"And a very pleasant fate, my dear fellow, to fall in love with a beautiful girl, with the not improbable hope that she may return your affection. But I should like to know the name of your beautiful lady with the golden locks; let us ask the landlord."

"I never thought of that," said Eric.

"Of course not," returned Carl, laughing.

"Who ever heard of a lover doing anything half so matter-of-fact!"

The landlord now came in, followed by a waiter bearing a savoury supper. It seemed as if worthy Herr Wirkmann could not do honour enough to the young man who first rescued the ladies, and then braved the storm to go to the assistance of his friend.

"You seem to know the ladies we were so fortunate as to save from the wolves, best? Can you tell us who they are, and what are their names; and do they live in this neighborhood?" asked Eric, of the hospitable landlord, now busy superintending the placing of the supper on the table.

"Yes, noble sir," answered the host. "I believe they live at Strahlen; they are two sisters, the ladies Marie and Katrine von Mellinthen—at least, so my will told me, for we had not seen them before to-night—and they told my wife their name was Mellinthen, and there are no Mellenthens live nearer than Strahlen, and that is a good twenty leagues off!"

"Which is Marie?" asked Carl—"the lady with the golden curls?"