

adjusted his harp. "My fingers are stiff now," he said, "and my voice is feeble; but I will do my best, for my king still loves to listen to the voice of Eric." So saying, he struck his harp, and thus raised his song:

"Rest in peace among your mountains ye sons of the stormy Morven; pursue the boar of the desert ye dwellers of the mist. The youth of Pictavia are valiant, and many are our chiefs of fame. Brudus lifts the spear, and the mighty are no more. The arm of Varno is terrible; his battle-axe is the thunderbolt of heaven; a thousand ghosts shriek at the lightning of his steel. Rest among your mountains children of the mist, pursue the deer of Ardven, and listen to the songs of Selma. Why will ye come ruthless roamers of the desert? Our hatchet hangs high in our hall; our warriors pursue the fleet-bounding roe; our youth sit beneath the tree and whisper the tale of love; peace is in our fields and softly falls the dew of night. Do you come to the feast of joy, chiefs of the mountain land? They come, they come, but not to our halls of mirth. Gory are their swords, but not with the life-blood of the brave. Like wolves howling for their prey they rush upon the feeble in arms. Old men, groaning with years, sink beneath their steel. Fair, fair is the flower of the vale, but the blood of the virgin has dimmed its beauty. The mother shrieks for the child of her love; her home is desolate, and fire has laid waste the stately towers of her sires. The proud Scot triumphs over the feeble. Arise ye valiant; let the sons of Pictavia seize the spear. Brudus arose and called his chiefs to the combat. Forward sprung the bounding steed of Varno; loud rung his sounding mail. His terrible spear is in his hand, flaming like a meteor of night. Garnard is there, grey in his locks of age; but the arm of the brave is not weak; his father's sword is in his hand, the sword of the mighty Deril. Cuthel, and Combust, and Kennil, fierce in the strife of death, where are the weapons of your strength? Pursue ye the deer in the glens of Sidlaw, or hunt the doe in the woods of Morden? Are the maids of your love dearer than the shout of battle, or fairer than the sparkling of spears? But lo! they come, and terrible are the looks of the chiefs. Their bosoms are burning for war; forward they rush to the clashing of swords. No need to tell how the mighty fought; how Brudus and Varno fought; high shone the spear of Combust, the arrows of Cuthel flew thick. Awful was the sword of Garnard, and many were the deeds of Kennil. The Scot has fled to his hills of snow, to his home by the lonely lake. Rejoice, O Pictavia, in the might of thy sons."

The song having ceased, Brudus arose, and said:

"Noble warriors, bravely have you fought and gallantly vindicated our ancient renown; and princely would be your guerdon could Brudus reward your merits! Varno, what shall be thy meed? All that Brudus may give should be thine, for to you he owes life, crown and kingdom; choose ye now, chief of Castle Clatchart."

"I have had princely reward already," replied Varno;

"peace is again on our fields; my king commends my deeds; old warriors have said 'Well done;' and the poor have blessed me. What more needs Varno?"

"Nay, but more must be thine," said Brudus. "When gifts are given to the great in arms take thy lot; or who will accept should Varno refuse?"

"I have lands enough already and to spare," answered Varno. "The halls of Coltrach and its fair fields I give to Appin, my youngest hero; for many were his deeds of blood, and twice did the sword of the boy save the life of Varno. He that gives of his fulness without hurt needs not the gift of the generous."

"Nay, by my sword," cried the king, "such things must not be. Shall Varno fight for nought, and at the same time reward those who fight? If you receive not our gift, keep unimpaired your own broad fields, and be Appin's the meed of Varno. Where is the youth, and who are his sires?"

"The boy is a stranger," replied Varno. "He says his sire is worthy, and whits his sword on the helmets of Saxons. Though unable to hurl the spear, his bow is good; and, were his sire a villain, the youth did noble deeds. The brave always are noble. Appin keeps ward in Castle Clatchart."

Within an hour the budding hero stood in the royal presence. As he entered the hall every eye was fixed upon him. His stature, step and air were not those of the soldier. The young chiefs smiled, and the grey-haired looked more and more grave as the stripling, trembling, and with his chin resting on his breast, moved hesitatingly forward to the royal seat.

"Appin, my boy!" cried Varno, and hastily meeting him, caught his hand; "Appin, be bold, as if friends were foes; hold up your head and bend the knee to Brudus."

Involuntary the youth obeyed the command of his chief. Brudus started. Appin sank upon the floor. Varno raised him in his arms. His helmet was quickly unfastened, and glossy ringlets, darker than the raven's wing, fell thick clustering o'er a brow smooth and white as mountain snow. Brudus gazed earnestly upon the face. It seemed not unknown to him; then, pressing him to his bosom, gazed again, and exclaimed:

"Spoldanka! my child, my daughter, 'tis she!"

(To be continued.)

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