

Thorgunna at once refused to sell. Thurida then invited the Hebridee lady home on a visit, and the stranger, only too glad to leave the vessel, accepted the invitation with alacrity.

On the arrival of the lady with her boxes at the farm, she asked to see her bed, and was showed a convenient closet in the lower part of the hall. There she unlocked her largest trunk, and drew forth a suit of bed-clothes of the most exquisite workmanship, and she spread over the bed English linnen sheets and a silken coverlet. From the box she also extracted tapestry hangings and curtains to surround the couch; and the like of all these things had never been seen in the island before.

Thurida opened her eyes very wide, and asked her guest to share bed-clothes with her.

"Not for all the world," replied the strange lady, with sharpness; "I'm not going to pig it in the straw for you, ma'am!"

An answer which, the Saga writer assures us, did not particularly gratify the good woman of the house.

Thorgunna was stout and tall, disposed to become fat, with black eyebrows, a thick head of bushy brown hair, and soft eyed. She was not much of a talker, nor very merry, and it was her wont to go to church every day before beginning her daily task. Many people took her to be about sixty years old. She worked at the loom every day except in hay-making time, and then she went forth into the fields and stacked her own hay. The summer that year was wet, and the hay had not been carried on account of the rain, so that at Frodriver farm, by autumn, the crop was only half cut, and the rest was still standing.

One day appeared bright and cloudless, and the farmer, Thorodd, ordered the house to turn out for a general hay-making. The strange lady worked along with the rest tossing hay till the hour of noons, when a black cloud crossed the sky from the north, and by the time that prayers had been said such a darkness had come on that it was almost impossible to see. The hay-makers, at Thorodd's command, raked their hay together into cocks, but Thorgunna, for no assignable reason, left hers spread. It now became so dark that there was no seeing a hand held up before the face, and down came the rain in torrents. It did not last many minutes, and then the sky cleared, and the evening was as bright as had been the morning.

It was observed by the hay-makers, on their return to their work, that it had rained blood, for all the grass was stained. They spread it, and it soon dried up; but Thorgunna tried in vain to dry hers, it had been so thoroughly saturated that the sun went down leaving it dripping blood, and all her clothes were discoloured. Thurida asked what could be the meaning of the portent, and Thorgunna answered that it boded ill to the house and its inmates. In the evening, late, the strange woman returned home, and went to her closet and stripped off her the stained clothes. She then lay down in her bed and began to sigh. It was soon ascertained that she was ill, and when food was brought her she would not swallow it.

Next morning the bonder came to her to inquire how she felt, and to learn what turn the sickness was likely to take. The poor lady told him that she feared her end was approaching, and she earnestly besought him to attend to her directions as to the disposal of her property, not changing any particular, as such a change would entail misery on the family. Thorodd declared his readiness to carry out her wishes to the minutest detail.

"This, then," said she, "is my last request. I desire my body to be taken to Skalholt, if I die of this disease, for I have a presentiment that that place will shortly become the most sacred in the island, and that clerks will be there who will chant over me; and do you reimburse yourself for any outlay in carrying this into effect from my chattels. Let your wife, Thurida, have my scarlet gown, lest she be put out at the further distribution of my effects, which I propose. My gold ring I bequeath to the church; but my bed, with its curtains, tapestry, coverlet and sheets, I desire to have burned, so that they go

into nobody's possession. This I desire, not because I grudge the use of these handsome articles to anybody, but because I foresee that the possession of them will be the cause of innumerable quarrels and heartburnings."

Thorodd promised solemnly to fulfil the latter every particular.

The complaint now rapidly gained ground, and before many days Thorgunna was dead. The farmer put her corpse into a coffin; then took all the bed-furniture into the open air, and, raising a pile of wood, flung the clothes on top of it, and was about to fire the pile, when, with a face pale from anxiety and dismay, forth rushed Thurida, to know what in the name of wonder her husband was about to do with those treasures of needlework, the coverlet, sheets and curtains of the strange lady's bed.

"Burn them! according to her dying request," replied Thorodd.

"Burn them?" echoed Thurida, casting up her hands and eyes; "what nonsense! Thorgunna only desired this to be done because she was full of envy lest others should enjoy these incomparable treasures."

"But she threatened all kinds of misfortunes unless I obeyed strictly her injunctions; and I promised to fulfil her intentions," expostulated the worthy man.

"Oh, that is all fancy!" exclaimed the wife; "what misfortune can these articles possibly bring upon us?"

Thorodd still stood out; but in this, as in many another house, the grey mare was the best horse, and what with entreaties, embraces, and tears, he was forced to effect a compromise, and relinquish to his wife the hangings and the coverlet in order that he might secure immunity for burning the pillow and the sheets. Yet neither were satisfied, says the historian.

Next day preparations were made for flitting corpse to Skalholt, and trustworthy men were secured to accompany it. The body was swathed in linen, but not stitched up; it was then put into the coffin and placed on horseback. So they started with it over the moor, and nothing particular happened till they reached Valljarnar plain, where there are many pools and morasses, and the corpse had repeated falls into the mire. Well, after a bit they crossed the Northrar at Eyar-ford, but the water was very deep, for there had been heavy rains.

At nightfall they reached Staffholt, and asked the farmer to take them in. He declined peremptorily, probably disliking the notion of housing a corpse, and he shut the door in their faces. They could go no further that night as the Huita was before them, which is very deep and broad, and could only be traversed in safety by day; so they took the coffin into an out-house, and after some trouble persuaded the farmer to let them sleep in his hall; but he would not give them any food, so they went supperless to bed. Scarcely, however, was all quiet in the house before a strange clatter was heard in the shed serving as larder. One of the farm servants, thinking that thieves were breaking in, stole to the door, and on looking in beheld a tall naked woman, with thick brown hair, busily engaged in preparing food. The poor fellow was so frightened that he fled back to his bed, quaking like an aspen leaf. In another moment the nude figure stalked into the hall, bearing victuals in both hands, and these she placed on the table. By the dim light the bearers recognised Thorgunna, and they understood now that she resented the churlishness of the host, and had left her coffin to provide food for them. The farmer and his wife were now speedily brought to terms, and leaving their beds they displayed the utmost alacrity in supplying all the necessities of their guests. A fire was lighted; the wet clothes were taken off the travellers; curd and beer, and a stew of iceland-moss, set before them.

Hist!—a little noise in the out-house! It is only Thorgunna stepping back into her coffin.

Nothing transpired of any moment during the rest of the journey. The bearers had but to narrate the story of the preceding night's events, and they were sure of a ready welcome wherever they halted.

At Skalholt all went well; the clerks accepted the gold ring, and chanted over the body: they buried her deep, and put green turf over her. So, their errand accomplished, the servants of Thorodd returned home.

At Frodriver there was a large hall, with a closed bed-room at one end of it. On either side of the hall were closets; in one of these dried fish were stacked up, and flour was kept in the other. Every evening, about meal-time, a great fire was lighted in the hall, and men used to sit long before it ere they adjourned to supper. The same night that the funeral party returned the men were sitting chatting round the fire, when suddenly they perceived a phosphorescent half-moon grow into brilliancy on the wall of the apartment, and travel slowly round the hall against the sun. This appearance continued all the while that the men sat by the fire, and was visible every evening after. Thorodd asked Thorir Stumpleg, his bailiff, what this portended? and the man replied that it boded death to some one, but to whom he could not say.

Shortly after a shepherd came in, gloomy, and muttering to himself in a strange manner. When addressed he answered wildly, and they thought he must have lost his wits. The man remained in this state for some little while. One night he went to bed as usual, but in the morning, when the men came to wake him, they found him lying dead in his place.

He was buried in the church.

A few nights after, strange sounds were heard outside the house; and one night when Thorir Stumpleg went out of the door for some purpose, he saw the shepherd stride past him. Thorir attempted to slip indoors again, but the shepherd grasped him, and after a short tussle cast him in, so that he fell upon the hall floor bruised and severely injured. He succeeded in crawling to his bed, but he never rose from it again. His body was purple and swollen. After a few days he died, and was buried in the churchyard. Immediately after his spectre was seen to walk in company with that of the shepherd.

A servant of Thorir now sickened, and after three days' illness, died. Within a few days five more died. The fast preceding Christmas approached, though in those days the fashion of fasting was not introduced. In the closet containing dried fish, the stack was so big that the door could not be closed, and when fish were wanted, a ladder was placed against the pile and the top fish were taken away for use. In the evening, as men sat over the fire, the stack of dried stock-fish suddenly was upset, and when people went to examine it, they could discover no cause. Just before Yule, also, Thorodd, the bonder, went out in a long-boat with seven men to Ness, after some fish, and they were out all night. The same evening, the fires having been kindled in the hall at Frodriver, a seal's head appeared to rise out of the floor of the apartment. A servant girl, who first saw it, rushed to the door, and catching up a bludgeon which lay beside it, struck at the seal's head. The blow made the head rise higher out of the floor, and it turned its eyes towards the bed-curtains of Thorgunna. A house-churl now took the stick and beat at the apparition, but he fared no better, for the head rose higher at each stroke till its fore-fins appeared, and the fellow was so frightened that he fainted away. Then up came Kiartan, the bonder's son, a lad of twelve, and snatching up a large iron mallet for beating the fish, he brought it down with a crash on the seal's head. He struck again and again, till he drove it into the floor, much as one might drive a pile; he then beat down the earth over it.

It was noticed by all that on every occasion the lad Kiartan was the only one who had any power over the apparitions.

Next morning it was ascertained that Thorodd and his men had been lost, for the boat was driven ashore near Enni; but the bodies were never recovered.

Thurida, and her son Kiartan, immediately invited all their kindred and neighbours to a funeral feast. They had brewed for Yule, and