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THIODOLF THE ICELANDER. BY HARON DE LA MOTTE FOUQUE. (From the New York Freeman's Journal.) CHAPTER I.

The waves were yet very high, the fragments of the wrecked ship were driven wildly over the sea; even the mast, by clinging to which the knight Pietro had safely brought his beloved to shore, was now borne back by a towering wave into the boundless ocean.

Pietro heeded it not, although he had fastened a kerchief full of jewels and gold to the mast, and had not yet detached it; in this moment he had noticed nothing in the world but the fair pale being in his arms, who had not yet re-opened her heavenly eyes. The storm played roughly with her dark silky hair, and drove it now in wild beauty half over her white face, and now threw it back from her smooth forehead; drops of rain fell on her delicate cheeks, and twigs torn from the trees rustled around her. But neither that nor Pietro's agonised, almost despairing cry to his beloved could awaken her from that deep, death-like slumber. The sun was sinking in the west, and still the fair form lay motionless, stiff, and mute.

At length the calm of approaching evening began to overcome the storm. The winds blew more gently, and the broken clouds sailed over the sky with slackened speed. Then a gleam of the setting sun broke brightly through the gray mist, and rested with a pleasant light on the delicate features of the maiden. The wild anguish of Pietro's heart was hushed, a soft sorrow seemed to speak to him in flute-like tones; he bent over the senseless form and sighed, while tears of love filled his eyes: "O Malgherita, my only joy! Malgherita!" And, as if it had been granted to none but the gentlest sounds and lights of nature to awaken so tender a beauty, Malgherita opened her eyes at this caressing greeting, and smiled kindly on the evening gleam and on her lover.

With all the tender care and thankful rapture with which man can cherish and tend the lost and unexpectedly recovered treasure of his life, Pietro strove to show his joy to the fair maiden, and to find wherewithal to refresh and strengthen her after the rough storm. But around them stared nothing but brushwood and bare rocks.—The two lovers sat on a small platform, whose length and breadth measured but a few hundred steps; behind them rose a steep height, which formed a half-moon, reaching to the coast, and was covered with tall old trees, to which it was easy to see axe and saw had never been laid;—hard by a mountain-stream rushed impetuously down into the sea, adding to the wild noise of the surge.

"Where are we, Pietro?" asked Malgherita smiling and rubbing her beautiful eyes, as if she thought it was but a dream, and felt sure that, when fully awake, she should find herself in a well-known beloved country.

The knight understood the movement, and was much troubled at it. "Malgherita," said he, after a silence, "it is, alas! no dream which places thee on this inhospitable coast! But I cannot tell thee how it is called. The storm has tossed us hither and thither for many days over the wild sea, till not the steersman himself could tell where we were driven, for by night the stars were veiled with impenetrable darkness, and by day a covering of wet mist concealed the sun."

"I recollect more and more about it," said Malgherita thoughtfully. "We have been very, very long tossed about, and at last we were shipwrecked. Is it not so?"

"Yes, truly," said Pietro. "The blind, deaf sea did not show that reverence for thy holy, patient beauty which all nature ought to feel for so bright an apparition. All became ungodly and rugged as this shore which we hardly reached, and which, perhaps, we are the first to tread, and to give it a name by our mischance."

"Then let it be called the shore of love," said Malgherita with a heavenly smile; "and speak not, O my beloved, of any mischance which has befallen us! Build me here, by the sea, a little straw hut; it shall be my father's castle near Marseilles; and when thou returnest with thy prey from the chase, I will adorn thee as a victor with reeds and sea-side flowers as of yore I adorned thee with gold and jewels, after a gorgeous tournament. This is a knightly thought, Pietro; and we will spend our whole life in quiet innocent sports. We need but think that we are again become children; and has not love long ago done that for us?"

In spite of the pleasant images that floated before her mind, here Malgherita suddenly shuddered, and looked fearfully at some bushes behind them. Pietro turned his eyes eagerly in the same direction, at the same time putting his hand to his side, and discovering, to his comfort, that the sea had at least left him the precious well-tempered dagger in his belt.

"Didst thou, too, bear anything?" asked the terrific maiden, after a pause. "It seemed to me as if some one laughed behind that thicket."

"Perchance it is but a mocking echo," said the knight soothingly, though without looking away from the spot. "But happen what may, Malgherita, be at ease; thou art under Pietro's safeguard."

The maiden, calmed and cheered, again gazed smiling on the sea, trusting fearlessly in her lover, and rejoicing that her life and safety lay in his valor. "See, Pietro," said she, "how brightly the setting sun streams to us over the waves.—What a broad dazzling path of light! The storm is past; a peaceful, untroubled night seems to rise out of the waters."

But a distinct laugh was now heard close to them, and, while Pietro in angry alarm started up, a slender youth of gigantic height came forth from the bushes; an immense battle-axe was on his shoulder; he was still laughing, as he said in broken language, half Italian, half Provençal:—"Oh, how little the maiden knows about storms! It will blow, and thunder, and rain, all night. Dost thou not see how low the sea-birds are skimming? Thou must be a little foolish, dear lady."

"Bold man, be silent," cried Pietro, and drew his dagger.

"Leave your little knife in its place—leave it," said the stranger, laughing; "I will do you no harm. But if you attack me, see, I have a battle-axe—a dozen of your little knives would not make one like it."

"Though the sea has swallowed up my arms," said Pietro, proudly, "that will not hinder me from defending, with the last that is left me, the beauty whom thou hast insulted."

"Insult beauty! no, not insult," said the stranger, suddenly becoming grave. "If I spoke uncourteously, it was because I only bungle at your language. I have not myself been to that land whence you probably come, sir knight and lady, but my father and uncle have often. You come from Italy, do you not?"

"From Marseilles, dear stranger," said Malgherita; and as he nodded familiarly, to signify that he understood the difference, she continued, a sudden longing rising in her heart, "Are we, then, very, very far from the bright Provençal coast?"

"We are here in Iceland," said the stranger, gently; "but it is not so terribly far. Wait a little, lady, perhaps half a year, then the best season will come—the gay spring—and then you can sail away."

"Iceland!" said Malgherita, turning pale, and looking down. "Ah, Pietro, shall we ever see thy fair knightly castle of Tuscany?"

"Why not?" said the stranger. "Iceland is in this world—Tuscany is in this world; and a gallant of the right sort may well reach both the one and the other."

Then he raised his voice, and sang, in his own tongue, the following words:

"The Northman sails both north and south, Sees many lands, and knows them all; The one he greets with kindly gifts, The other 'neath his sword doth fall."

"I shall take my first flight next spring," continued he again, in broken southern tongue;—"and then I will take thee home, pretty lady, and thee too, sir knight, if thou behave civilly and leave thy little knife quiet in its proper place."

Pietro and Malgherita, when they listened to the rough-sounding song, recollected that these tones had been heard by them in their far-off blooming home, sung by some noble Normans who had sailed over from Sicily. To honor these strangers many had learnt their language; and so it came that the two lovers could speak to the Icelandic in his own tongue, whereby arose far better understanding between them.

"If I take you to your home so full of golden fruit and sunlight," said the Icelandic, "I shall soon learn Italian. Hitherto I have never left this island. Will you come with me to my uncle's?—I tell you that the rain will soon pour down again, and then you can see how you like what will be your winter quarters. Autumn storms are very wild here; we shall not be able to set out before spring."

"A winter in Iceland!" sighed Malgherita; "it is very strange."

"What is there to wonder at?" cried the Icelandic. "A brave man cares little where he winters; but, indeed, you are not a brave man, lady—something very different. Will you both come to my uncle's? I live there also, and we have good cheer; plenty of meat and ale, and songs and legends as many as one can wish for."

The lovers, in their need, accepted without delay the hospitable invitation; and perhaps the kind and honest heart, which shone forth from the large blue eyes of the youth, would have hindered them, even in more favorable circumstances, from giving him an uncourteous refusal. So they all three went up the hill by a wild path skirting the wood.

CHAPTER II.

In the deepening darkness something like a wall was seen through the branches, and Pietro

asked the Icelandic if that was his uncle's dwelling.

"No," was the answer; "it is the dwelling of my father—his honorable grave. I never like to pass by without singing him a song—if you would wait one little minute, pretty lady—the rain is not yet so very near."

"You good son," said Malgherita, with a mournful smile, "do according to your pious custom. I will gladly give you time."

They were now close to the lofty grave, on whose grassy summit towered high an immense stone inscribed with strange marks and figures; Pietro and Malgherita sat down under a wide-spreading elm, while the Icelandic hastened up the mound and climbed upon the stone, whence he sang words like the following—

"My father long ago was slain By the wild robbers of the main: He resteth now in sleep profound Beneath the elm-tree shaded mound, His first-born, vigorous, young, and brave, Contemplanter from his parent's grave That unknown world, that distant strand, For which he leaves his father-land."

Oh, to thy son, dear father, tell Where thou dost now in spirit dwell: Is it with Christ, we call the White? Or in Wabalatta's halls of light?— Fight bravely on, beloved youth, And thou shalt know the hidden truth When, yielding up thy parting breath, Thou join'st him in the vale of death."

Since first this ancient earth began, Innumerable tribes of man Have sprung to life, then passed away, Like flowers that live but for a day. But, old or new, they all are gone; And 'tis the hero's name alone That lives for aye in minstrel lays And songs of never-ending praise."

Then the youth sprang gaily down from the stone, went to the lovers, and then all set off again together. But Malgherita, since his song, could not help looking on him somewhat askance; and at length she said—

"You have not yet yet made known to us who you yourself are."

"Ah, that indeed can be done but too easily and too shortly," answered he. "See, if I tell you that I am called Thiodolf and an the son of Asmundur, and that both my parents have long ago passed into the grave, you know all my his tory, so far. That of my glorious father may have sounded a good deal farther, and so shall mine in time. Only ask again after a couple of years."

"I did not mean that," said Malgherita. "But you sang just now such strange heathen words; and yet in the midst of them came the name of our Lord Christ."

"Yes, yes," interrupted Thiodolf, "I know that. In your country they believe entirely in the white Christ."

"The white Christ?" said Pietro, in surprise; "what does that mean?"

"Why, it means your—your own Christ," answered Thiodolf. "Many Christian priests come to our island; they want us to let ourselves be sprinkled with water, after their fashion, and believe on the Crucified. What they tell us of Him sounds so beautiful and sweet that we listen gladly to them, and we too love the Christ, and call Him white, as we do all good spirits."

"Then why do you not tell yourselves be baptized in His holy Name?" asked Pietro.

"Many of us have done this," answered Thiodolf; "but they believe likewise in our good old gods. They think they may take the One and not leave the others."

"Pietro, Pietro, whither are we come?" whispered Malgherita, trembling, and clinging closer to her lover.

"Oh! don't be frightened," said Thiodolf, kindly. "It is only on account of our sorceries that we are not entirely of your belief. They are quite needful for us here amongst our elves and sprites; those merry folks who will give you many sports during the winter, lady."

"What thou, Ice-giant, callest sport," muttered Pietro, discontentedly, to himself, and then asked aloud, "Art thou and thine uncle baptized or not, Thiodolf?"

"We are marked," answered Thiodolf;—"that is, we have let ourselves be marked with the cross, as a first step, and now we can hold intercourse with Christians as well as with heathens. Your bishops themselves ordained this; but baptism will not come till long afterwards.—Many times we take pleasure in the thought of it, and many times not."

"I still have thee, Pietro," said Malgherita softly to herself, strengthening her sorrowful heart with this sweet trust; and her knight, who understood her, pressed the delicate hand of his beloved joyfully to his heart with increased confidence in himself.

At this moment a sudden turn of the path brought them to an immense far-spreading building, which rose up dark and misshapen against the evening sky.

"Here we shall pass the winter together," said Thiodolf.

CHAPTER III.

At the entrance a hammer was hanging to an iron chain; the young Icelandic seized it and thundered it three times against the gate.—"Gently, gently!" a strong voice was heard to cry from afar. "I knew at the first stroke that it was Thiodolf. Thou needst not shiver the planks of the door." And at the same time a deep laugh sounded, and soon there was a going hither and thither in the court-yard, while the loud bark of dogs burst forth from all sides.

"Only let me come in, you brutes!" cried the youth; "and I will tell you to know Thiodolf better. Silence!"

The barking ceased instantly; but a shaggy monster quickly appeared on the wall, who looked around with fiery eyes, then gathered itself up for a spring, and bounded down amongst those who were waiting at the gate. Malgherita screamed in terror; but Thiodolf, patting the head of the creature who was fawning upon him, said: "What is there to be so frightened at?—It is not even one of the bounds; it is only my wolf; and when I or my uncle are near he bites no one."

By this time the double gates of the strange building were open, and several men with long beards, clothed in wolves' and bears' skins, with great flaming pine-torches in their hands appeared within. Malgherita, hiding her terror, went in with Pietro, and passed through the double rank which the men formed, to the entrance of the main building, from whose large hall the hearth-light shone through the open door. The bearded men bowed lowly and kindly as the guests passed them: and Thiodolf, as he went by, gave orders that the best and most refreshing food should be prepared for the wondrously lovely little lady and the noble knight whom he had brought with him; whereupon the servants ran with ready zeal in different directions. The wolf trotted joyfully behind his master, and showed his teeth fiercely at the dogs who stretched their dark heads out of many corners of the building; and then Thiodolf pinched his ear till he howled. They entered the hall of the house; there were sitting on each side of the hearth, on high stools, a stiff and stately man and woman, both very old, and dressed in strange but rich clothing. They looked almost like two images; and for such Pietro and Malgherita at first took them, thinking that the fire before them was consuming some idolatrous sacrifice.

But Thiodolf went up to them saying: "Uncle Nefiof and Aunt Gunhilda, I bring you two fair guests;" and forthwith the old man got down from his high position, greeted Malgherita in no uncourteous manner, and led her to his seat;—while the old woman quietly kept her place of honor, and only offered her hand kindly to the visitors. It was strange to see how the blooming slender Malgherita, and the old, solemn Gunhilda, sat opposite to each other, on their high stools; and Thiodolf, who, with his uncle and Pietro, had taken lower seats round the fire, said: "The pretty stranger is still prettier to look at since she has sat near my good old aunt. It is like that bright future of which the Christian priests always talk, compared to the old fallen Odin's time. Wait just a moment, Aunt Gunhilda, you must see it too." Then he sprang up in simple-hearted haste, took down from the wall a shield bright as a mirror, and asked good-humoredly, as he held it before the two women,—

"Is it not true, Aunt Gunhilda? is it not a pretty picture? I mean from the contrast."

"Pietro could hardly keep from laughing, and the old Nefiof laughed out most heartily, saying: "He never does otherwise. He must go out far into the world before he learns its ways."

Gunhilda, too, laughed good-humoredly; and Thiodolf quietly put back the shield in its place, appearing accustomed to his uncle and aunt's well-meant jests at him, and not much troubling himself to make out what they found so wonderful in him. But Malgherita could not join in the laugh; all here seemed to her so mysterious, and solemn, and magical; and since her place near Gunhilda had separated her from Pietro, tears of sadness stood in her eyes, and she trembled violently. The good old woman saw this, and, at the same time, first perceived that Malgherita's clothes were soaked with sea-water; so she hastened to take her lovely guest into her chamber to provide her with dry garments, looking back reproachfully at her nephew because he had said nothing of this, and doubtless in his thoughtless ways had unnecessarily delayed the delicate maiden on the road.

"Yes, indeed, indeed," said Thiodolf, shaking his head, as if angry at himself; "I did just what aunt says. But then why is that Provençal child so fair? Who could think of chill when looking at her? It is just as if a bright, all-powerful mermaid had risen from the sea, which would be natural for her."

Old Nefiof, in the meanwhile, had made the knight also take off his wet clothes, and had dressed him in costly furs, adorned with golden clasps. Malgherita soon came back with Gun-

hilda, dressed in a rich northern garb, and looking indescribably lovely in her strange attire.—They all again sat round the fire; the attendants brought mead and food, and it seemed as if the northern dress had made the northern home more natural to the two strangers. The old man spoke of his expeditions in Sicily, and sang many songs which he had brought thence; Pietro spoke of the heroes of northern race, and how they upheld the Norman name in knightly honor on the southern coasts. Thus a bridge was, as it were, thrown over from one far-distant home to the other, and soon it seemed to Malgherita that Iceland was much nearer to Marseilles than it had at first appeared to her. They separated to go to rest, when Gunhilda, who had heard from Malgherita that she was only Pietro's betrothed, not his wife, took the maiden into her chamber; the uncle invited the knight to share his place of rest. "For," said he, "if you sleep near Thiodolf, you will probably be roughly awakened; for at every howl of a bear, he rushes, were it midnight, out into the wild forest."

"I cannot help it," answered Thiodolf. "This is what I think: it is better to hunt than to sleep; for I shall have time enough to sleep when they carry me to my father in his mound of earth, and shut the stone door upon me. It is true that the dead hunt in Iceland. Some nights ago, when the moon had thrown her cold white mantle far over the mountains—"

"Thou must not tell fearful things before sleeping time," said Gunhilda. "Dost not thou see how the maiden shudders?"

"She is nothing but an aspen-tree, with her tremblings and shakings," cried Thiodolf, vexed; and he left the hall: the others at the same time went to their chambers.

CHAPTER IV.

The sun had but just risen from the sea when Malgherita, hardly less beautiful and bright, came forth from Nefiof's court. She carried in her hand a lute, which she had found in the hall, and drew from it as she went some sweet sounds: although the instrument was too large for her to carry, and she held it uneasily in her arms. The strings were also too far apart, and much too hard and rough to bend beneath so small and delicate a hand. But Malgherita still caressed her awkward companion softly and fondly, till many delicious sounds swept over the island in its morning brightness. Then she hastened with winged steps to reach a neighboring height, whence the sea would lie open before her in all its majesty. As she stood on the height, she looked around with a long, thirsty gaze; but then sighing deeply, and shaking her head as if unsatisfied, she sank down upon the grass, touched the heavy lute as gently as she could, and sang to it this song:

"Thou glorious sea, upon whose sand I spent my infant hours, Gathering beside thy fragrant strand Its sweetly blooming flowers; Thou didst allure me from my rest To gaze upon thy azure breast, With thought that, as of yore, thou sea, Thou wouldst look brightly up at me."

I came, beheld, my joy was o'er— O melancholy doom! Dark hangs the mist above this shore, The waves are beautiful no more, The very heaven is gloom! No, naught is left me but to die! Both have deceived me—sea and sky. Yea, all is false, save love's sweet light, Which can illumine e'en Iceland's night!"

Malgherita had hardly finished, when she heard from the sea-shore the sound of lutes; she at first took them for the echo of her own, till at last a not unpleasant man's voice joined with them, and sang these words:

"And dost thou so long for thy beautiful land, Little stranger whom tempests have toss'd on our strand? Oh say, dost this island so gloomy appear,— Its ocean so dark, and its heaven so drear? Yet here in the meadows, in forest and fell, The elves and the fairies delight them to dwell, And to speed through the air, and to dance on the sand,— They are called the 'good folk' by the men of this land."

And indeed they are truly a good little race, They are full of good-will, and of kindness, and grace; Your home they will prosper, your hearth they will bless, With gambol and frolic, with smile and caress.

They weave a sweet harmony all the night long, Which is call'd in our country 'the good people's song'; And be thou but pleased with their frolicsome lay, The good people will guard thee by night and by day.

They will hover around thee, and watch by thy bed, And shield from all danger thy beautiful head; Thy house they will build, thy mead they will brew, And many more things the good people will do;

For the fairest of gifts they bestow on the fair: Then yield thee not, lady, to gloom and despair; When thou longest for home, oh, remember the while That the elves and the fairies caliver this isle. Malgherita had listened to this song with shud-