

# THE EVENING NEWS.

Thursday. - March 16, 1871.

## THE SONGSTRESS WITH THE GOLDEN GIRDLE.

A True Episode in the Career of Nilsson

### CHAPTER I.

HOW THE GIRLIE WAS WON.

"My lord," said Blinda, in a subdued tone, sweet as honey, soft as cream; "we come, in deep humility, to own your might and your goodness of our land; and in sign of homage, we pray with all humility, that, my lord, and your grace's commands, shall honor a simple heart that has not been have pride for which you may command, with whom none of us, we may many, are waiting your coming to divide the portions, and to pour the wine."

"My man," cried Tumlerling, "you have heard." A feast is prepared for us by the white hands in Smoland. We go with you, lady, to do honor to your cheer; but we go hand-in-hand, and I bear a dirge from that garland in earnest that you will be my companion on the meal."

He took it as he spoke. There was one sudden flash of those dark eyes of Blinda's, but in the next moment her face wore a smile, and she led on her guest with the most graceful humility. The other leaders chose companions from among the women, and so the army came into the hall.

A woodland path opened suddenly on a green space, where the pleasant grass, through which flowed a brook as clear as crystal, was surrounded on all sides by dense forest trees. The sunny space of grass was more attractive than their gloomy distance, sprinkled, too, as it was, by tables covered with meats, and flasks of wine, and heaps of cooling fruits.

The songstress with the golden girdle had now seen tokens of a luxury unexpected in this remote province.

"Madam," he said, "I am surely in the Waialaha dreamed of by the ancients."

"Maybe, my lord," she answered, with a flattering smile; "for that, too, was the rest assigned to valiant warriors that sleep up to the highest place."

"Please, like a true knight, I demand the general; and that one must be selected by many another, and so delicate viands were held up by ready hands, while smiling lips invited to indulgence.

The feast went on with tumultuous mirth, and when at last the dishes were almost emptied, the soldiers lay down on the grass to rest, each with a maiden hand to pour out more of that rich, heavy wine. Then the women sang sweet songs of their own; and the men drew sword, and one by one they fell asleep.

The evening was drawing on, but they were not chilly, for the women covered them warmly in large cloaks.

The eyelids of the general were closing to the sound of a low and dreamy chorale, when the soldier heard him break upon the harmony with a sudden cry:

"My lord, the forest is closing upon us!"

"Silence, fool!"

"My lord, it is! Look, look for yourself." Tumlerling idly began to rise.

"My lord," said Blinda, softly, "would you disturb yourself for a drunken man's vision? Be content; draw this last cup which I have poured out for you. Oda has one to give him."

The soldier was silent, and the soothing chords began again. One by one the men sank asleep; the shadows closed in; the forest trees seemed to grow closer and closer around the scene of that festivity. Blinda watched them with eyes which seemed to glow in the darkness, until one could have said that the leaves were rustling close around the table.

Then with a sudden cry, wild and shrill as that of an eagle, Blinda sprang up, the branches dropped, and a score of women stood behind, their staves, scythes, and axes gleaming in the rays of the rising moon. Then there were cries of treachery, and curses of despair and a rattle of steel on steel. Many of those brave women shed their blood on that plain; but one by one the Danish men were hewn down, and Sweden was saved from her dangers.

Blinda gave her body to her sister warrioress, and with the rest founded a church that "standeth to this day," and in memory of her is called Blindberg. And thus a woman palmed an arrow, a pendant to that great plot of the same century, where Birnam wood did come to Dunstanane.

The king of Sweden gave to the heroines of previous battles which the Danes had won the right to inherit equally with themselves; their weddings, they rode to the church to the music of the drum; they were buried with military honors, and to all of them it was permitted to wear as a token of this brave action, a girdle embroidered in gold and silver, which passed down for ages from mother to daughter. And this was the girdle which they won.

### CHAPTER II.

THE SWEET SINGER OF SMOLAND.

Eight centuries had passed away; a peasant woman had won the coveted race of state-woman. Swedish lake and afternoon of the sweet, short, northern summer. Her fingers were busy with a mat, which she was plaiting from the borders of the water, and with her little daughter had gathered her hair. There was a smile on the woman's face as she let her eyes rove from her mechanical work to the alpenstocks, more, with its hills, and the bushes, and the great stretching round about in broad aspects of pleasant varied color. A sweet wild plaintive strain seemed to fuse and steep the scene in peace. The little child, sitting near her on a hay stool, was pouring forth one of her country songs in a rich, clear, bird-like voice. Upon her shoulder lay a little violin, and she was accompanying herself upon it with still marvellous as her age. The mother, however, with a proud pleasure, "Certainly, the old God has given me a wonderful little daughter," thought, "there is not one of the children about us who has as much music in her, or is so sweet a voice," she added; and she is right. The child had the fascinating, pleasant features, and the long, bright, waving hair of the cherub by Corregio, and as her face was lighted by the glow of life, "oh, very sweet, very charming, very good."

The music of the violin. Suddenly, there was a sound of wheels upon the road, behind. The mother, glancing round, saw a carriage approaching; but the child was too deeply absorbed to heed it. The vehicle drew near, and when close behind the pair it was stopped by its occupant, a man. She was dressed very elegantly, and she sat leaning her side upon her hand, and listening entranced to the tiny musician. A smile of sympathy passed between her and the mother. Suddenly the child perceived that she was watched, and dropped her violin with a start. Smiling, the lady descended from her carriage, and came towards the girl. "Give her to me, and I will make her a happy life."

Jenny Lind! That name, in Sweden, then meant all that was good, and great, and splendid.

"Oh, Madam Christine, hearest thou? Since God has given thee the gift of thy voice, will thou go with this good lady?"

The child looked gloomy, and only half comprehended. Very gently, the lady pressed her hand. Suddenly, flinging her arms around her mother, the girl cried out with a deep sob: "Jenny Lind, I will go."

"Mother, if you wish to send me away, I will throw myself into the water before me."

Half-shrinking, half-entreated, the lady was obliged to retreat her sudden and somewhat unfeeling words. "The child, weeping and wailing, went with her, and when she got home, she said to her mother:

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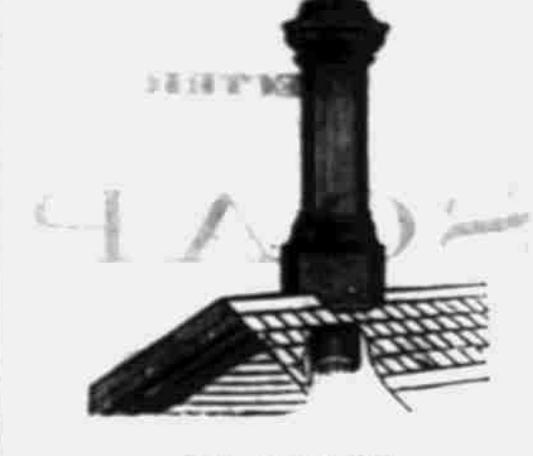
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