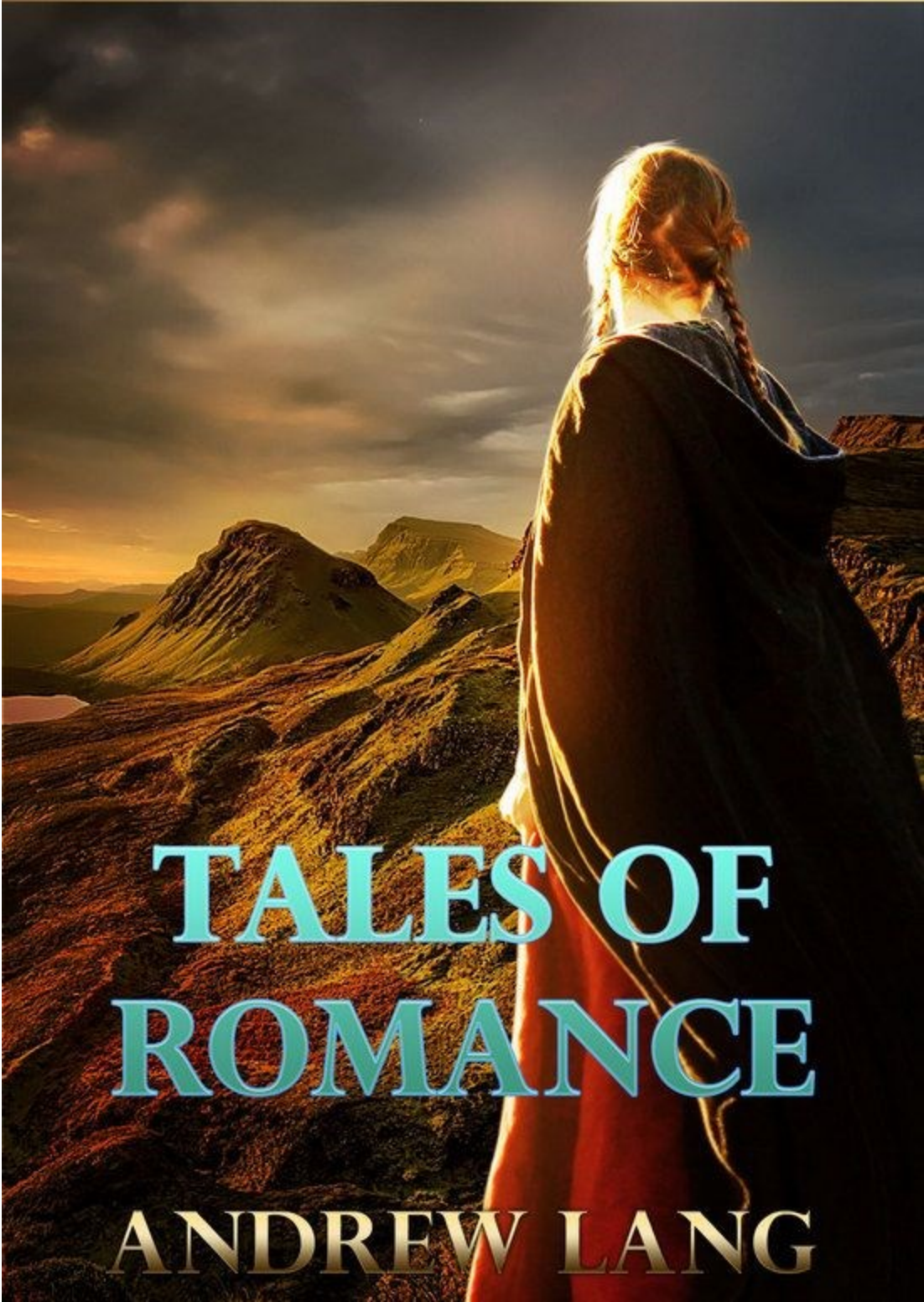


A COLLECTION OF SHORT STORIES



TALES OF
ROMANCE

ANDREW LANG

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COMPILED BY

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PUBLISHER NOTE: Historical Romance. Short Stories. 7,400 words.

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**LUMINOSITY
PUBLISHING**

LUMINOSITY PUBLISHING LLP

A COLLECTION OF SHORT STORIES 2
JUNE 2021 Compiled by ANDREW LANG

This is a work of fiction. All characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any resemblance to actual persons living or dead is purely coincidental.

WAYLAND THE SMITH.

PART I.

Right up to the north of Norway and Sweden, looking straight at the Pole, lies the country of Finmark. It is very cold and very bare, and for half the year very dark, but inside its stony mountains are rich stores of metals, and the strong, ugly men of the country spent their lives in digging out the ore and in working it.

Like many people who dwell in mountains, they saw and heard strange things, which were unknown to the inhabitants of the lands to the south.

Now in Finmark there were three brothers whose names were Slagfid, Eigil, and Wayland, all much handsomer and cleverer than their neighbours. They had some money of their own, but this did not prevent them working as hard as anyone else, and as they were either very clever or very lucky, they were soon in a fair way to grow rich.

One day they went to a new part of the mountains which was yet untouched, and began to throw up the earth with their pickaxes, but instead of the iron they expected to see, they found they had lighted upon a mine of gold.

This discovery pleased them greatly and their blows became stronger and harder, for the gold was deep in the rock and it was not easy to get it out.

At last, a huge lump rolled out at their feet, and when they picked it up, they saw three stones shining in it, one red and one blue and one green. They took it home to their mother, who began to weep bitterly at the sight of it. "What is the matter?" asked her sons anxiously, for they knew things lay open to her which were hidden from others.

"Ah, my sons," she said as soon as she could speak, "you will have much happiness, but I shall be forced to part with you. Therefore, I shed tears, for I hoped that only death would divide us! Green is the grass, blue is the sky, red are the roses, golden is the maiden. The Noras" (for so in that country they called the Fates) "beckon you to a land where green fields lie under a blue sky, fields where golden-haired maidens lie among the flowers."

Great was the joy of the three brothers when they heard the words of their mother, for they hated the looks of the women who dwelt about them, and longed to see the maidens of the south. Next morning, they rose early and buckled on their swords and coats of mail, and fastened on their heads helmets that they had made the day before from the lump of gold. In the centre of Slagfid's helmet was the green stone, and in the centre of Eigil's was the blue stone, and in the centre of Wayland's was the red stone, and when they were ready, they put their reindeers into their sledges, and set out over the snow.

PART II.

When they reached the mountains where only yesterday they had been digging, they saw by the light of the moon a host of little men running to meet them. They were dressed all in grey, except for their caps, which were red; they had red eyes, too, and black tongues, which never ceased chattering.

These were the mountain elves, and when they came near, they formed themselves into a fairy ring, and sang while they danced round it—

Will you leave us? Will you leave us?
Slagfid, Eigil, and Wayland, sons of a King.
Is not the emerald better than grass?
Is not the ruby better than roses?
Is not the sapphire better than the sky?
Why do you leave the mountains of Finmark?

But Eigil was impatient and struck his reindeer, that willing beast which flies like the wind and needs not the touch of a whip. It bounded forward in surprise, and knocked down one of the elves that stood in its path. But the hands of his brothers laid hold of the reins, and stopped the reindeer, and sang again—

The Finlander's world, the Finlander's joy
Lies under the earth,
Seek not without what we offer within,
Despise not the elves small and dark though they be.
The best is within, do not seek it without.
The Finlander's world, the Finlander's joy,
Lies under the earth.

Slagfid struck his reindeer. It bounded forward and struck down an elf who stood in its road. Then his brothers stood in its path, and stopped the reindeer, and sang—

Because Slagfid struck his reindeer,
Because Eigil struck his reindeer,
Our hatred shall follow you.
A time of weal, a time of woe, a time of grief, a time of joy.
Because Wayland also forsook us,
Though he struck not the reindeer,

A time of weal, a time of woe, a time of grief, a time of joy.
Farewell, O Finlanders, sons of a King.

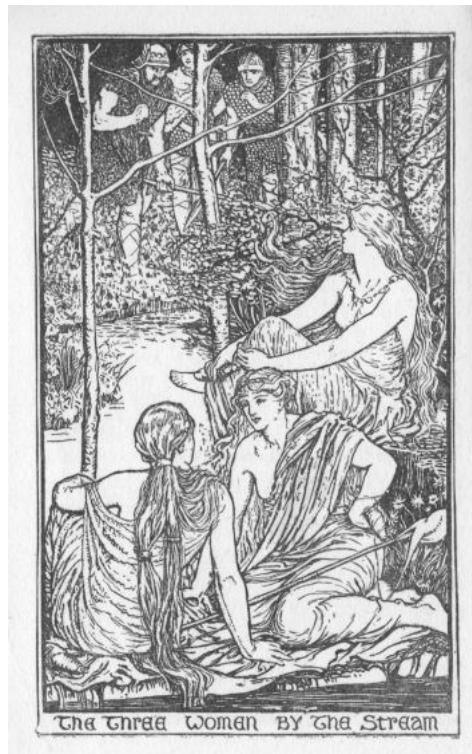
Their voices died away as they crossed a bright strip of moonlight, which lay between them and the mountains and so they were seen no more.

The brothers thought no more about them or their words, but went swiftly on their way south, sleeping at night in their reindeer skins.

After many days they came to a lake full of fish, in a place which was called the Valley of Wolves, because of the number of wolves which hid there. But the Finlanders did not mind the wolves, and built a house close to the lake, and hunted bears, and caught fish through holes in the ice, till winter had passed away and spring had come. Then one day they noticed that the sky was blue, and the earth covered with flowers.

By-and-by they noticed something more, and that was that three maidens were sitting on the grass, spinning flax on the bank of a stream. Their eyes were blue, and their skins were white as the snow on the mountains, while instead of the mantles of swansdown they generally wore, golden hair covered their shoulders.

The hearts of the brothers beat as they looked on the maidens, who were such as they had often dreamed of, but had never seen, and as they drew near, they found to their surprise that the maidens were dressed each in red, green, and blue garments, and the meadow was so thickly dotted with yellow flowers that it seemed as if it were a mass of solid gold.



The three women by the stream

“Hail, noble princes! Hail, Slagfid, Eigil, and Wayland,” sang the maidens.

“Swanvite, Alvilda, and Alruna are sent by the Norns,
To bring joy to the princes of Finmark”

Then the tongues of the young men were unloosed, and Slagfid married Swanvite,
Eigil Alruna, and Wayland Alvilda.

PART III.

For nine years they all lived on the shores of the lake, and no people in the world were as happy as these six; till one morning the three wives stood before their husbands and said with weeping eyes—

“Dear lords, the time has now come when we must bid you farewell, for we are not allowed to stay with you any longer. We are Norns—or, as some call us, Valkyrie. Nine years of joy are granted to us, but these are paid for by nine years during which we hover round the combatants on every field of battle. But bear your souls in patience, for on earth all things have an end, and in nine years we will return to be your wives as before.”

“But we shall begetting old then,” answered the brothers, “and you will have forgotten us. Stay now, we pray you, for we love you well.”

“We are not mortals to grow old,” said the Norns, “and true love does not grow old either. Still, we do not wish you to fall sick with grieving, so we leave you these three keys, with which you may open the mountain, and busy yourselves by digging out the treasures it contains. By the time the nine years are over you will have become rich and men of renown.” So, they laid down the keys and vanished.

For a long while the young men only left their houses to seek for food, so dreary had the Valley of Wolves become. At last, Slagfid and Eigil could bear it no longer, and declared they would travel through the whole world till they found their wives, but Wayland, the youngest, determined to stay at home.

“You would do much better to remain where you are,” said he. “You do not know in which direction to look for them, and it is useless to seek on earth for those who fly through the air. You will only lose yourselves, and starve, and when the nine years are ended who can tell where you may be?”

But his words fell on deaf ears, for Slagfid and Eigil merely filled their wallets with food and their horns with drink, and prepared to take leave of their brother. Wayland embraced them weeping, for he feared that he should never more see them, and once again he implored them to give up their quest. Slagfid and Eigil only shook their heads. “We have no rest, night or day, without them,” they said, and they begged him to look after their property till they came back again.

Wayland saw that more words would be wasted, so he walked with them to the edge of the forest, where their ways would part. Then Slagfid said: “Our fathers, when they went a journey, left behind them a token by which it might be known whether they were dead or alive, and I will do so also.” So, he stamped heavily on the soft ground, and added, “As long as this footmark remains sharp and clear, I shall be safe. If it is filled with water I shall be drowned, if with blood, I shall have fallen in battle. But if it is filled with earth an illness will have killed me, and I shall lie under the ground.” Thus, he did, and Eigil did

likewise. Then they cut stout sticks to aid their journeys, and went their ways. Wayland stood gazing after them as long as they were in sight, and then he went sadly home.

PART IV.

Slagfid and Eigil walked steadily on through the day, and when evening came, they reached a stream bordered with trees, where they took off their golden helmets and sat down to rest and eat. They had gone far that day and were tired, and drank somewhat heavily, so that they knew not what they did. "If I lose my Swanvite," said Slagfid, "I am undone. She is the fairest woman that sun ever looked on, or that man ever loved."

"It is a lie," answered Eigil. "I know one lovelier still, and her name is Alruna. Odin does not love Freya so fondly as Eigil adores her."

"It is no lie," cried Slagfid, "and may shame fall on him who slanders me."

"And I," answered Eigil, "stand to what I have said, and declare that you are the liar." At this they both drew their swords and fell fighting, till Slagfid struck Eigil's helmet so hard that the jewel flew into a thousand pieces, while Eigil himself fell backwards into the river.

Slagfid stood still, leaning on his sword and looking at the river into which his brother had fallen. Suddenly the trees behind him rustled, and a voice came out of them, saying, "A time of weal, a time of woe, a time of tears, a time of death," and though he could see nothing he remembered the mountain elves, and thought how true their prophecy had been. "I have slain my brother," he said to himself, "my wife has forsaken me. I am miserable and alone. What shall I do? Go back to Wayland, or follow Eigil into the river? No. After all I may find my wife. The Norns do not always bring misfortune."

As he spoke a light gleamed in the darkness of the night, and, looking up, Slagfid saw it was shed by a bright star which seemed to be drawing nearer, and the nearer it drew its shape seemed to change into a human figure. Then Slagfid knew that it was his wife, Swanvite, floating just over his head and encircled by a rim of clear green light.

He could not speak for joy, but held out his arms to her. She beckoned to him to follow her, and Slagfid, flinging away his sword and coat of mail, began to climb the mountain.

Halfway up it seemed to him as if a hand from behind was pulling him back, and turning he fancied he beheld his mother and heard her say: "My son, seek not after vain shadows, which yet may be your ruin."

The words caused Slagfid to pause for a moment. Then the figure of Swanvite danced before him and beckoned to him again, and his mother was forgotten. There were rivers to swim, precipices to climb, chasms to leap, but he passed them all gladly, till at last he noticed that the higher he got the less the figure seemed like Swanvite.

He felt frightened and tried to turn back, but he could not. On he had to go, till just as he reached the top of the mountain the first rays of the sun appeared above the horizon, and he saw that, instead of Swanvite, he had followed a black elf.

He paused and looked over the green plain that lay thousands of feet below him, cool and inviting after the stony mountain up which he had come. "A time of death," whispered the black elf in his ear, and Slagfid flung himself over the precipice.

PART V.

After his brothers had forsaken him, Wayland went to bed lonely and sad, but the next morning he got up and looked at the three keys that the Noras had left behind them. One was of copper, one was of iron, and one was of gold.

Taking up the copper one, he walked to the mountain till he reached a flat wall of rock. He laid his key against it, and immediately the mountain flew open and showed a cave where everything was green. Green emeralds studded the rocks, green crystals hung from the ceiling or formed rows of pillars, even the copper which made the walls of the cave had a coating of green. Wayland broke off a huge projecting lump and left the cave, which instantly closed up so that not a crack remained to tell where the opening had been.

He carried the lump home, and put it into the fire till all the earth and stones which clung to it were burned away, and then he fashioned the pure copper into a helmet, and in the front of the helmet he set three of his largest emeralds.

This occupied some days, and when it was done, he took the iron key, and went to another mountain, and laid the key against the rock, which flew open like the other one. But now the walls were of iron, which shone like blue steel, while sapphires glittered in the midst.

Wayland gazed with wonder at all these things; then he broke off a piece of the iron, and carried it home with him.

For many days after he busied himself in forging a sword that was so supple, he could wind it round his body, and so sharp it could cut through a rock as if it had been a stick. In the handle and in the sheath, he set some of the finest sapphires that he had brought away with him.

When all was finished, he laid the sword aside, and returned to the mountain, with the golden key. This time the mountain parted, and he saw before him an archway, with a glimpse of the sea in the distance.

Before the entrance roses were lying, and inside the golden walls sparkled with rubies, while branches of red coral filled every crevice. Vines climbed around the pillars, and bore large bunches of red grapes.

Wayland stood long, looking at these marvels; then he plucked some of the grapes, broke off a lump of gold, and set out home again.

Next day he began to make himself a golden breastplate, and in it he placed the jewels, and it was so bright that you could have seen the glitter a mile off.

After he had tried all the three keys, and found out the secrets of the mountain, Wayland felt dull. So, his mind went back to his brothers, and he wondered how they had fared all this time.

The first thing he did was to go to the edge of the forest, and see if he could find the two footprints they had left.

He soon arrived at the spot where they had taken farewell of each other, but a blue pool of water covered the trace of Eigil's foot. He turned to look at the impression made by Slagfid, but on that fresh green grass had sprung up over it, and on a birch-tree near it a bird had perched, which sang a mournful song.

Then Wayland knew that his brothers were dead, and he returned to his hut, grieving sore.

PART VI.

It was a long time before Wayland could bring himself to go out, so great was his sorrow, but at last, he roused himself from his misery, and went to the mountain for more gold, meaning to work hard till the nine years should be over and he should get his wife back again.

All day long he stood in his forge, smelting and hammering, till he had made hundreds of suits of armour and thousands of swords, and his fame travelled far, so that all men spoke of his industry.

At last, he grew tired of making armour, and hammered a number of gold rings, which he strung on strips of bark, and as he hammered, he thought of Alvilda his wife, and how the rings would gleam on her arms when once she came back again.

Now at this time Nidud the Little reigned over Sweden, and was hated by his people, for he was vain and cowardly and had many other bad qualities. It came to his ears that away in the forests lived a man who was very rich, and worked all day long in pure gold.

The King was one of those people who could not bear to see anyone with things which he did not himself possess, and he began to make plans how to get hold of Wayland's wealth.

At length he called together his chief counsellors, and said to them: "I hear a man has come to my kingdom who is called Wayland, famous in many lands for his skill in sword-making. I have set men to inquire after him, and I have found that when first he came here, he was poor and of no account, so he must have grown rich either by magic or else by violence. I command, therefore, that my stoutest men-at-arms should buckle on their iron breastplates and ride in the dead of night to Wayland's house, and seize his goods and his person."

"King Nidud," answered one of the courtiers, "that you should take himself and his goods is well, but why send a troop of soldiers against one man? If he is no sorcerer, then a single one of your soldiers could take him captive, but if, on the other hand, he is a magician, then a whole army could do nothing with him against his will."

At this reply the King flew in a rage, and, snatching up a sword, ran it through his counsellor's body; then, turning to the rest, told them that they would suffer the same fate if they refused to submit to his will.

So, the men-at-arms put on all their armour, and, mounting their horses, set forth at sunset to Wayland's house, King Nidud riding at their head. The door stood wide open, and they entered quietly, in deadly fear lest Wayland should attack them.

But no one was inside, and they looked about, their eyes dazzled by the gold on the walls. The King gazed with wonder and delight at the long string of golden rings, and, slipping the finest off a strip of bark, placed it on his finger.

At that moment steps were heard in the outer court, and the King hastily desired his followers to hide themselves, and not to stir till he signed to them to do so.

In another moment Wayland stood in the doorway, carrying on his shoulders a bear which he had killed with his spear and was bringing home for supper.

He was both tired and hungry, for he had been hunting all day, but he had first to skin the animal, and make a bright fire, before he could cut off some steaks and cook them at the end of the spear. Then he poured some mead into a cup and drank, as he always did, to the memory of his brothers. After that he spread out his bear's skin to dry in the wind, and this done he stretched himself out on his bed and went to sleep.

PART VII.

King Nidud waited till he thought all was safe, then crept forth with his men, who held heavy chains in their hands wherewith to chain the sleeping Wayland. But the task was harder than they expected, for he started up in wrath, asking why he should be treated so. "If you want my gold, take it and release me. It is useless fighting against such odds."

"I am no robber," said Nidud, "but I am your King."

"You do me much honour," replied Wayland, "but what have I done to be loaded with chains like this?"

"Wayland, I know you well," said Nidud. "Poor enough you were when you came from Finmark, and now your jewels are finer and your drinking cups heavier than mine."

"If I am indeed a thief," answered Wayland, "then you do well to load me with chains and lead me bound into your dungeons, but if not, I ask again, why do you misuse me?"

"Riches do not come of themselves," said Nidud, "and if you are not a thief, then you must be a magician and must be watched."

"If I were a magician," answered Wayland, "it would be easy for me to burst these bonds. I know not that I have ever wronged any man, but if he can prove it, I will restore it to him tenfold. As to the gifts that may come from the gods, no man should grudge them to his fellow. Therefore, release me, O King, and I will pay whatever ransom you may fix."

But Nidud only bade his guards take him away, and Wayland, seeing that resistance availed nothing, went with them quietly.

By the King's orders he was thrown into a dark hole fifteen fathoms under ground, and the soldiers then came and robbed the house of all its treasures, which they took to the Palace. The ring which Wayland had made for Alvilda, Nidud gave to his daughter, Banvilda.

One day the Queen was in her own room, when the King came in to ask her advice as to how best to deal with Wayland, as he did not think it wise to put him to death, for he hoped to make some profit out of his skill. "His heart will beat high," said the Queen, "when he sees his good sword, and beholds his ring on Banvilda's finger. But cut asunder the sinews of his strength, so that he can never more escape from us, and keep him a prisoner."

The King was pleased with the Queen's words, and sent soldiers to carry Wayland to a tower on an island. The sinews of his legs were cut so that he could not swim away, but they gave him his boots, and the chests of gold they had found in his house. Here he was left, with nothing to do from morning till night, but to make helmets and drinking cups and splendid armour for the King.

PART VIII.

On this island Wayland remained for a whole year, chained to a stone and visited by no one but the King, who came from time to time to see how his prisoner was getting on with a suit of golden armour he had been ordered to make.

The shield was also of gold, and on it Wayland had beaten out a history of the gods and their great deeds. He was very miserable, for the hope of revenge which had kept him alive seemed as far off as ever in its fulfilment, and finding a sword he had lately forged lying close to his hand, he seized it, with the intent of putting an end to his wretched life.

He had hardly stretched out his hand, when a bird began to sing at the iron bars of his window, while the evening sun shone into his prison. "I should like to see the world once more," thought he, and, raising himself on the stone to which his chain was fastened, he was able to look at what lay beneath him.

The sea washed the base of the rock on which the tower was built, and on a neck of land a little way off some children were playing before the door of a hut. Everything was bathed in red light from the glow of the setting sun.

Wayland stood quite still on top of the stone, gazing at the scene with all his eyes, yet thinking of the land of his birth, which was so different. Then he looked again at the sea, which was already turning to steel, and in the distance, he saw something moving on the waves.

As it came nearer, he discovered it was a water sprite, singing a song which blended with the murmur of the waves and the notes of the bird. And the song put new life and courage into his heart, for it told him that if he would endure and await the pleasure of the gods, joy would be his one day.

The sprite finished her song, and smiled up at Wayland at the window before turning and swimming over the waves till she dived beneath them. That same instant the bird flew away, and the moon was covered by a cloud. But Wayland's heart was cheered, and when he lay down to rest, he slept quietly.

Some days later the King paid another visit, and suddenly espied the three keys which had been hidden in a corner with some of Wayland's tools.

He at once asked Wayland what they were, and when he would not tell him the King grew so angry that, seizing an axe, he declared that he would put his prisoner to death unless he confessed all he knew. There was no help for it, and Wayland had to say how he came by them and what wonders they wrought. The King heard him with delight and went away, taking the keys with him.

PART IX.

No time was lost in preparing for a journey to the mountains, and when the King reached the spot described by Wayland he divided his followers into three parties, sending two to await him some distance off, and keeping the third to enter the mountain with himself, if the copper key did the wonders it had done before.

So, he gave it to one of the bravest of his men, and told him to lay it against the side of the mountain. The man obeyed, and instantly the mountain split from top to bottom.

The King bade them enter, never doubting that rich spoils awaited him, but instead, the men sank into a green marsh, which swallowed up many of them, while the rest were stung to death by the green serpents hanging from the roof. Those who, like the King, were near the entrance alone escaped.

As soon as he had recovered from the terror into which this adventure had thrown him, he commanded that it should be kept very secret from the other two parties, and desired Storbiorn his Chamberlain, to take the key of iron and the key of gold and deliver them to the leaders of the divisions he had left behind, with orders to try their fortune in different parts of the mountain.

“Give the keys to me, my lord King,” answered Storbiorn, “and I shall know what to do with them. These magicians may do their worst, my heart will not beat one whit the faster, and I shall see all that happens.”

So, he went and gave his message to the two divisions, and one stayed behind while Storbiorn went to the mountain with the other.

When they arrived, the man who held the key laid it against the rock, which burst asunder, and half the men entered at Storbiorn’s command.

Suddenly an icy blue stream poured upon them from the depths of the cavern, and drowned most of them before they had time to fly. Only those behind escaped, and Storbiorn bade them go instantly to the King and tell him what had happened.

Then he went to the third troop and marched with them to the rock, where he gave the golden key to one of the men, and ordered him to try it.

The rock flew open at once, and Storbiorn told the men to enter, taking care, however, to keep behind himself. They obeyed and found themselves in a lovely golden cave, whose walls were lit up by thousands of precious stones of every hue.

There was neither sight nor sound to frighten them, and even Storbiorn, when he saw the gold, forgot his prudence and his fears, and followed them in.

In a moment, a red fire burst out with a terrific noise, and clouds of smoke poured over them, so that they fell down choked into the flames. Only one man escaped, and he ran back as fast as he could to the King to tell him of the fate of his army.

PART X.

All this time Wayland was working quietly in his island prison, waiting for the day of his revenge. The suit of golden armour which the King had commanded kept him busy day and night, and, besides the wonderful shield with figures of the gods, he had wrought a coat of mail, a helmet, and armour for the thighs, such as never had been seen before.

The King had invited all his great nobles to meet him at the Palace, when he returned from the mountain, so that they might see his wonderful armour and all the precious things he should bring with him from the caverns.

When Nidud reached his Palace the Queen and Banvilda, their daughter, came forth to meet him, and told him that the great hall was already full of guests, expecting to see the wonders he had brought.

The King said little about his adventures, but went into the armoury to put on his armour in order to appear before his nobles. Piece by piece he fastened it, but he found the helmet so heavy that he could hardly bear it on his head. However, he did not look properly dressed without it, so he had to wear it, though it felt as if a whole mountain was pressing on his forehead. Then, buckling on the sword which Wayland had forged, he entered the hall, and seated himself on the throne.

The Earls were struck dumb by his splendour, and thought at first that it was a god, till they looked under the helmet and saw the ugly little man with the pale cowardly face. So, they turned their eyes gladly on the Queen and Princess, both tall and beautiful and glittering with jewels, though inwardly they were not much better than the King.

A magnificent dinner made the nobles feel more at ease, and they begged the King to tell them what man was so skilled in smith's work. Now Nidud had drunk deeply, and longed to revenge himself on Wayland, whom he held to have caused the loss of his army; so, he gave the key of the tower to one of his Earls, and bade him take two men and bring forth Wayland, adding that if the next time he visited the tower he should find a grain of gold missing, they should pay for it with their lives.

The three men got a boat, and rowed towards the tower, but on the way one who, like the King, had drunk too much fell into the sea and was drowned. The other two reached the tower in safety, and finding Wayland, blackened with dust, busy at his forge, bade him come just as he was to the boat.

With his hands bound they led him before the King, and said, "We have done your desire, Sir King, and must now hasten back to look for Grullorm, who fell into the sea."

"Leave him where he is," replied Nidud, "and in token of your obedience to my orders I will give you each these golden chains."

The guests had not thought to see the man who had made such wonderful armour helpless and a cripple, and said so to the King. "He was once handsome and stately

enough,” answered Nidud, “but I have bowed his stubborn head.” And the Queen and her daughter laughed and said, “The maidens of Finmark will hardly fancy a lover who cannot stand upright.”



Wayland mocked by the Queen and Banvilda

But Wayland stood as if he heard nothing, till the King’s son snatched a bone from the table and threw it at his head. Then his patience gave way, and, seizing the bone, he beat Nidud about the head with it till the helmet itself fell off.

The guests all took his side, and said that, though a cripple, he was braver than many men whose legs were straight, and begged the King to allow him to go back to his prison without being teased further.

But the King cried that Wayland had done mischief enough, and must now be punished, and told them the story of his visit to the mountain and the loss of his followers. "It would be a small punishment to put him to death," he said, "for to so wretched a cripple death would be welcome. He may use the gold that is left, but henceforth he shall only have one eye to work with," and the Princess came forward and carried out the cruel sentence herself. Wayland bore it all, saying nothing, but praying the gods to grant him vengeance.

PART XI.

One night Wayland sat filled with grief and despair, looking out over the sea, when he caught sight of two red lights, bobbing in his direction. He watched them curiously till they vanished beneath the tower.

Soon the key of the door turned, and two men, whom he knew to be the King's sons, talked softly together. He kept very still, and heard one say: "Let us first get as much from the chest as we can carry, then we will put him to death, lest he should betray us to our father."

Then Wayland took a large sword which lay by his side and hid it behind him, and he had scarcely done so when the princes entered the prison. "Greeting to you," said they. "Nidud our father has gone into the country, and as he is so greedy of wealth that he will give us none, we have come here to get it for ourselves. Hand us the key and swear not to tell our father, or you shall die."

"My good lords," answered Wayland, "your request is reasonable, and I am not so foolish as to refuse it. Here is the key, and I will swear not to betray you."

The brothers took the key, and opened the chest, which was still half full of gold. It dazzled their eyes, and they both stooped down so as to see it better. This was what Wayland had waited for, and, seizing his sword, he cut off their heads, which fell into the chest. He then dug a grave for the bodies in the floor of his dungeon. Afterwards he dried the skulls, and made them into two drinking cups wrought with gold. The eyes he set with precious stones, while the teeth he filed till they were shaped like pearls, and strung like a necklace.

As soon as the King came back from his journey he paid a visit to Wayland, who produced the drinking cups which he said were made of some curious shells washed up in a gale.

After some days had passed, some sailors found the princes' boat, which had drifted into the open sea. Their bodies, of course, were not to be found, and the King ordered a splendid funeral feast to be prepared.

On this occasion the new drinking cups were filled with mead, and, besides her necklace, Banvilda wore the ring which her father had taken long ago from Wayland's house.

As was the custom, the feast lasted long, and the guests drank deeply and grew merry. But at midnight their gaiety suddenly came to an end. The King was drinking from the cup of mead, when he felt a violent pain in his head and let the vessel fall. The hues of the armllets that the Queen wore became so strange and dreadful that her eyes suffered agony from looking at em, and she tore them from her arms; while Banvilda was seized with

such severe toothache that she could sit at table no longer. The guests at once took leave, but it was not till the sun rose that the pains of their hosts went away.

PART XII.

In the torture of toothache which she had endured during the night, Banvilda had dashed her arm against the wall, and had broken some of the ornaments off the ring.

She feared to tell her father, who would be sure to punish her, and was in despair how to get the ring mended, when she caught sight of the island on which Wayland's tower stood. "If I had not mocked at him, he might have helped me now," thought she.

No other way seemed to offer itself, and in the evening, she loosened a boat and began to row to the tower. On the way she met an old merman with a long beard, floating on the waves who warned her not to go on, but she paid no heed, and only rowed the faster.



The merman warns Banvilda in vain

She entered the tower by a false key, and, holding the ring out to Wayland, begged him to mend it as fast as possible, so that she might return before she was missed. Wayland answered her with courtesy, and promised to do his best, but said that she would have to blow the bellows to keep the forge fire alight. “How comes it that these bellows are sprinkled with blood?” asked Banvilda.

“It is the blood of two young sea dogs,” answered Wayland, “they troubled me for long, but I caught them when they least expected it. But blow the bellows harder, I pray you, or I shall never be finished.”

Banvilda did as she was told, but soon grew tired and thirsty, and begged Wayland to give her something to drink. He mixed something sweet in a cup, which she swallowed hastily, and soon fell fast asleep on a bench. Then Wayland bound her hands, and placed her in the boat, after which he cut the rope that held it and let it drift out to sea.

This done, he shut the door of the tower, and, taking a piece of gold, he engraved on it the history of all that had happened, and put it where it must meet the King’s eye when next he came. “Now is my hour come,” he cried with joy, snatching his spear from the wall, but before he could throw himself on it, he heard a distant song and the notes of a lute.

By this time, the sun was high in the heavens, yet its brightness did not hinder Wayland from seeing a large star, which was floating towards him, and a brilliant rainbow spanned the sky. The flowers on the island unfolded themselves as the star drew near, and he could smell the smell of the roses on the shore.

And now Wayland saw it was no star, but the golden chariot of Freya the goddess, whose blue mantle floated behind her till it was lost in the blue of the sky. On her left was a maiden dressed in garlands of fresh green leaves, and on her right was one clad in a garment of red.



The Chariot of Freya

At the sight Wayland's heart beat high, for he thought of the lump of gold set with jewels, which he and his brothers had found in the mountain so long ago. Fairies fluttered round them, mermaids rose from the depths of the sea to welcome them, and as Freya and her maidens entered the prison Wayland saw that she who wore the red garment was indeed Alvilda. "Wayland," said the goddess, "your time of woe is past. You have suffered much and have avenged your wrongs, and now Odin has granted my prayer that Alvilda shall stay by you for the rest of your life, and when you die, she shall carry you in her arms to the country of Walhalla, where you shall forge golden armour and fashion drinking horns for the gods."

When Freya had spoken, she beckoned to the green maiden, who held in her hand a root and a knife. She cut pieces off the root and laid them on Wayland's feet, and on his eye, then, placing some leaves from her garland over the whole, she breathed gently on it. "Eyr the physician has healed me," cried Wayland, and the fairies took him in their arms and bore him across the waves to a bower in the forest, where he dreamed that Alvilda and Slagfid and Eigil were all bending over him.

When he woke Alvilda was indeed there, and he seemed to catch glimpses of his brothers amid the leaves of the trees. "Arise, my husband," said Alvilda, "and go straight to the Court of Nidud. He still sleeps, and knows nothing. Throw this mantle on your shoulders, and they will take you for his servant."

So, Wayland went, and reached the royal chamber, and in his sleep the King trembled, though he knew not that Wayland was near. "Awake," cried Wayland, and the King awoke, and asked who had dared to disturb him thus.

"Be not angry," answered Wayland, "had you slain Wayland long ago, this misfortune that I have to tell you of would never have happened."

"Do not name his name," said the King, "since he sent me those drinking cups a burning fever has laid hold upon me."

"They were not shells, as he told you," answered Wayland, "but the skulls of your two sons, Sir King. Their bodies you will find in Wayland's tower. As for your daughter, she is tossing, bound, on the wild waves of the sea. But now I, Wayland, have come to give you your deathblow——" But before he could draw his sword fear had slain the King yet more quickly.

So, Wayland went back to Alvilda, and they went into another country, where he became a famous smith, and he lived to a good old age, and when he died, he was carried to Walhalla, as Freya had promised.

THE END



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