

THE EAGLE'S NEST

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Translated from the Norse.

THE Endre Farms was the name of a little settlement lying all by itself, surrounded by high mountains. It consisted of level, fertile bottom land, traversed and intersected by a wide creek coming from the mountains. This creek emptied into a small lake near by the settlement, and at this point one had a fair view far and wide over the country.

It was over this lake that the man had come rowing who first broke ground in the valley. His name was Endre, and those now living there were his descendants. Some said he had taken a refuge to this place, a fugitive from justice. And in this fact they would see the reason why all of his family were so dark-complected. Others explained this as due to the mountains shutting out the sun's rays even as early as 5 o'clock in the summer.

Above this settlement was hanging an eagle's nest. It was built on an overhanging cliff high up on the mountain. All could see the she-eagle perched on the nest, but none could reach it. The male would soar over the settlement, dash swiftly down and snatch up now a lamb, and at other times a kid, and once he even carried away a baby. It was not safe to live in the settlement as long as the eagles had their home on the mountain top. There was an old-folk tale that once upon a time two brothers had climbed up to the nest and torn it down. But nowadays there was no one capable of doing that.

Whenever two persons met in the Endre Farms they would talk about the Eagle's nest. They knew when the eagles had returned in the spring, knew where they had done their last mischief and who had last been the daring one to try to reach the nest. The boys trained themselves from childhood in climbing mountains and trees in order to some day be able to reach the nest and tear it down as those two brothers had done.

At the time of this story the cleverest boy in the settlement was Leif and he was not of the Endre family. He had curly hair and small eyes, was eager for all kinds of games and well liked by the girls. He used to boast that he would surely reach the eagle's nest some day; but the old folks in the settlement thought he should not be so loud about it. This irritated him and spurred him on to hazard the climb even before he had reached mature age.

It was on a clear Sunday forenoon in the early summer. The people gathered in great numbers at the foot of the mountain to look on. Old people advised against it, but the young ones spurred him on. He listened only to his own desire, however, and waited until the mother eagle left the nest. Then he swung himself to the limb of a tree several yards from the ground. Along a cleft in the mountain there was a growth of shrubs and, following this cleft, he began to climb. Gravel and little pebbles came rolling down—otherwise all was quiet. Only the creek kept on with its ceaseless, monotonous, soft murmur.

Soon the mountain became steeper and more overhanging; he was observed to be hanging for a long while by one hand, feeling for a foothold which he could not see.

Many, especially women, turned their heads away, and they said he would not have attempted this if his parents had been alive. He obtained a hold, however, then searched again, now with a hand, then with a foot. He lost his hold—he slipped, but again he held on. Those who followed him with their eyes could hear each other breathe, so still was it. Then arose a tall young girl who had been sitting all alone on a rock. Rumor had it that she had promised herself to him ever since she was a child, although he was not of the Endre family. She held her arms up to him and called out: "Leif, Leif, why do you do this?" All the people turned toward her; her father stood close beside her, and he looked at her sternly, but she paid no heed. "Come down again, Leif," she called, "you are dear to me and up there you have naught to gain." One could see that he bethought himself for a moment or two, but then he went on higher. He was sure of hand and foot, and so it went well for a long while. But then he became tired and was seen to rest often. A small stone came rolling down as an ill omen, and all who saw it followed it with their eyes until it reached the bottom. Some could not bear the strain but walked off. The tall girl was still standing alone on yonder rock. She wrung her hands and looked up to him. Leif was taking a new grip with his hand—but he lost his hold. She could see it plainly. He struck out with the other hand but missed. "Leif," she screamed, her voice echoing in the mountain, and the others joined in. "He slides," they cried and held out their hands toward him, men and women. He kept on sliding, faster and faster—ever faster, carrying along with him gravel, earth and stones. All turned their heads away and then they heard a scream and a grating sound along the side of the mountain behind them, followed by a heavy thud as if a big lump of wet soil had struck the ground. When they again took courage to turn around and look, he was lying there, lacerated and torn beyond recognition. The girl lay in a swoon on the rock. Her father carried her away.

The young folk who had been most eager in spurring Leif on did not even have the courage to come forward to help him. Some of them could not even bear to look at him. So some of the older men had to come forth and lend a hand. One of them—the oldest among them—said as he lifted the body: "This was sad;—yet" he added as he looked up,—"it is well that some things hang so high that not everyone can reach them."

A Saga of The Orkney Isles

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was passed, but the freemen were given the choice of buying their lands outright so that the Earl might not inherit them in the future. The greater number of the landholders availed themselves of this plan and once again there was an abundance of funds to carry on the work of building the cathedral.

When the work had progressed so that the cathedral could be roofed the remains of St. Magnus, which had already been removed from Christ's Church in Birsay, were laid to rest in the magnificent new minster. Many great men were also laid there to rest, Earl Rognvald himself being buried there in after years, and there, also, rested the remains of King Haakon

for a time before being removed to Bergen.

The years passed and the scroll of history unrolled. Earls and prelates came and departed; old customs faded; strong structures crumbled into ruin and ruin into dust; the Vikings sailed no more on cruises of harry and plunder; civilization advanced and men gave their energies over to pastoral and productive pursuits; hours of vice and virtue fled into Eternity and fair locks whitened into the grave and returned to ashes, but the destructive hand of Time spared the Cathedral of St. Magnus in Kirkwall.

Many and wonderful are the stories which might be told by the ashlar of the old red church could stones but speak. How within those eroded walls old King Haakon, who had come to conquer the Western Isles, breathed his last while Sverrir's saga was read by faithful friends; how the islands were placed in pawn by a royal father for the dowry of a Princess and passed into the dominion of Scottish Kings; how the island became the home of Scottish Earls; how when Earl Patrick lay in Edinburgh awaiting his doom as a traitor, his son held Kirkwall; how during rebellion the old tower was wrapped in smoke and echoed under the rattle of musketry; how the last of the Stewarts was turned from St. Magnus at the point of the bayonet; the troopers of Cromwell stalking up the aisles; the swearing of the Covenant; the returning of the bishops and after a time their final departure; the changing to the staid Presbyterian fashion and all the glories and ignomies, the joys and sorrows of the tide of every-day affairs. Swept by the centuries it still stands a link between the dead past and the living present through which our fathers speak to us, as they spoke to the legions going forward to the defense of Democracy in their pause there—spoke that silent language of the centuries which but few fully understood, of the many who looked upon the old Cathedral of St. Magnus.

CONSISTENCY IN BUSINESS.

WE are told, sufficiently often to impress the statement, that "business is business," and from this we are led to believe that commercial transactions are governed by a code of ethics, rules laws or principles which will bear analysis from a standpoint of profit-making or what we term business success, and of consistency in its application. Time-honored terms in connection with trade indicate the existence of such a code from the day when men first began to barter, and in the nature of things it should be a more perfect and highly developed system today than at any time in the history of the world, and in use by commercial institutions of high standing.

Corporations have in a large measure succeeded individuals in the business world, and as corporations are not only conscienceless, but it has been charged in sarcasm, "subject to no law." This may account for the peculiarly unbusiness-like action of many firms of presumably high standing. They do not hesitate to appeal to a spirit of patriotism and loyalty to their community which they, themselves, signally fail to abide by. Consistency is a bright and shining jewel in business as well as in other things.

Noah certainly stored a lot of trouble when he allowed those two Fords to get aboard the ark with the other animals.