

**A Song of Summer Time.**  
 Frank H. Sweet, in July Donahoe's.

Oh, the swaying of the branches and the  
 fitting through the trees,  
 And the music of the voices that come  
 upon the breeze;  
 Oh, the singing and the winging of the  
 birds that come and go,  
 And the frisking of the squirrels as they  
 scamper to and fro;  
 Oh, the ferns and mossy carpets and the  
 waters dark and cool,  
 That go stealing through the shadows from  
 some clear, unshaded pool!

Oh, the thrilling of the songsters  
 From the branches and the grass  
 And the glancing of the sunlight  
 On the waters as we pass!

Oh, the glancing of the sunlight as it strikes  
 the waters clear,  
 And the singing of the thrushes and the  
 other songs we hear,  
 Oh, the floating and the floating on the  
 waters of the lake,  
 And the ripples and the shadows that go,  
 dancing from our wake;  
 Oh, the breezy days of pleasure and the  
 pleasant nights to dream,  
 When the stars look down and twinkle  
 and the winged lanterns gleam!

Oh, the summers in the country,  
 When the songsters nest and sing;  
 And the pleasure without measure  
 That the woods and waters bring!

**ERIC BRIGHTYES.**

H. RIDER HAGGARD.

Author of "King Solomon's Mines," "She," "Allan Quartermain," Etc.

**CHAPTER IV.—Continued.**

Now Eric stood for a long while on the edge of the fall and looked, measuring every thing with his eyes. Then he went up above, where the river swirls down to the precipice, and looked again, for it is from this bank that the dividing island-rock Sheep-saddle must be reached.

"A man may hardly do this thing; yet I will try it," he said to himself at last. "My honor shall be great for the feat, if I chance to live, and if I die—well, there is an end of troubling after maids and all other things."

So he went home and sat silent that evening. Now, since Thorgrimur Iron-Toe's death, his housewife, Saevuna, Eric's mother, had grown dim of sight, and though she peered and peered again from her seat in the ingle nook, she could not see the face of her son.

"What ails thee, Eric, that thou sittest so silent? Was not the meat, then, to thy mind at supper?"

"Yes, mother, the meat was well enough though a little under cooked."

"Now I see that thou art not thyself, son, for thou hadst no meat, but only stock-fish—and I never knew a man forget to supper on the night of his eating, except he was distraught or deep in love."

"Was it so?" said Brighteyes.

"What troubles thee, Eric!—that sweet lass yonder?"

"Ay, somewhat, mother."

"What more, then?"

"This, that I go down Golden Falls to-morrow, and I do not know how I may come from Sheep-saddle rock to Wolf's Fang crag and keep my life whole in me; and now, I pray thee, weary me not with words, for my brain is slow, and I must use it."

When she heard this Saevuna screamed aloud, and threw herself before Eric, praying him to forego his mad venture. But he would not listen to her, for he was slow to make up his mind, but, that being made up, nothing could change it. Then, when she learned that it was to get sight of Gudruda that he purposed thus to throw his life away, she was very angry and cursed her and all her kith and kin.

"It is likely enough that thou wilt have cause to use such words before all this tale is told," said Eric; "nevertheless, mother, forbear to curse Gudruda, who is in no way to blame for these matters."

"Thou art a faithless son," Saevuna said, "who wilt slay thyself striving to win speech with thy May, and leave thy mother childless."

Eric said that it seemed so indeed, but he was pledged to it and the feat must be tried. Then he kissed her, and she sought her bed, weeping.

Now it was the day of the Yule-feast, and there was no sun till one hour before-noon. But Eric, having kissed his mother and bidden her farewell, called a thrall, Jon by name, and giving him a sealskin bag full of his best apparel, bade him ride to Middalhof and tell Asmund the Priest that Eric Brighteyes would come down Golden Falls an hour after mid-day, to join in his feast; and thence go to the foot of the Golden Falls, to await him there. And the man went, wondering, for he thought his master mad.

Then Eric took a good rope and a staff tipped with iron, and, so soon as the light served, mounted his horse, forded Rau River, and rode along Coldback till he came to the lip of Golden Falls. Here he stayed a while till at length he saw many many people streaming up the snow from Middalhof far beneath, and, among them, two women who by their stature should be Gudruda and Swanhild, and, near to them, a great man whom he did not know. Then he showed himself for a space on the brink of the gulf and turned his horse up stream. The sun shone bright upon the edge of the sky, but the frost bit like a sword. Still, he must strip off his garments, so that nothing remained on him except his sheepskin shoes, shirt and hose

and take the water. Now here the river runs mightily and he must cross full thirty fathoms of swirling water before he could reach Sheep-saddle, and woe to him if his foot slip on the boulders, for certainly he must be swept over the brink.

Eric rested the staff against the stony bottom and, leaning his weight on it, took the stream, and he was so strong that it could not prevail against him till at length he was rather more than half-way across and the water swept above his shoulders. Now he was lifted from his feet and, letting the staff float, he swam for his life, and with such mighty strokes that he felt little of that icy cold. Down he was swept—now the lip of the fall was but three fathoms away on his left, and already the green water boiled beneath him. A fathom from him was the corner of Sheep-saddle. If he may grasp it, all is well; if not, he lies.

Three great strokes and he held it. His feet were swept out over the brink of the fall, but he clung on grimly, and by the strength of his arms drew himself on to the rock and rested a while. Presently he stood up, for the cold began to nip him, and the people below became aware that he had swum the river above the fall and raised a shout, for the deed was great. Now Eric must begin to clamber down Sheep-saddle, and this was no easy task, for the rock is almost sheer, and slippery with ice, and on either side the waters rushed and thundered, throwing their blinding spray about him as he leaped to the depths beneath. He looked down, studying the rock; then, feeling that he grew afraid, made an end of doubt and, grasping a point with both hands, swung himself down his own length and more.

Now for many minutes he climbed down Sheep-saddle, and the task was hard, for he was bewildered with the booming of the waters that bent out on either side of him like the arc of a bow, and the rock was very steep and slippery. Still, he came down all those fifteen fathoms and fell not, though twice he was near to falling, and the watchers below marvelled greatly at his hardihood.

"He will be dashed to pieces where the waters meet," said Ospakar; "he can never gain Wolf's Fang crag beneath; and, if so it be that he come there and leaps to the pool, the weight of water will drive him down and drown him."

"It is certainly so," quoth Asmund; "and it grieves me much; for it was my just that drove him to this perilous adventure, and we cannot spare such a man as Eric Brighteyes."

Now Swanhild turned white as death; but Gudruda said: "If great heart and strength and skill may avail at all, then Eric shall come safely down the waters."

"Thou fool!" whispered Swanhild in her ear, "how can these help him? No troll could live in yonder cauldron. Dead is Eric, and thou art the bait that lured him to his death!"

"Spare thy words," she answered; "as the Norms have ordered so it shall be."

Now Eric stood at the foot of Sheep-saddle, and within an arm's length the mighty waters met, tossing their yellow waves and seething furiously as they leaped to the mist-hid gulf beneath. He bent over and looked through the spray. Three fathoms under him the rock Wolf's Fang split the waters, and thence, if he can come thither, he may leap sheer into the pool below. Now he unwound the rope that was about his middle, and made one end fast to a knob of rock—and this was difficult, for his hands were stiff with cold—and the other end he passed through his leathern girdle. Then Eric looked again, and his heart sank within him.

How might he give himself to this boiling food and not be shattered? But as he looked, lo! a rainbow grew upon the face of the water, and one end of it lit upon him, and the other, like a glory from the gods, fell full upon Gudruda as she stood a little way apart, watching at the foot of Golden Falls.

"Seest thou that," said Asmund to Groa, who was at his side, "the gods build their Bifrost bridge between these two. Who now shall keep them asunder?"

"Read the portent thus," she answered: "they shall be united, but not here. Yon is a spirit bridge, and, see, the waters of Death foam and fall between them!"

Eric, too, saw the omen and it seemed good to him, and all feet left his heart. Round about him the waters thundered, but amid their roar he dreamed that he heard a voice calling:

"Be of good cheer, Eric Brighteyes; for thou shalt live to do mightier deeds than this, and in guerdon thou shalt win Gudruda."

So he paused no longer, but, shortening up the rope, pulled on it with all his strength, and then leaped out upon the arch of waters. They struck him and he was dashed out like a stone from a sling; again he fell against them and again was dashed away, so that his girdle burst. Eric felt it go and clung wildly to the rope and lo! with the inward swing, he fell on Wolf's Fang, where never a man had stood before and never a man shall stand again. Eric lay a little while on the rock till his breath came back to him, and he listened to the roar of the waters. Then, rising on his hands and knees, he crept to his point, for he could scarcely stand because of the trembling of the stone beneath the shock of the fall; and when the people below saw that he was not dead, they raised a great shout, and the sound of their voices

came to him through the noise of the waters.

Now, twelve fathoms beneath him was the surface of the pool; but he could not see it because of the wreaths of spray. Nevertheless, he must leap and that swiftly, for he grew cold. So of a sudden Eric stood up to his full height, and, with a loud cry and a mighty spring, bounded out from the point of Wolf's Fang far into the air, beyond the reach of the falling flood, and rushed headlong toward the gulf beneath. Now all men watching held their breath as his body travelled, and so great is the place and so high the leap that through the mist Eric seemed but as a big white stone hurled down the face of the arching waters.

He was gone and the watchers rushed down to the foot of the pool, for there, if he rose at all, he must pass to the shallows. Swanhild could look no more, but sank upon the ground. The face of Gudruda was set like a stone with doubt and anguish. Ospakar saw and read the meaning, and he said to himself: "Now, Odin grant that this youngling rise not again! for the maid loves him dearly, and he is too much a man to be lightly swept aside."

Eric struck the pool. Down he sank, and down and down—for the water falling from so far must almost reach the bottom of the pool before it can rise again—and he with it. Now he touched the bottom, but very gently, and slowly began to rise and, as he rose, was carried along by the stream. But it was long before he could breathe, and it seemed to him that his lungs would burst. Still, he struggled up, striking great strokes with his legs.

"Farewell to Eric," said Asmund; "he will rise no more now."

But just as he spoke Gudruda pointed to something that gleamed, white and golden, beneath the surface of the current, and lo! the bright hair of Eric rose from the water, and he drew a great breath, shaking his head like a seal, and, though but feebly, struck out for the shallows that are at the foot of the pool. Now he found footing, but was swept over by the fierce current, and cut his forehead, and he carried that scar till his death. Again he rose, and with a rush gained the bank unaided and fell upon the snow.

Now people gathered about him in silence and wondering, for none had known so great a deed. And presently Eric opened his eyes and looked up, and found the eyes of Gudruda fixed on him, and there was that in them which made him glad he dared the path of Golden Falls.

**CHAPTER V.**

**HOW ERIC WON THE SWORD WHITEFIRE.**

Now, Asmund the priest bent down and Eric saw him and spoke:

"Thou badest me to thy Yule-feast, lord by yonder slippery road, and I have come. Dost thou welcome me well?"

"No man better," quoth Asmund. "Thou art a gallant man, though foolishly; and thou hast done a deed that shall be told of while skalds sing and men live in Iceland."

"Make place, my father," said Gudruda, "for Eric bleeds." And she loosened her kerchief from her neck and bound it about his wounded brow, and taking the rich cloak from her body, threw it on his shoulders, and no man said her nay.

Then they led him to the hall, where Eric clothed himself and rested, and he sent back the thrall Jon to Coldback, bidding him tell Saevuna, Eric's mother, that he was safe. But he was somewhat weak all that day, and the sound of waters roared in his ears.

Now, Ospakar and Groa were ill-pleased at the turn things had taken; but all the others rejoiced much, for Eric was well loved of men and they had grieved if the waters had prevailed against his might. But Swanhild brooded bitterly, for Eric never turned to look on her.

The hour of the feast drew on and, according to custom, it was held in the Temple, and thither went all men. When they were seated in the nave of the Hof, the fat ox that had been made ready for sacrifice was led in and dragged before the altar on which the holy fire burned. Now Asmund the Priest slew it, amid silence, before the figures of the gods, and, catching its blood in the blood-bowl, sprinkled the altar and all the worshippers with the blood-twigs. Then the ox was cut up, and the figures of the almighty gods were anointed with its molten fat and wiped with fair linen. Next the flesh was boiled in the cauldrons that were hung over fires lighted all down the nave, and the feast began.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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