

The Troll Wedding

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One summer, a long, long time ago, the folk of Melbustad went up to the hill pastures with their herd. But they had been there only a short time when the cattle began to grow so restless that it was impossible to keep them in order. A number of different maidens tried to manage them, but without avail; until one came who was betrothed, and whose betrothal had but recently been celebrated. Then the cattle suddenly quieted down, and were easy to handle. So the maiden remained alone in the hills with no other company than a dog. And one afternoon as she sat in the hut, it seemed to her that her sweetheart came, sat down beside her, and began to talk about their getting married at once. But she sat still and made no reply, for she noticed a strangeness about him. By and by, more and more people came in, and they began to cover the table with silverware, and bring on dishes, and the bridesmaids brought the bridal crown, and the ornaments, and a handsome bridal gown, and they dressed her, and put the crown on her head, as was the custom in those days, and they put rings on her hands.

And it seemed to her as though she knew all the people who were there; they were the women of the village, and the girls of her own age. But the dog was well aware that there was something uncanny about it all. He made his way down to Melbustad in flying leaps, and howled and barked in the most lamentable manner, and gave the people no rest until they followed him. The young fellow who was to marry the girl took his gun, and climbed the hills; and when he drew near, there stood a number of horses around the hut, saddled and bridled. He crept up to the hut, looked through a loop-hole in the wall, and saw a whole company sitting together inside. It was quite evident that they were trolls, the people from underground, and therefore he discharged his gun over the roof. At that moment the doors flew open, and a number of balls of gray yarn, one larger than the other, came shooting out about his legs. When he went in, there sat the maiden in her bridal finery, and nothing was missing but the ring on her little finger, then all would have been complete.

"In heaven's name, what has happened here?" he asked, as he looked around. All the silverware was still on the table, but all the tasty dishes had turned to moss and toadstools, and frogs and toads and the like.

"What does it all mean?" said he. "You are sitting here in all your glory, just like a bride?"

"How can you ask me?" answered the maiden. "You have been sitting here yourself, and talking about our wedding the whole afternoon!"

"No, I have just come," said he. "It must have been some one else who had taken my shape!"

Then she gradually came to her senses; but not until long afterward was she altogether herself, and she told how she had firmly believed that her sweetheart himself, and all their friends and relatives had been there. He took her straight back to the village with him, and so that they need fear no such devilry in the future, they celebrated their wedding while she was still clad in the bridal outfit of the underground folk. The crown and all the ornaments were hung up in Melbustad and it is said that they hang there to this very day.