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Patron: Taylor, Michelle

Journal Title: A tale of the house of the
Wolfings and all the kindreds of the
mark /

Volume: Issue:

Month/Year: 1978 **Pages:** 5-10

Article Author: Mathews, Richard

Article Title: Introduction

OCLC Number: 4192477

ILL # - 108999659



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roof were three hearths for the fires, and above each hearth a luffer or smoke-bearer to draw the smoke up when the fires were lighted. Forsooth on a bright winter afternoon it was strange to see the three columns of smoke going wavering up to the dimness of the mighty roof, and one maybe smitten athwart by the sunbeams. As for the timber of the roof itself and its framing, so exceeding great and high it was, that the tale tells how that none might see the fashion of it from the hall-floor unless he were to raise aloft a blazing faggot on a long pole: since no lack of timber was there among the men of the Mark.

At the end of the hall anigh the Man's-door was the dais, and a table thereon set thwartwise of the hall; and in front of the dais was the noblest and greatest of the hearths; (but of the others one was in the very midmost, and another in the Woman's-Chamber) and round about the dais, along the gable-wall, and hung from pillar to pillar were woven cloths pictured with images of ancient tales and the deeds of the Wolfings, and the deeds of the Gods from whence they came. And this was the fairest place of all the house and the best-beloved of the Folk, and especially of the older and the mightier men: and there were tales told, and songs sung, especially if they were new: and thereto also were messengers brought if any tidings were abroad: there also would the elders talk together about matters concerning the House or the Mid-mark or the whole Folk of the Markmen.

Yet you must not think that their solemn councils were held there, the folk-motes whereat it must be determined what to do and what to forbear doing; for according as such councils, (which they called Things) were of the House or of the Mid-mark or of the whole Folk, were they held each at the due Thing-steads in the Wood aloof from either acre or meadow, (as was the custom of our forefathers for long after) and at such Things would all the men of the House or the Mid-mark or the Folk be present man by man. And in each of these steads was there a Doomring wherein Doom was given by the neighbours chosen, (whom now we call the Jury) in matters between man and man; and no such doom of neighbours was given, and no such voice of the Folk proclaimed in any house or under any roof, nor even as aforesaid on the tilled acres or the depastured meadows. This was the custom of our forefathers, in memory, belike, of the days when as yet there was neither house nor tillage, nor flocks and herds, but the Earth's face only and what freely grew thereon.

But over the dais there hung by chains and pulleys fastened to a tie-beam of the roof high aloft a wondrous lamp fashioned of glass; yet of no such glass as the folk made then and there, but of a fair and clear green like an emerald, and all done with figures and knots in gold, and strange beasts, and a warrior slaying a dragon, and the sun rising on the earth: nor did any tale tell whence this lamp came, but it was held as an ancient and holy thing by all the Mark-men, and the kindred of the Wolf had it in charge to keep a light burning in it night and day for ever; and they appointed a maiden of their own kindred to that office; which damsel must needs be unwedded, since no wedded woman dwelling under that roof could be a Wolfing woman, but would needs be of the houses wherein the Wolfings wedded.

This lamp which burned ever was called the Hall-Sun, and the woman who had charge of it, and who was the fairest that might be found was called after it the Hall-Sun also.

At the other end of the hall was the Woman's-Chamber, and therein were the looms and other gear for the carding and spinning of wool and the weaving of cloth.

Such was the Roof under which dwelt the kindred of the Wolfings; and the other kindreds of the Mid-mark had roofs like to it; and of these the chiefest were the Elkings, the Vallings, the Alftings, the Beamings, the Galtings, and the Bearings; who bore on their banners the Elk, the Falcon, the Swan, the Tree, the Boar, and the Bear. But other lesser and newer kindreds there were than these: as for the Hartings above named, they were a kindred of the Upper-mark.

CHAPTER II.

THE FLITTING OF THE WAR-ARROW.

TELLS the tale that it was an evening of summer, when the wheat was in the ear, but yet green; and the neat-herds were done driving the milch-kine to the byre, and the horscherds and the shepherds had made the night-shift, and the out-goers were riding two by two and

one by one through the lanes between the wheat and the rye towards the meadow. Round the cots of the thralls were gathered knots of men and women both thralls and freemen, some talking together, some hearkening a song or a tale, some singing and some dancing together; and the children gambolling about from group to group with their shrill and tuneless voices, like young throstles who have not yet learned the song of their race. With these were mingled dogs, dun of colour, long of limb, sharp-nosed, gaunt and great; they took little heed of the children as they pulled them about in their play, but lay down, or loitered about, as though they had forgotten the chase and the wild-wood.

Merry was the folk with that fair tide, and the promise of the harvest, and the joy of life, and there was no weapon among them so close to the houses, save here and there the boar-spear of some herdman or herd-woman late come from the meadow.

Tall and for the most part comely were both men and women; the most of them light-haired and grey-eyed, with cheek-bones somewhat high; white of skin but for the sun's burning, and the wind's parching, and whereas they were tanned of a very ruddy and cheerful hue. But the thralls were some of them of a shorter and darker breed, black-haired also and dark-eyed, lighter of limb; sometimes better knit, but sometimes crooked of leg and knottier of arm. But some also were of build and hue not much unlike to the freemen; and these doubtless came of some other Folk of the Goths which had given way in battle before the Men of the Mark, either they or their fathers.

Moreover some of the freemen were unlike their fellows and kindred, being slenderer and closer-knit, and black-haired, but grey-eyed withal; and amongst these were one or two who exceeded in beauty all others of the House.

Now the sun was set and the glooming was at point to begin and the shadowless twilight lay upon the earth. The nightingales on the borders of the wood sang ceaselessly from the scattered hazel-trees above the greensward where the grass was cropped down close by the nibbling of the rabbits; but in spite of their song and the divers voices of the men-folk about the houses, it was an evening on which sounds from aloof can be well heard, since noises carry far at such tides.

Suddenly they who were on the edges of those throngs and were the less noisy, held themselves as if to listen; and a group that had gathered

about a minstrel to hear his story fell hearkening also round about the silenced and hearkening tale-teller: some of the dancers and singers noted them and in their turn stayed the dance and kept silence to hearken; and so from group to group spread the change, till all were straining their ears to hearken the tidings. Already the men of the night-shift had heard it, and the shepherds of them had turned about, and were trotting smartly back through the lanes of the tall wheat: but the horse-herds were now scarce seen on the darkening meadow, as they galloped on fast toward their herds to drive home the stallions. For what they had heard was the tidings of war.

There was a sound in the air as of a humble-bee close to the ear of one lying on a grassy bank; or whiles as of a cow afar in the meadow lowing in the afternoon when milking-time draws nigh: but it was ever shriller than the one, and fuller than the other; for it changed at whiles, though after the first sound of it, it did not rise or fall, because the eve was windless. You might hear at once that for all it was afar, it was a great and mighty sound; nor did any that hearkened doubt what it was, but all knew it for the blast of the great war-horn of the Elkings, whose Roof lay up Mirkwood-water next to the Roof of the Wolfings.

So those little throngs broke up at once; and all the freemen, and of the thralls a good many, flocked, both men and women, to the Man's-door of the hall, and streamed in quietly and with little talk, as men knowing that they should hear all in due season.

Within under the Hall-Sun, amidst the woven stories of time past, sat the elders and chief warriors on the dais, and amidst of all a big strong man of forty winters, his dark beard a little grizzled, his eyes big and grey. Before him on the board lay the great War-horn of the Wolfings carved out of the tusk of a sea-whale of the North and with many devices on it and the Wolf amidst them all; its golden mouth-piece and rim wrought finely with flowers. There it abode the blowing, until the spoken word of some messenger should set forth the tidings borne on the air by the horn of the Elkings.

But the name of the dark-haired chief was Thiodolf (to wit Folk-wolf) and he was deemed the wisest man of the Wolfings, and the best man of his hands, and of heart most dauntless. Beside him sat the fair woman called the Hall-Sun; for she was his foster-daughter before men's eyes; and she was black-haired and grey-eyed like to her fosterer,

and never was woman fashioned fairer: she was young of years, scarce twenty winters old.

There sat the chiefs and elders on the dais, and round about stood the kindred intermingled with the thralls, and no man spake, for they were awaiting sure and certain tidings: and when all were come in who had a mind to, there was so great a silence in the hall, that the song of the nightingales on the wood-edge sounded clear and loud therein, and even the chink of the bats about the upper windows could be heard. Then amidst the hush of men-folk, and the sounds of the life of the earth came another sound that made all turn their eyes toward the door; and this was the pad-pad of one running on the trodden and summer-dried ground anigh the hall: it stopped for a moment at the Man's-door, and the door opened, and the throng parted, making way for the man that entered and came hastily up to the midst of the table that stood on the dais athwart the hall, and stood there panting, holding forth in his outstretched hand something which not all could see in the dimness of the hall-twilight, but which all knew nevertheless. The man was young, lithe and slender, and had no raiment but linen breeches round his middle, and skin shoes on his feet. As he stood there gathering his breath for speech, Thiodolf stood up, and poured mead into a drinking horn and held it out towards the new-comer, and spake, but in rhyme and measure:

"Welcome, thou evening-farer, and holy be thine head,
Since thou hast sought unto us in the heart of the Wolfings' stead;
Drink now of the horn of the mighty, and call a health if thou wilt
O'er the eddies of the mead-horn to the washing out of guilt.
For thou com'st to the peace of the Wolfings, and our very guest thou art,
And meseems as I behold thee, that I look on a child of the Hart."

But the man put the horn from him with a hasty hand, and none said another word to him until he had gotten his breath again; and then he said:

"All hail ye Wood-Wolfs' children! nought may I drink the wine,
For the mouth and the maw that I carry this eve are nought of mine;
And my feet are the feet of the people, since the word went forth that tide,
'O Elfhere of the Hartings, no longer shall thou bide

In any house of the Markmen than to speak the word and wend,
 Till all men know the tidings and thine errand hath an end.
 Behold, O Wolves, the token and say if it be true!
 I bear the shaft of battle that is four-wise cloven through,
 And its each end dipped in the blood-stream, both the iron and the horn,
 And its midmost scathed with the fire; and the word that I have borne
 Along with this war-token is, 'Wolfings of the Mark
 Whenso ye see the war-shaft, by the daylight or the dark,
 Busk ye to battle faring, and leave all work undone
 Save the gathering for the handplay at the rising of the sun.
 Three days hence is the hosting, and thither bear along
 Your wains and your kine for the slaughter lest the journey should be long.
 For great is the Folk, saith the tidings, that against the Markmen come;
 In a far off land is their dwelling, whenso they sit at home,
 And Welsh¹ is their tongue, and we wot not of the word that is in their
 As they march a many together from the cities of the South.'" [mouth,

Therewith he held up yet for a minute the token of the war-arrow
 ragged and burnt and bloody; and turning about with it in his hand
 went his ways through the open door, none hindering; and when he was
 gone, it was as if the token were still in the air there against the heads
 of the living men, and the heads of the woven warriors, so intently had
 all gazed at it; and none doubted the tidings or the token. Then said
 Thiodolf:

"Forth will we Wolfing children, and cast a sound abroad:
 The mouth of the sea-beast's weapon shall speak the battle-word;
 And ye warriors hearken and hasten, and dight the weed of war,
 And then to acre and meadow wend ye adown no more,
 For this work shall be for the women to drive our neat from the mead,
 And to yoke the wains, and to load them as the men of war have need."

Out then they streamed from the hall, and no man was left therein
 save the fair Hall-Sun sitting under the lamp whose name she bore.
 But to the highest of the slope they went, where was a mound made

¹ Welsh with these men means Foreign, and is used for all people of Europe who
 are not of Gothic or Teutonic blood.

higher by man's handiwork; thereon stood Thiodolf and handled the
 horn, turning his face toward the downward course of Mirkwood-
 water; and he set the horn to his lips, and blew a long blast, and then
 again, and yet again the third time; and all the sounds of the gathering
 night were hushed under the sound of the roaring of the war-horn of the
 Wolfings; and the Kin of the Beamings heard it as they sat in their
 hall, and they gat them ready to hearken to the bearer of the tidings
 who should follow on the sound of the war-blast.

But when the last sound of the horn had died away, then said
 Thiodolf:

"Now Wolfing children hearken, what the splintered War-shaft saith,
 The fire scathed blood-stained aspen! we shall ride for life or death,
 We warriors, a long journey with the herd and with the wain;
 But unto this our homestead shall we wend us back again,
 All the gleanings of the battle; and here for them that live
 Shall stand the Roof of the Wolfings, and for them shall the meadow thrive,
 And the acres give their increase in the harvest of the year;
 Now is no long departing since the Hall-Sun bideth here
 'Neath the holy Roof of the Fathers, and the place of the Wolfing kin,
 And the feast of our glad returning shall yet be held therein.
 Hear the bidding of the War-shaft! All men, both thralls and free,
 'Twixt twenty winters and sixty, beneath the shield shall be,
 And the hosting is at the Thingstead, the Upper-mark anigh;
 And we wend away to-morrow ere the Sun is noon-tide high."

Therewith he stepped down from the mound, and went his way back
 to the hall; and manifold talk arose among the folk; and of the war-
 riors some were already dight for the journey, but most not, and a many
 went their ways to see to their weapons and horses, and the rest back
 again into the hall.

By this time night had fallen, and between then and the dawning would
 be no darker hour, for the moon was just rising; a many of the horse-
 herds had done their business, and were now making their way back
 again through the lanes of the wheat, driving the stallions before them,
 who played together kicking, biting and squealing, paying but little heed
 to the standing corn on either side. Lights began to glitter now in the
 cots of the thralls, and brighter still in the stithies where already you