

LAPP GIRLS.

'MID mountains, lakes, and forests wild,
I grew up from a tender child:
Made strong by storm and summer's sun,
On fleet foot o'er the snows to run;
With placid stream alone to trace
My bright brown eyes and ruddy face.



LAPP girls, mountain nymphs, nature's own children; beloved, but neither pampered nor petted; born and nurtured amidst her wildest solitudes, where shepherd never piped to his woolly flock, nor

ploughboy ever whistled as he furrowed the stony land. Now wandering over altitudes where snow-fields and snow-flecks defy the summer's heat; where the eagle soars and the wolf prowls, and the bear lurks under the birch woods which hang upon their lower skirts; now camping by the side of a lonely tarn, or crossing a wide and drear morassy plateau; and now descending to vast forests of darksome pine, through which the cataract plunges and rushes

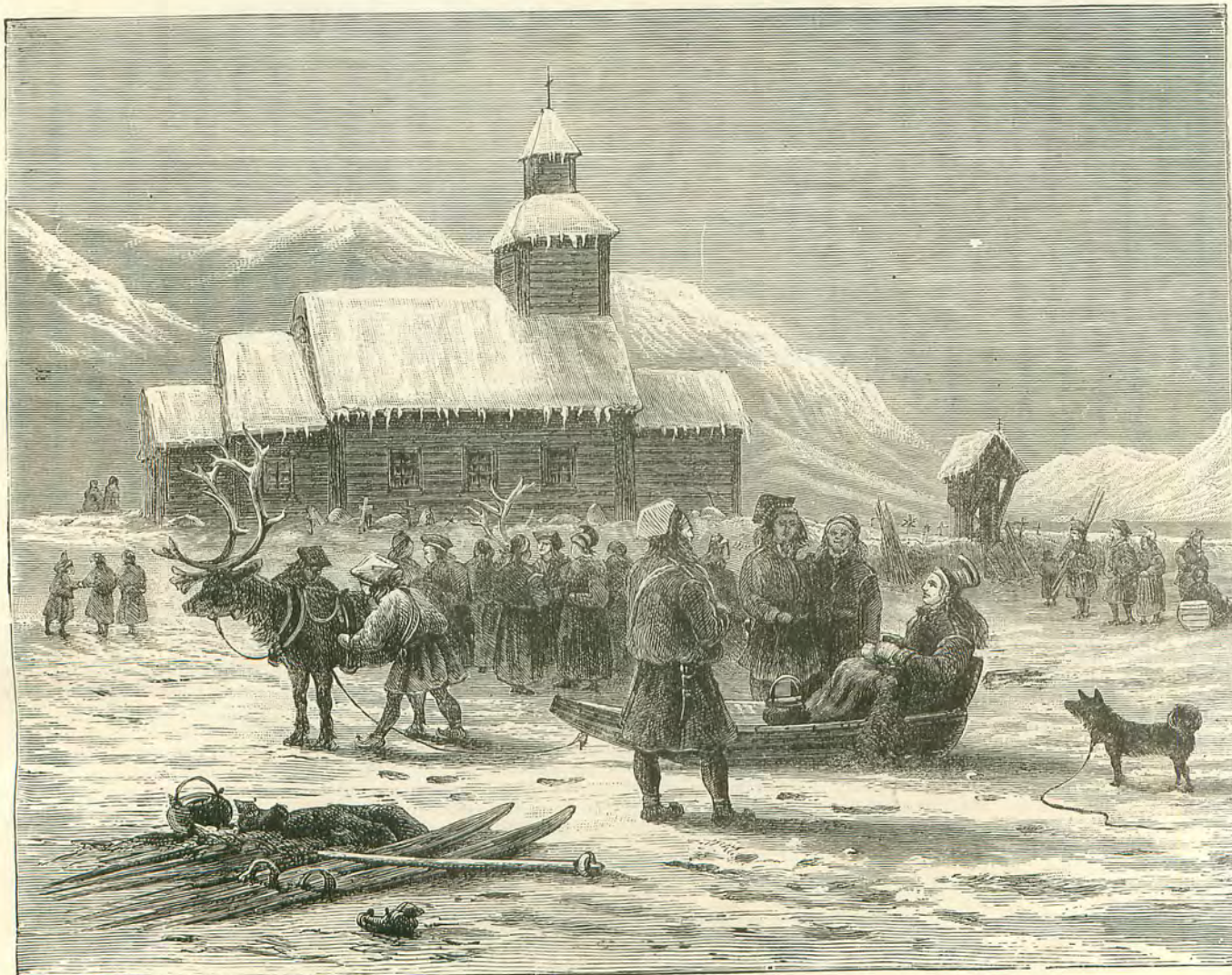
with a thundering roar. Dwelling thus amidst the wildest, most picturesque and poetic of scenes; themselves clad in attire as picturesquely accordant with the scenery as it is suitable to the nature and climate of the region; tending also the most picturesque of half-wild herds, what wonder that imagination, despite the snows, should have been fired by the theme, and have involved Lapland girls, and their companions too, in the golden, sunny haze its magic wand had evolved from a mountain fog?

But whatever poetic ideas and sentiments Lapp girls or men may incite in the minds of others, they are themselves practical, not poetical; and we may rest assured that the so-called translations of Lapland love-songs in which poets have indulged are pleasant fictions merely, or, at most, as much like any basis of song they may be founded upon as a polished ruby gem is like a fragment of millstone-grit. Lapp girls have no time or inclination to indulge in romantic fancies; their life is sternly real and prosaic; and as such we will endeavour to describe it.

And first, attention is due to personal appearance; a subject of prime consideration with most girls, not even excepting the sensible

young readers of THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER. The Lapps, it is well known, are a small race; the men averaging about five feet and the women four feet eight inches in height, some not attaining to four feet six. Though muscular and well developed, with occasional exception of the women, they are never fat. Owing to intermixture with other races, the Mongolian type of features is now rarely seen in its purity, though approximations to it, more or less close, are common. The chief traits are short, broad faces; high cheekbones; wide mouth, with thick lips and good teeth; short chin; nose commonly rather short; eyes, sometimes obliquely set, and usually narrow, being contracted, perhaps, by habitual endeavour to avoid the smoke within the tent, and the glare of the snow without; the colour various, but most frequently brown. The prevailing colour of the hair also is brown, but it is seen of all shades, from flaxen to black. When young the Lapps are fair-complexioned, but as they grow older acquire a grey or brownish hue.

Beauty is a rare quality among the Lapps; nevertheless many of the girls are quite passably good-looking, and some really pretty, especially when set off by their quaint holiday dress.



SUNDAY IN SWEDISH LAPLAND.

They have often bright, vivacious eyes, and their step is elastic and quick. But, alas for the fair Lapp maidens! beauty, everywhere proverbially fleeting, is especially so with them; under the influence of a hard climate, toil, and smoke, they soon look old; and when really so, usually combine an aspect of sordid indifference with ugliness in excess.

Next to personal appearance, dress, which is closely connected with it, is an object of liveliest interest to the generality of young girls—Lappish included; few among the daughters of Eve agree with the poet that "beauty unadorned is adorned the most;" rather would they, in defiance of a greater poet, "paint the lily, and add another perfume to the rose."

To see Lapp girls in the full bloom of their wardrobes we must not seek them at home in the smutty tent, or with the herd on the mountain, in greasy, tattered old skin tunic, and besmirched headgear over dishevelled hair. We must meet them by one of the small, solitary chapels, scattered widely apart in the upper valleys of the wilderness, where, once or twice a year, the pastor comes from the far distant parish church to conduct religious rites and services for the benefit of the wandering portion of his flock. There, for two or three summer or autumn days of hard, prolonged toil, he reads the lessons, preaches, leads the singing of certain psalms and hymns, administers the sacrament, catechises young and old, baptises, marries, and repeats the burial service over the dead, interred since his former visitation within the lonely churchyard by relatives and friends.

On such occasion the wilderness blossoms like the rose. All appear in the choicest of their holiday garments, which, as worn by the girls and young women at least, are radiantly gay, contributing—in combination with wooded and snow-patched mountains; the simple chapel, standing, perchance, on a bosky and grassy knoll; and the curious, tent-shaped church huts of the Lapps, formed of poles and birch-bark, which are scattered around it—to produce a scene as strange as it is interesting and picturesque. Within these primitive huts, which are entirely vacated for the rest of the year, we may see our gaily-attired Lapp girls seated with their kindred upon birch twigs and reindeer skins laid upon the floor, forming family and friendly circles round the central fire, and indulging in cups of their dearly-beloved coffee from the copper kettle, which stands on three long legs upon the hearth; or, better still, in the sunshine, sitting and chatting in little groups on the grassy slopes before the doors; for there their attire is more brightly displayed, and may be more accurately observed.

Among the nomadic Lapps the dresses of men, women, and children are all much alike, and the holiday dress differs from the ordinary one only in costliness of material and ornamentation. It consists, for the girls in common with older women, of a tunic-shaped coat of fine woollen cloth with long sleeves, extending from the neck to below the calf of the leg, or often almost to the ankles; slit in front from the neck to near the waist, where it is clasped by an embroidered or silver-embossed belt. The colours most prevalent are black and dark or light blue, the latter and bright green being more especially favoured by the girls; but whatever the colour, the dress is always edged and margined with stripes of some contrasting colour or colours—scarlet, green, yellow, and white being much in vogue. Trousers or tight-fitting pantaloons are worn by women as well as men; the men's of thin leather, the women's more usually of fine or coarse cloth. The summer shoe is of stout leather; its sole, without heel, stitched to the upper part along the sides of the foot, and terminating at the toes with a sharp, upturned peak. In lieu of sock the foot is enveloped in soft, dried grass, extending over the ankles where the shoe meets and over-

laps the pantaloons; around which it is tightly closed by coils of parti-coloured, broad worsted band—so arranged, according to one fashion adopted by the girls, that blue appears uppermost, succeeded by scarlet and light yellow. Like their sisters elsewhere, the mountain girls are vain of a small foot, and consequently are apt to pinch their pretty little toes. The head-dress of the Lapps varies in different localities. In some parts of Norwegian Lapland the men wear a flat-topped and the women a helmet-shaped cap; in the more northern tracts of Swedish Lapland both men and women wear high-peaked caps of dark blue cloth, the women's being distinguished by having scarlet edges and seams. But further south, while the same form prevails, the man only wears a blue cap, and the woman invariably a scarlet or red, towering on the heads of some of the prettier girls and young women with very pleasing effect, calculated to communicate its flame-like nature to susceptible hearts. Within the dress a stomacher of embroidered cloth is usually worn, suspended round the neck and fastened behind with a hook; but this is often crossed over and concealed by a small neckerchief or shawl. The girls mostly wear their hair in two long plaits, each terminated with a string of beads and a variegated tassel; and either hanging behind, or perhaps more commonly brought to the front. From the belt, or partly from a brass ring connected with it, resembling a small catherine-wheel, hang sundry useful articles and ornaments—knife, scissors, needle-case of reindeer's horn, a large tassel composed of beads, strips of coloured leather, small brass rings and silver balls; and above all, on these holiday occasions, a small bead-embroidered pocket or purse, containing a silver spoon with large round or ovoid bowl and short broad handle, richly engraved and hung with small rings of frosted silver, which peers out of the pocket with as much desire to be admired as any young lady's golden watch.

Such, with slight local variations, is the summer holiday dress of the young lady Lapp; but in winter, when Lapland is no Garden of Eden, and dress is worn for warmth, the Lapp maiden is robed from head to feet in the shaggy spoils of the reindeer. Instead of the dainty azure *vulopo*, with its scarlet and amber-tinted margins, she must now don the heavy hirsute *muodda*, of similar form, but made wide and unshapely; and in this, with mittens on her hands and shoes on her feet of the same material, her head also hid in furry cap, our mountain nymph seems transformed to a werewolf, or other wild creature of the woods, by the spiteful magic of some potent wizard of her own race. But, thus mantled, she can defy the winter's snowstorms, and its cold, which sometimes congeals mercury, cannot freeze her blood. With the coruscating northern lights, the full-orbed moon, or a myriad twinkling stars gleaming in the deep heaven above her head, she can glide upon her long snow-shoes over the boundless expanse of snow to drive the wolf from her flock; or, seated in her cosy sledge, she can urge her fleet reindeer to the tent of a distant friend.

Lapp girls, be they rich or poor, take part, at least occasionally, in tending the herd. Milking is another of their occupations, shared with both women and men during the three or four summer months to which only the milking season extends. A pleasant sight in rural England is that of a comely dairymaid, seated in park or paddock under a broad oak, milking her quiet group of cows; but though no such tranquil beauty attends a milking scene in Lapland wilds, it possesses a far more stirring interest of its own. There, upon the lower slopes of a cragged and snow-flecked mountain, collected with clamour of dogs and men from far and wide, within an ample fold, or perchance upon an open patch of snow,

may be seen a herd of several hundred, or even over a thousand, reindeer—bucks, does, and calves; a forest of great branching horns swaying over a dense mass of grey-brown backs and restless heads. All hands are soon at work, each playing a part. Mark that sturdy, nimble-footed damsel in red cap and tattered skin coat with the hair worn off. See, she uncoils from her waist a long lasso, and with a cast of her hand, the noose end of it is over the horns of a wilful milch doe. It struggles and rushes forward, dragging the girl along. She stumbles over a tree-root, and is trailed a yard or two along the ground; but, keeping her hold, she springs up again in a moment, renews the contest, and presently leads the subjugated animal to the milker, who, couching under a tree to which it is tied, extracts the milk with one hand into a short-handled ladle which the other hand holds. In like manner all the does to be milked are singled out from the rest of the herd and caught with the lasso; but most of them more quietly submit.

As the tent contains neither table, chair, stool, nor beds, except reindeer skins, and as the floor consists merely of the common earth, strewn with small branches of birch, there is not much household work for the girls to do. Of bread or porridge the mountain Lapps eat little or none, their diet being chiefly reindeer cheese and flesh; and, contrary to usual custom, the man is the principal cook. No doubt the young ladies will be capable of preparing the delectable blood-soup and blood-cakes so highly relished by the Lapps; the former consisting of desiccated and pulverized blood, kept in the stomach of the reindeer, from which it is taken and boiled in water; the latter, of the same ingredient, mixed with a little barley meal and baked in a frying-pan over the fire.

Among other accomplishments, Lapp girls are good sempstresses; with the aid of their mammas, making their own dresses, and doing all the tailoring for the men. They also plait, or weave in a small hand-frame, shoe bands and belts; and even shoe-making is not beyond their skill. The more delicate art of embroidery is also known to them; and on winter evenings especially, while the man is perhaps making or carving horn spoons with a knife, or interweaving fine basket-work of spruce tree roots, the girls and women, it is likely, are as busily engaged embroidering belts, stomachers, collars, gloves, and purses, with thread, worsted, small beads, or fine tin-wire. Their proficiency in the practice of this art is mentioned by Jacob Ziegler, a German author, in the year 1523.

During the course of the last forty years schools have been established in different parts of Lapland, to which the children of the nomads are sent to be educated, living meantime with the peasants in the distant hamlets where the schools are situated; and as the Lapp scholars are said to be quite as quick to learn as their associates, most of the young people can now read, and many of them can write.

The remark of the Italian Ucerbi, that the mountain Lapp is utterly devoid of a sense of harmony, has been the verdict also of Swedish and other authors; the only musical instrument peculiarly his own is a scranell pipe of wood or bone; and his native wood-notes—wild enough—sound harsh and discordant to cultivated ears. Nevertheless, as the present writer has had the opportunity of hearing, the nomadic girls and young women—at least, when trained by teachers, and by missionaries who have sought their solitary haunts—are quite capable, under guidance of a leader, of singing in melodious concert, with voices impressively soft and sweet, the sacred tunes and hymns they have been taught. On the same occasion he was equally pleased to observe the simple, childlike, unsophisticated

character of several, if not most, of these more cultivated and devout young people; the kindly and gentle expression of their features—"something than beauty dearer"—combined with a total absence of affectation, pretence, or vulgarity of any kind. The feminine nature, especially, of the Lapps is very impressionable, and therefore correspondingly open to religious emotions and influences.

With the good and bad qualities of the rest of mankind the Lapp is, in general, well-disposed; his usual kind treatment of wife, children and servants being favourable evidence of this. Yet in the important and usually pleasant affair of courtship, love amongst the Lapps appears to play a very subordinate part. The poet, darting the electric fire of his own heart into that of the young nomad, sings:

"Haste, my reindeer, and let us nimbly go
Our am'rous journey o'er this dreary
waste;
Haste, my reindeer! still, still thou art
too slow.
Impetuous love demands the lightning's
haste."

But the young Lapp is rarely in such a violent hurry and flurry about the affair, although he usually marries at an early age. Nowhere is marriage more commonly undertaken from mercenary motives than among the mountain Lapps. The heart, says Lästadius, has in it next to no voice; and Gustaf von Düben, a Swedish ethnologist, who has written a most comprehensive work on Lapland and its inhabitants, states that very frequently Lapp marriages are a parents' bargain, contracted while the children are quite young, and brought to pass, without consulting them, when they become of proper age. Such procedure naturally occurs most among the rich.

Lapp girls are eligible for wives at sixteen or seventeen years of age; and the young men as soon as they can slaughter a reindeer and set up a tent. Early marriages are commonly urged on by the parents; for an ecclesiastical ordinance instituted in 1745, to promote the acquisition of religious knowledge by the young Lapps, still remains: giving liberty of marriage to every youth as soon as he has learnt the required amount of Christian doctrine, and attained the age of seventeen.

The young people visit each other unrestrictedly in the tents, and indulge in much merriment and lively talk; but the mode of greeting when they first meet, by kissing with the nose—rubbing their noses together—formerly practised by the Lapps, has become obsolete. Nevertheless, though fashions change, love—even if it be but the love of money—is perennial; and therefore it naturally happens at these social gatherings that mutual attachments between young men and maidens are sometimes formed. The course of Lapp courtship, when not superseded by parental authority, has been circumstantially described by Lästadius and later writers. According to these, when a young man has taken a fancy to a fair maid, or to the wealth which constitutes the sole charms of another, the wily youth begins his advances jestingly, that he may thereby surmise the chance of final success. If the signs appear favourable, and the old formalities are to be observed, the suitor then pays a ceremonious visit to the girl's parents, accompanied with numerous relations, himself the last in the procession. On arriving at the tent, or hut, he either remains outside, or keeps quite passive within; his charmer also, if present, is equally mute, and appears totally unconcerned; but more frequently, at sight of the company, she hastens to some hiding-place, or among the reindeer.

Business is begun by one of the relatives who has been chosen to take the part of chief speaker, or pleader; and while he is advocating the suitor's cause with the girl's father and mother, treating them at the same time with the contents of a spirit flask, the others, aided by the same potent influence, seek to enlist in his favour the rest of the family; plying them with commendations and adulations in prose and verse. If at this stage of proceedings fervid eloquence and ardent spirit failed to effect the desired result, it was a custom formerly for the pleader to present the suitor with the consolation of a calfskin! But if a more or less liberal supply of both has inclined the parents to consent, then comes the consideration of the suitor's gifts; which are forthwith placed before them on a reindeer skin. Usually they consist of silver articles, such as spoons, drinking-cups, rings, and clasps; also money and household utensils may be added, together with the proffer of reindeer. Persuasive gifts are also presented to the relatives of the bride; the entire presentations being often of considerable value when both parties are rich. If, however, those displayed in the first instance before the parents are deemed insufficient, the pleader brings out and offers more; and it sometimes happens that, after prolonged bargainings, restricted offers cause the loss of the suit. When the parents have been contented, the bride, if out, is sent for by some friend, to whom the suitor's mother makes a present to secure her good word; and on arriving, after meekly expressing submission to the will of father and mother, the obedient daughter receives and scrutinises her gift; and if not to her liking and expectation, she wing dissatisfaction till they are rendered more consonant with her desires. She is then betrothed with a ring and a spoon, both of ancient form; and the affair being so far brought to a fortunate conclusion, the parents on both sides are treated to bränvin (a sort of whisky), nor are the rest of the company, including the bride, loth to take a taste of the same; all shake hands; speeches are made; provisions, brought by the guests, are set out; servers are appointed, and a betrothal feast is held. When that is over all seek rest; and after a breakfast next day, the successful wooer and his retinue return to their tents.

Variations of the mode of wooing and winning a bride among Lapland snows occur in different parts of the region; nor is the above mode, known as "courtship with bränvin," that is, with due formality, so common now as formerly; but it will suffice to show the spirit with which, in a double sense, the affair is still generally conducted; and it now only remains to make an end of Lapp girls by converting them into wives.

After the publication of the banns appointed marshals carry round the invitations, presenting with them to each invited person a dram, which he receives as earnest-money binding him to attend. Marriage is celebrated in accordance with the ritual of the Lutheran Church, to which the Lapps of Sweden and Norway, in common with the Scandinavians, belong. As in the case of country bridals of the dominant race in parts where the old customs are still retained, there is no lack at a Lapp marriage of rustical pomp. On one such occasion, witnessed by the writer in Swedish Lapland, the young bride was quite resplendent; upon her head a small, glittering crown surmounted a wreath, or mass rather, of artificial flowers, glowing with the gayest of tints; a silver-gilt belt encircled her waist, and above it the whole bust was covered with silver-gilt ornaments, large and small, in various leafy, floral, and other forms, set upon scarlet cloth edged with lace, and most of them hanging loosely so that they quivered and glittered as the united couple walked slowly between admiring spectators from the altar down the aisle.

The bridegroom wore a Lapp coat of the usual form, edged with scarlet, and with high, stiff, upright collar, lined with scarlet cloth; but above the belt it was opened unusually wide to display a white shirt front, and the white handkerchief he wore round his neck; it was moreover adorned with a large bouquet of artificial red roses, rivalling those of his bride. The bridesmaids and bridesmen were little inferior in dress or adornment to the parties they respectively honoured; and as the bridal procession, headed by a musician playing on the violin, passed from the church to the house of entertainment, it made a goodly show. The bride's dress, it should have been stated, was of fine black cloth; in form like the bridegroom's coat, but without the collar, and margined near the bottom of the skirt with a strip of scarlet cloth. She also wore a white veil, hanging behind her back almost to the heels; but this part of the bridal costume, and much of the rest, was adopted from the Swedes—the Lapps, like other people, having on high occasions an inclination to copy the fashions of those who rank higher than themselves. The crown and other costly bridal ornaments belonged to a Lapp who was in the habit of lending them out on hire; a custom prevailing also among the Swedish and Norwegian peasantry in parts where the bridal crown is still in request.

Högström, who wrote more than a century ago, says that the bride was led to the marriage by her father and a kind of marshal, and that it was usual for her to show on the occasion a high degree of bashfulness; so that she had sometimes to be dragged forwards by force, like a refractory reindeer in the milking-fold when the noose has been thrown round its neck. In proof of such modesty, one Lapp-bride, when standing before the altar in all the pomp and circumstance of matrimonial initiation, on being asked if willing to take that man to be her lawful husband, answered in the negative; but, when told by the pastor he could not in that case proceed, the coy damsel quickly substituted a "Yes" for the "No," saying she fully expected he would put the question a second time. It was not sufficient, however, for a young Lapp bride to appear shy and bashful; if she would be happy and fortunate after marriage she must show no signs of satisfaction while it is taking place, nor during the festivities which succeed it.

The wedding feast is held at the home of the bride's parents; but provisions and bränvin are contributed to it by the guests. Occasionally also some of these give or promise gifts to the married pair; the latter being subsequently fetched by the bridegroom, who accompanies his thanks with a grateful draught from the bottle carried in his hand. The Lapps in general are by nature a lively effusive people, and when the substantial part of the entertainment has been disposed of, it is often succeeded by no small measure of merriment, free talk, playing, dancing, and especially of drinking, so that it sometimes happens most of the company sleep where they sit or chance to fall. Such excesses, however, belong less to the present than the past.

The young couple remain a year with the bride's father, grazing their herd along with his. At the termination of this period they remove to a hut or tent of their own, taking with them all their property, consisting of reindeer, partly given in dowry, household articles, provisions, and sundry bridal gifts presented by the younger members of the family and friends.

And now, as the bride has quite passed away from the sisterhood of Lapp girls, with best wishes for her future welfare and happiness, we leave her to the household, maternal, and pastoral cares which devolve upon an active, industrious and vigilant Lapp wife in her breezy and fluctuating mountain home.