

HOW SAMPO LAPPELILL SAW THE MOUNTAIN KING

A STORY FOR CHILDREN.

(FROM THE SWEDISH OF
Z. TOPELIUS.)



a high, dreary mountain, and can be seen from Aimiö, from which it is five or six miles distant.

"You audacious boy!" exclaimed the mother; "how dare you talk so? Rastekäis is the home of the trolls, and Hisü dwells there also."

"Who is Hisü?" inquired Sampo.

"What ears that boy has!" thought the Lapp-wife. "But I ought not to have spoken of such things in his presence; the best thing I can do now is to frighten him well." Then she said aloud: "Take care, Lappelill, that you never go near Rastekäis, for there lives Hisü, the Mountain-King, who can eat a whole reindeer at one mouthful, and who swallows little boys like flies."

Upon hearing these words, Sampo could not help thinking what good fun it would be to have a peep at such a wonderful being—from a safe distance, of course!

Three or four weeks had elapsed since Christmas, and darkness brooded still over Lapland. There was no morning, noon, or evening; it was always night. Sampo was feeling dull. It was so long since he had seen the sun that he had nearly forgotten what it was like. Yet he did not desire the return of summer, for the only thing he remembered about that season was that it was a time when the gnats stung very severely. His one wish was that it might soon become light enough for him to use his snow-shoes.

One day, at noon (although it was dark), Sampo's father said: "Come here! I have something to show you."

Sampo came out of the hut. His father pointed towards the south.

"Do you know what that is?" asked he.

"A southern light," replied the boy.

"No," said his father, "it is the herald of the sun. To-morrow, maybe, or the day after that, we shall see the sun himself. Look, Sampo, how weirdly the red, light glows on the top of Rastekäis!"

Sampo perceived that the snow upon the

FAR away in Lapland, at a place called Aimiö, near the River Jana, there lived, in a little hut, a Laplander and his wife, with their small son, Sampo.

Sampo Lappelill was now between seven and eight years of age. He had black hair, brown eyes, a snub nose, and a wide mouth, which last is considered a mark of beauty in curious Lapland. Sampo was a strong child for his age; he delighted to dance down the hills in his little snow-shoes, and to drive his own reindeer in his own little sledge. The snow whirled about him as he passed through the deep drifts, until nothing of him could be seen except the tuft of his black forelock.

"I shall never feel comfortable while he is from home!" said the mother. "He may meet Hisü's reindeer with the golden antlers."

Sampo overheard these words, and wondered what reindeer it could be that had golden antlers. "It must be a splendid animal!" said he; "how much I should like to drive to Rastekäis with it!" Rastekäis is

gloomy summit, which had been so long shrouded in darkness, was coloured red. Again the idea flashed into his mind what a grand sight the terrible Mountain-King would be—from a distance. The boy brooded on this for the remainder of the day, and throughout half the night, when he should have been asleep.

He thought, and thought, until at length he crept silently out of the reindeer skins which formed his bed, and then through the door-hole. The cold was intense. Far above him the stars were shining, the snow scrunched beneath his feet. Sampo Lappelill was a brave boy, who did not fear the cold. He was, moreover, well wrapped up in fur. He stood gazing at the stars, considering what to do next.

Then he heard a suggestive sound. His little reindeer pawed the ground with its feet. "Why should I not take a drive?" thought Sampo, and proceeded straightway to put his thought into action. He harnessed the reindeer to the sledge, and drove forth into the wilderness of snow.

"I will drive only a little way towards Rastekaïs," said Sampo to himself, and off he went, crossing the frozen River Jana to the opposite shore, which—although the child was unaware of this fact—belonged to the kingdom of Norway.

As Sampo drove, he sang a bright little song. The wolves were running round his sledge like grey dogs, but he did not mind them. He knew well that no wolf could keep pace with his dear, swift little reindeer. Up hill and down dale he drove on, with the wind whistling in his ears. The moon seemed to be racing with him, and the rocks to be running backwards. It was thoroughly delightful!

Alas! at a sudden turning upon the downward slope of a hill the sledge overturned, and Sampo was pitched into a snow-drift. The reindeer did not observe this, and, in the belief that its master was still sitting behind it, it ran on. Sampo could not cry "Stop!" for his mouth was stuffed with snow.

He lay there in the darkness, in the midst of the vast, snowy wilderness, in which was no human habitation for miles around.

At first, he naturally felt somewhat bewildered. He scrambled unhurt out of the big snow-drift. Then, by the wan moonlight, he saw that he was surrounded on all sides by snow-drifts and huge mountains. One mountain towered above the others, and this he knew must be Rastekaïs, the home of the fierce Mountain-King, who swallowed little boys like flies!

Sampo Lappelill was frightened now, and heartily wished himself safe at home. But how was he to get there?

There sat the poor child, alone in the darkness, amongst the desolate, snow-covered rocks, with the big, black shadow of Rastekaïs frowning down upon him. As he wept his tears froze immediately, and rolled down over his jacket in little round lumps like peas; so Sampo thought that he had better leave off crying, and run about in order to keep himself warm.

"Rather than freeze to death here," he said to himself, "I would go straight to the Mountain-King. If he has a mind to swallow me, he must do so, I suppose; but I shall advise him to eat instead some of the wolves in this neighbourhood. They are much fatter than I, and their fur would not be so difficult to swallow."

Sampo began to ascend the mountain. Before he had gone far, he heard the trotting of some creature behind him, and a moment after a large wolf overtook him. Although inwardly trembling, Sampo would not betray his fear. He shouted:—

"Keep out of my way! I am the bearer of a message to the King, and you hinder me at your peril!"

"Dear me!" said the wolf (on Rastekaïs all the animals can speak). "And, pray, what little shrimp are you, wriggling through the snow?"

"My name is Sampo Lappelill," replied the boy. "Who are you?"

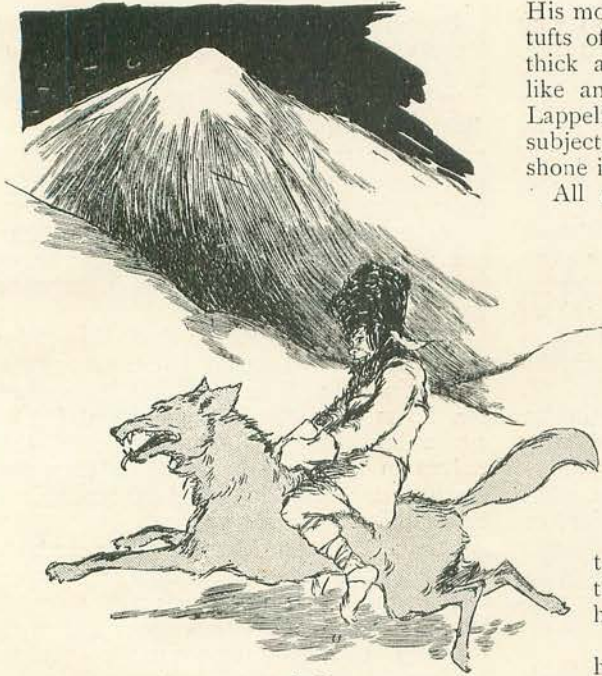
"I," answered the wolf, "am first gentleman-usher to the Mountain-King. I have just been all over the kingdom to call together his subjects for the great sun festival. As you are going my way, you may, if you please, get upon my back, and so ride up the mountain."

Sampo instantly accepted the invitation. He climbed upon the shaggy back of the wolf, and they went off at a gallop.

"What do you mean by the sun festival?" inquired Sampo.

"Don't you know *that*?" said the wolf. "We celebrate the sun's feast the day he first appears on the horizon, after the long night of winter. All trolls, goblins, and animals in the north then assemble on Rastekaïs, and on that day they are not permitted to hurt each other. Lucky it was for you, my boy, that you came here to-day. On any other day, I should have devoured you long ago."

"Is the King bound by the same law?" asked Sampo, anxiously.



"THEY WENT OFF AT A GALLOP."

"Of course he is," answered the wolf. "From one hour before sunrise until one hour after sunset, he will not dare to harm you. If, however, you are on the mountain when the time expires, you will be in great danger. For the King will then seize whoever comes first, and a thousand bears and a hundred thousand wolves will also be ready to rush upon you. There will soon be an end of Sampo Lappelill!"

"But perhaps, sir," said Sampo, timidly, "you would be so kind as to help me back again before the danger begins?"

The wolf laughed. "Don't count on any such thing, my dear Sampo; on the contrary, I mean to seize you first myself. You are such a very nice, plump little boy! I see that you have been fattened on reindeer milk and cheese. You will be splendid for breakfast to-morrow morning!"

Sampo began to think that his best course might be to jump off the wolf's back at once. But it was too late. They had now arrived at the top of Rastekaï's. Many curious and marvellous things were there to be seen. There sat the terrible Mountain-King on his throne of cloudy rocks, gazing out over the snow-fields. He wore on his head a cap of white snow-clouds; his eyes were like a full moon; his nose resembled a mountain-ridge.

His mouth was an abyss; his beard was like tufts of immense icicles; his arms were as thick and strong as fir trees; his coat was like an enormous snow mountain. Sampo Lappelill had a good view of the King and his subjects, for a bow of dazzling northern lights shone in the sky and illuminated the scene.

All around the King stood millions of goblins, trolls, and brownies; tiny, grey creatures, who had come from remotest parts of the world to worship the sun. This they did from fear, not from love; for trolls and goblins hate the sun, and always hope that he will never return when they see him disappear at the end of summer.

Farther off stood all the animals of Lapland, thousands and thousands of them of all sizes; from the bear, the wolf, and the glutton, to the little mountain-rat, and the brisk, tiny reindeer-flea. No gnats appeared, however; they had all been frozen.

Sampo was greatly astonished at what he saw. Unobserved, he slipped from the wolf's back, and hid behind a ponderous stone, to watch the proceedings.

The Mountain-King shook his head, and the snow whirled about him. The northern lights shone around his head like a crown of glory, sending long, red streamers across the deep blue sky; they whizzed and sparkled, expanded and drew together, fading sometimes, then again darting out like lightning over the snow-clad mountains. This performance amused the King. He clapped with his icy hands until the sound echoed like thunder, causing the trolls to scream with joy, and the animals to howl with fear. At this the King was still more delighted, and he shouted across the desert:—

"This is to my mind! Eternal darkness! Eternal night! May they never end!"

"May they never end!" repeated all the trolls at the top of their voices. Then arose a dispute amongst the animals. All the beasts of prey agreed with the trolls, but the reindeer and other gentle creatures felt that they should like to have summer back again, although they disliked the gnats that would certainly return with it. One creature alone was ready to welcome summer quite unreservedly. This was the reindeer-flea. She piped out as loudly as she could:—

"If you please, your Majesty, have we not come here to worship the sun, and to watch for his coming?"

"Nonsense!" growled a Polar bear. "Our

meeting here springs from a stupid old custom. The sooner it ends the better! In my opinion, the sun has set for ever; he is dead!"

At these words the animals shuddered, but the trolls and goblins were much pleased with them, and reiterated them gaily, shaking with laughter to such an extent that their

tremendous arm to strike Sampo; but at that moment the northern light faded. A red streak shot suddenly across the sky, shining with such brilliancy into the King's face that it entirely dazzled him. His arm fell useless at his side. Then the golden sun rose in slow stateliness on the horizon, and that flood of glorious light caused even those who had rejoiced in his supposed death to welcome his re-appearance.

But the goblins were considerably astonished. From under their red caps they stared at the sun with their little grey eyes, and grew so excited that they stood on their heads in the snow. The beard of the Mountain-King began to melt and drip, until it was flowing down his jacket like a running stream.

By-and-by, Sampo heard a reindeer say to her little one:—

"Come, my child, we must be going, or we shall be eaten by the wolves."

"Such will be *my* fate also if I linger longer," thought Sampo. So he sprang upon the back of a beautiful reindeer with golden antlers,

which started off with him at once, darting down the rocks with lightning speed.

"What is that rustling sound that I hear behind us?" asked the boy, presently.

"It is made by the thousand bears; they are pursuing us in order to eat us up," replied the reindeer. "You need not fear, however, for I am the King's own enchanted reindeer, and no bear has ever been able as yet to nibble my heels!"

They went on in silence for a time, then Sampo put another question.

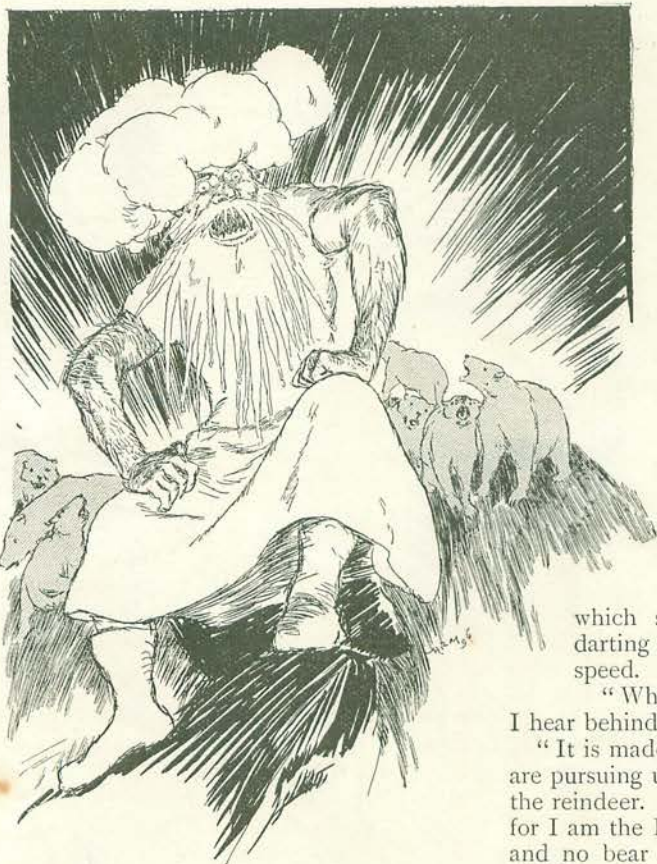
"What," asked he, "is that strange panting I hear behind us?"

"That," returned the reindeer, "is made by the hundred thousand wolves; they are at full gallop behind us, and wish to tear us in pieces. But fear nothing from them! No wolf has ever beaten me in a race, yet!"

Again Sampo spoke:—

"Is it not thundering over there amongst the rocky mountains?"

"No," answered the now trembling reindeer; "that noise is made by the King, who is chasing us. Now, indeed, all hope has fled, for no one can escape *him*!"



"THE TERRIBLE MOUNTAIN-KING."

tiny caps fell off their heads. Then the King roared, in a voice of thunder:—

"Yea! Dead is the sun! Now must the whole world worship me, the King of Eternal Night and Eternal Winter!"

Sampo, sitting behind the stone, was so greatly enraged by this speech that he came forth from his hiding-place, exclaiming:—

"That, O King, is a lie as big as yourself! The sun is *not* dead, for only yesterday I saw his forerunner. He will be here very shortly, bringing sweet summer with him, and thawing the icicles in your funny, frozen beard!"

The King's brow grew black as a thundercloud. Forgetful of the law, he lifted his

"Can we do nothing?" asked Sampo.

"There is no safety to be found here," said the reindeer, "but there is just one chance for us. We must try to reach the priest's house over yonder by Lake Enare. Once there, we shall be safe, for the King has no power over Christians."

"Oh, make haste! make haste! dear reindeer!" cried Sampo, "and you shall feed on golden oats, and out of a silver manger."

On sped the reindeer. As they entered the priest's house, the Mountain-King crossed the courtyard, and knocked at the door with such violence that it is a wonder he did not knock the house down.

"Who is there?" called the priest from within.

"It is I!" answered a thundering voice; "it is the mighty Mountain-King! Open the door! You have there a child, whom I claim as my prey."

"Wait a moment!" cried the priest. "Permit me to robe myself, in order that I may give your Majesty a worthier reception."

"All right!" roared the King; "but be quick about it, or I may break down your walls!" A moment later he raised his enormous foot for a kick, yelling: "Are you not ready yet?"

Then the priest opened the door, and said, solemnly, "Begone, King of Night and Winter! Sampo Lappelill is under my protection, and he shall never be yours!"

Upon this, the King flew into such a violent passion that he exploded in a great storm of snow and wind. The flakes fell and fell, until the snow reached the roof of the priest's house, so that everyone inside it expected to be buried alive. But as soon as the sun rose, the snow began to melt, and all was well. The Mountain-King had completely vanished, and no one knows exactly what became of him, although

some think that he is still reigning on Rastekais.

Sampo thanked the priest heartily for his kindness, and begged, as an additional favour, the loan of a sledge. To this sledge the boy harnessed the golden-antlered reindeer, and drove home to his parents, who were exceedingly glad to see him.

How Sampo became a great man, who fed his reindeer with golden oats out of a silver manger, is too lengthy a story to tell now.

