PAGEANT OF THE NORTHMEN

By Willard Dillman.

Hans Heg was doing the last of his evening's work. He was only ten years old, but times were hard in Norway, and children would lend a hand where there was a chance to help. As Hans came out of his father's inn with an empty water bucket, his mother looked up from her spinning. She had brought her wheel out upon the stone walk, for the evening was mild and balmy. She felt a tugging at her heart as the boy passed her. She caught his jacket, pulled him to her side, took off his cap and stroked his hair. As she looked into his blue eyes, she thought she saw pictures of ~~strange lands~~ new lands. Her mother's heart would hardly let him go. He was hers now, but would not be hers long. Other forces would pull him, other sights than the quiet scenes at the inn would fill his eyes -- strange visions in ~~his~~ wild, unknown lands. Other affections would by claim to his heart. She must hold him while she could.

Behind the cabin ran a road. Away towards the left it came down out of the mountains. Towards the right it wound away down the valley towards the river and the town. Along this road travelers were continually passing. Almost all of the travelers on this evening seemed to be coming from the valley and were bound toward the mountains. But sometimes a pair of reindeer hunters, or a group of saeter girls, or a lone traveler, or a doctor with his one-horse gig would be passing from the mountains down towards the town. One time three travelers on horse-back, bound toward the mountains turned in from the road, feeling that they had gone far enough for that day. They removed their saddle bags, gave their horses to stable boys, and went into the inn for the night.

Even Heg, the boy's father, was among those who passed along the road that evening. He had gone to the town that morning and was returning home. He turned out of the road and stopped his horse in front of the inn. Some boys appeared and took charge of his horse, while Even took an armful of bundles from the gig. As he passed his wife, who had resumed her spinning, he greeted her with affection.

Hans had now finished his evening's work. He brought out a book, seated himself on the stone walk, and opened his book at the page where he had left off the night before. He had read only a few lines when found hard words. He went to his mother and asked her to help him with his reading. As soon as it grew too dark to read, they laid the book aside and Hans begged for folk lore stories. The first story that his mother told him was about trolls and nisse and witches and gnomes and huldre. The next story was about the fairies. The next story was about the folk dances which the young people enjoyed after their day's work in the field.

But Hans was an eager boy, and he was not yet satisfied. As the lengthening twilight grew fainter he asked his mother for just one more story. Then she told him the story of Cinderella, which is well known by the children of every nation. Oddly enough, when the last of the stories had been told, all of the people and the spirits about whom she had been telling came out of the dark and danced in a great circle around the inn. But, neither Hans or his mother could see them.

These were all the stories Hans could make his mother tell him that night, so he went into the inn and fetched his grandfather. Grandfather came out, not unwillingly, and sat beside the boy's mother. Grandfather had a vast store of the legends and traditions of his land. He told about the Valkyrie and the gods and goddesses. Then he told the well known story of Harold the Fair-haired. Next he told about Fridthjof and Ingeborg and the Vikings. Next came the story of Leif Erickson and his Icelanders, and hoe they discovered the "land of vines."

There was a story of Olaf Trygveson who brought the Christian religion to Norway, and another about Olaf den Hellige, who broke the last heathen idol. Next Grandfather told how the outlaw, Arnljot Geline, became a Christian as he set out for the battle. This was the last story that grandfather would tell. But the boy was still unsatisfied, so he went into

the inn and brought out his father. Even Heg sat beside the boy's mother and told him about Kleng Pearson and the Sloopers. He said that Kleng ~~Sloopar~~ Pearson had a wandering disposition. A certain group in Norway had embraced the Quaker faith, and they were longing for a land in which they would not be ridiculed when they went to meeting. Kleng Pearson undertook to spy out a new home for the Norse Quakers. The voyage of the famous sloop, Restaurationen, was the result of his labors. About half a hundred of the Norwegian Quakers crossed the sea in this tiny ship, and were received in America by people of their faith. When they arrived in New York, two of the passengers, Mr. & Mrs. Lars Larson, proudly exhibited their baby girl, Margaret Allen Larson, who had been born during the passage.

Even Heg had barely finished the story of the Sloopers when a new guest arrived at the inn. This man was Ansten Nattastad, who had been in America. He turned in from the road, dismissed the gig, and joined the party on the stone walk. Even Heg received him with the friendliness of the born landlord. Ansten had a prosperous appearance, as if he had come from a land of plenty. The stable boys and others regarded him with interest bordering upon wonder. They noted his American hat, his heavy gold watch chain and the fur coat which he wore because he was proud of it. Mrs. Heg brought out refreshments, and they talked as they partook. Mr. Nattastad described America, its distances, its bigness and its opportunities. Hans listened with eagerness. The new-comer borrowed a fiddle from one of the natives and played an American tune. It did not take the inn-keeper and his family long to develop a strong desire to immigrate to America.

As twilight closed, some belated travelers could still be seen making their way along the road.

There was a clear space in the midst of an American forest. The forest was inhabited by Indians who were now just returning from some hunting expedition. The men formed themselves in large circles; the boys made a smaller circle in imitation of their elders. The women began setting up tepees and building fires. Shawana, an Indian girl, broke away from the women and came forward and sang a song she loved. She sang the song sweetly because she was thinking of her lover, Manawa, who, unfortunately, ~~began~~ belonged to a hostile tribe. Manawa was just then passint, but, of course, he dared not show himself. When he heard her voice, he stopped and listened. As soon as she had finished her song, he gave a weird native whistle. She started at the sound and made her way out toward him. But she was not unobserved. Three or four young men crept up to the lovers and dragged Manawa into the circle of hostile Indians. The girl pleaded with them, but to no avail. The chief condemned Manawa to be burned at the stake. They tied him to the trunk of a tree, piled fagots about him and performed a wild dance. Shawana was in despair. But at this moment, she saw a white man approaching the camp. She knew from his dress that he was a missionary. She ran and met him, and together they hurried to the spot. The missionary, by reason of the awe he inspired, was not harmed by the Indians. He stamped out the fire and released the captive. Then he joined the hands of the lovers and sent them away toward Manawa's people. The holy man showed the Indians the cruelty of their practice. He told them about the great spirit. He knelt in prayer, and the Indians, at first a few and then all, knelt in imitation.

Into the midst of the unbroken forest, as the shades of evening drew on, came a part of Norwegian immigrants. They were: John, Knut, Halvor and Torge Luraas, Halvor Lonflock, Helge Mathieson, Ole Kroken, Ole Molleflatten, Ole Kjonaas, Nils Kassa, Nils, Ole and John Tollesfjord, Gitle Danielson, Halvor Kjellarviken, Paul Rosoine and John Molee. They had just arrived from the old country. Some of them carried bundles, others axes and spades, and a few guns. These men were weary after their long day's walk. They had now come to the end of their journey. They looked the ground over, and some of them paced off distances. Then they sat in a group and shared with one another the food they had carried with them. After supper they lay down to sleep. Two or three of the last read from their psalmbooks and knelt and said their prayers before lying down. When the men had fallen asleep, spirits of the wood appeared and danced among them. It was as if these spirits were giving expression to the dreams of happiness that came to the pioneers during their first sleep in the new land of promise. As soon as they had finished their dance, the numphs flitted away into the woods.

When the new-comers awoke the next morning, they beheld the Indians worshiping the fire. The Indians had heard that they were to leave these

woods, and they were now holding a final impressive ceremony. The chief and medecine man knelt and bowed to the earth, then lifted brands aloft. This they repeated several times. The chief depicted the imminent departure of his people. The medecine man invoked the blessing of the great spirit. young men took brands from the fire and threw them in each of the four directions. Men and women were chanting weird lament. The new-comers hardly knew what to make of this. Those who had rifles held them ready. As soon as the Indians observed the new-comers, they took up their guns also. The red and the white men approached one another with caution. But the Indian chief came forward with uplifted arm, indicating that there was to be no resistance. The Norse lowered their rifles, the Indians did the like. The white men and the red men exchanged ideas by signs. The Indians told how they were about to leave these woods; the Norse described how they intended to plough the ground, cut down the trees and build houses. Some of the new-comers opened their bags and gave bright colored trinkets to some of the Indians. The red men and most of the white men joined in a circle. The chief passed his pipe-stone pipe around. One of the Northmen, not to be outdone, passed his long-stemmed Norwegian pipe around. Already two or three of the new-comers were pacing off the land, as if eager to commence farming operations.

By the time that evening came, the Indians and the new-comers were mingling on the friendliest of terms. This was to be the last night that the Indians were to spend in their old haunts. Indians and new-comers were now surprised at an odd sight. Out of the east came three American pioneer covered wagons. These American families were on their way to Oregon or California, and were looking for a place to spend the night. Among the Americans were Joe rown, William Smith and Peter Lees, with their wives and children. The Northmen were not long in inviting these Americans to make their camp in their woods. The Americans unhitched their horses or oxen and made camp for the night. After supper a large camp fire was built and the people of the three nationalities gathered around it. The woods rang with the songs of each of the nations. The last song that they sang was "Home, Sweet Home." Each one of the singers used his native language, but the air was the old familiar tune that everyone knew.

It was the next morning. The Indian women had already been at work preparing to leave. Some of them were now taking down the last of the tepees; others were loading their utensils upon the ponies' backs or upon the travoirs which the ponies dragged. Slowly and sadly the tribe passed in single file away toward the west. The Northmen and the Americans watched the exodus of the Indians with interest. As soon as the last of the Indians disappeared, the Americans began hitching up their teams. They bade the Northmen goodbye and drove slowly away to the west.

The Northmen were now left in possession of the forest. It was not long before they had built a cabin. Around this, one day, a few months later, they were gathered as if expecting something to happen. In the distance a party of additional immigrants was seen. Among the new-comers were Torger Ostenson, Osten Olson, Knud Johnson, Ole Halvorson, Andreas Ambrosius, Halvor Ostenson, Soren G. Backe, Johannes Johannesen, Johannes Skorstad, Ole Anderson, Helge Thompson, Syvert Ingebretson, Knud Svalestuen, Ole Haagenson, Rev. G. L. Clausen, Peter Jacobson, J. D. Reymert, Ole Storlie, Halvor Thompson, Halvor Larson and others. Peter Jacobson was to become the first ~~post~~ postmaster, James Reymert was to be the first editor. Halvor Thompson was a blacksmith, Halvor Larson was a carpenter. With them came their wives and children, and the wives and children of those who had come earlier.

Among the new-comers was Even Heg and his family, and John Einong and family. Hans Heg and Grunhild Einong, each about ten years of age, came walking hand in hand. They played together and watched the grownups at their work.

Some of the new-comers brought domestic animals, others brought tools and implements. They were received by those who were already on the scene with affection. It was not long before all joined in the work at hand. Some chopped logs, others were sawing. Almost in a twinkling a forge was set up and the blacksmith was beating on his anvil. Cowbells were heard in the woods. Logs were hauled together to commence the building of a church.

A lone Indian had remained in the woods and was watching the activities

of the white men. Two of the new-comers walked up to the lone Indian and asked him why he stood in this manner. He explained that his people were all gone, but that he hesitated to break away from the land where his forefathers were buried. Then, he, too, walked sadly in the track of his people and passed out of the picture.

Not many months had elapsed until a rude church had been built in the wilderness. The Rev. Clausen, a young minister just ordained, was instructing a class of children. Men and women gathered for church. They took their places as a congregation; the minister was commencing his sermon, he was astonished to see Ole Storlie and his wife, young pioneers, come in, late, for church. Their faces beamed with joy as they brought their new baby to the minister to be baptised. Mr. Clausen was not annoyed at the disruption of his service. He saw only the ardent love of the young parents. The congregation gave loving attention as the first child bornin the settlement received baptism.

Before the newcomers had been able to establish themselves in comfort, a scourage of cholera assailed the colony. An immigrant mother and her two children were at work in the field, when they were stricken, one after another. As they staggered to their cabin,Hans Heg and Gunhild Einong passed on their way home from school. Hans ran and brought a doctor, Gunhild ran and brought a neighbor. Hans hurried and brought Rev. Clausen. The doctor gave medecine, while the minister offered spiritual help. Not long afterward, two men were seen digging in the woods not far away. Some of the neighbors had gathered. A large box and two small ones,all new and rudely made, were borne away from a cabin. The young minister led the procession. The immigrant mother and her children were laid to rest in the new land in which they had hoped to find long life and happiness.

When a few years had passed, the people of the settlementhad gathered one Sunday at the church for the confirmation of a class of boys and girls. The Rev. Hans Andreas Stub, the new minister, recently arrived from Norway, was in charge. As the candidates took their places for the confirmation, Hans Heg appeared at the head of the boys, and Gunhild Einong at the head of the girls. In spite of the rude surroundings, there was adignity and solemnity about the ceremony.

The pioneer days were not without their touches of comedy. Hans Hanson, by profession a dancing master, had arrived from the old country with his five daughters, the eldest of whom was named Caspara. The fame of the comliness of these sisters had spread throughout the settlement. James Reymert and four other young men, mounted on sprightly horses, rode up one evening and stopped at the cabin. The father appeared at the door with his rifle, as if anticipating mischief. Young Reymert explained that they had come to court his daughters. At this the dancing master called his daughters out and introduced them. Very speedily the young men and women formed in couples. So favorably was the father impressed with these pioneer suitors, that he fetched out his violin and played. Two or three of the couples danced sedately, while others talked by themselves. The young men, almost in chorus, asked the father for his five dauthers. He seemed to hesitate, then he gave away all but Caspara. Then, being importuned further, he gave her away to young Reymert. The rustic wooers mounted their horses, and the daughters mounted, each behind the man of her choice. As they rode away the father stood in the cabin door, fiddle in hand, and waved them a farewell.

During the fifties a political campaign was being waged. Hans Heg was a candidate for state legislator on the Free Soil ticket. A platform had been erected, and the people had gathered for the debate. William Riley, the opposition candidate, had just finished his speech. The chairman now introduced Hans Heg. The young man had not proceeded far with his speech against slavery, when a party of fugitive slaves arrived, bound northward towards Canada. They were timid and tried to conceal themselves in the edge of the crowd. Hans Heg siezed the opportunity to make a hit at slavery. He invited them to sing some of their plantationsongs.

Just as they were finishing their last song, a party of southerners rode in, in pursuit of their slaves. They heard the negroes singing. They made their way to the platform and demanded the return of their property. The Norse settlers protested, but upon being shown papers duly signed, they surrendered the slaves. As the slaves were driven back towards the south, they could be heard singing a song that began, "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen." Hans Heg stirred his audience as he exhorted them and pointed to the slaves being driven back into bondage.

Not long after this the happiest event in Hans Heg's life occurred. He and his childhood playmate, Gunhild Einong, were married. The wedding took place in a grove on Mr. Einong's farm.

The great musician, Ole Bull, happened to be in the settlement at this time. He made the occasion still happier by playing his most dearly loved selection, "Saeterjentens Sondag." After the wedding the young people danced the spring dans and the Halling and folk dances. There were refreshments, and there was noble singing. While the festivities were still going on, Hans and Gunhild drove away to their new home in a gig.

Not many years of peace and happiness were given to the young couple. All too soon the cruel Civil War broke out in the land. At the frontier store the first postmaster, Peter Jacobson, was giving out the mail. He distributed something to each except Luth Hansen, the tinsmith. Through youthful error, Luth had been imprisoned in Norway, but had now become a Christian and wish ed to atone for his wrong doings. He remained a pathetic figure while others read their letters from home. The stage coach passed. As it halted in front of the store, the stage driver shouted in Norse and English, "Fort Sumter is bombarded!" As if giving expression to the thoughts in peoples minds, young women in military colors were performing a drill.

Hardly had the stage passed out of sight, when a counted courier galloped past, shouting in Norse and English, "President Lincoln calls for volunteers!" Luth Hanson and some of the men in front of the store attempted to form a squad and march in military fashion.

The 15th Wisconsin volunteers was a regiment made up almost entirely of Norwegian emogrants. This regiment, with acting Colonel Hans heg in command was ready to go to the front. It was inspiring to see these stalwart young soldiers going through their final drill. When the troops had been dismissed for the evening, a young corporal named Knute Nelson took his squad out for further drill. Luth Hanson, the tinsmith, awkward and unmilitary enought wanted to enlist in Knute's squad. The young corporal invited him to drill with his men. General U. S. Grant and two orderlies rode up and were met by Colonel Heg and some of his staff. The soldiers rose from their tents and gave three cheers for their new colonel. It was not military, perhaps, but it was genuine.

General Grant and Colonel Heg looked at some maps. Then General Grant and his orderlies rode away toward the south, while Colonel heg rejoined his regiment.

Two years later the 15th Wisconsin had become hardened veterans. They had already fought in several battles and many skirmishes. The dark battle of Chicamauga was in progress. Heavy cannonading and musketry were heard, indicating that the battle had arrived at a critical point. The 15th Wisconsin was being held in reserve at the left. Colonel Heg had shown notable courage and genius as an officer and was now acting brigadier general. A courier came galloping from the right with a paper which he handed to Colonel Heg. The need for reinforcements must have been urgent, for Colonel Heg's regiment set out immediately across the field and marched toward the Heaviest of the firing. Soon all were lost in the smoke and din of conflict. In his eagerness to carry the position, Colonel Heg unduly exposed himself. He received a mortal wound and fell from his horse. Some of his men caught him as he was falling, carried him to a hospital tent, and laid him on a cot.

The battle was still going on. That the men of the 15th Wisconsin were doing their duty was evident from the fact that the firing, though still heavy, came from further away, that the enemy was being pushed from the field. Soldiers were placed at the head and foot of the dead officer's cot. General Grant and President Lincoln appeared and stood behind Colonel Heg's bier.

Back in the settlement, the women were working in the fields. A woman was in charge of the store; women were driving lumber wagons. Some of the old men and children had gathered in front of the store and stood expectant. Two or three wounded soldiers, one of them being Luth Hanson, limped homeward from the southward and stopped at the store. It was touching to see that the one with the missing arm helped the one with the missing leg.

A detail of blue clad soldiers came marching towards the south, follow ed by a caisson bearing a flag draped casket. The remains of Colonel Heg were being brought back to the old home town. The colonel's young wife was broken with grief, but his mother had a Spartan strain in her blood. She stood erect and proud, as she gave her boy to his country. The wounded soldiers saluted the body of their colonel.

The war was over at last. Young women clad in brown and gold, and young men carrying rakes and scythes, joined in a festival of peace and harvest to the accompaniment of half-solemn music. Brave Colonel Heg was in his grave but his spirit, like that of John Brown, went marching on. It inspired the immigrants and their descendants in all that they did during the long years of peace that followed. The spirit of Colonel Heg and his men was with the minister and the choir and the class of confirmants that represented the sturdy religious feeling of the Northmen. It was with the college president and his men and women students in cap and gown. It inspired those of Norse descent who worked in the fields of art and literature, of invention, industry and commerce. Colonel Heg's spirit inspired the volunteers who fought in the Spanish American war, decades later. It remained with the thousands who enlisted as soldiers, sailors and marines in the vast world war. It was with the noble ~~her~~ women who served in the Red Cross and as war workers.

At last there came a day when a statue of Colonel Hans Heg was to be unveiled. His memory deserved this tribute, for this imigrant boy had proved himself to be all that is highest and noblest in the citizen of a republic. As the people gathered for this occasion, they were reminded of all the strange characters that had had an influence upon the colonel's life. In the mind's eye they could be seen taking their places around the pedestal. As in a dream, the ancient kings and vikings appeared and took their positions. They were followed by the sturdy immigrants with whom the boy had come to America, and the slaves, and the soldiers, and the spirits of the wood, and the spirits of war. All of the people with hom Hans Heg had lived and worked and fought seemed to group themselves silently about his statue, as if they wished they might pay his memory a final tribute.