

**SYNNÖVÉ
SOLBAKKEN: A
NORWEGIAN TALE**

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Synnövé Solbakken: a Norwegian tale by Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson

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A Norwegian Tale.

By BJÖRNSTJERNE BJÖRNSON

GIVEN IN ENGLISH

By JULIE SUTTER

London

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1881

SYNNÖVE SOLBAKKEN.

CHAPTER I.

AMID the Norwegian valleys there are favoured spots of lowlands rising into gentle eminence, lying open to the sunlight from the first of the ruddy dawn to the last beam gilding the west. People who live more in the shadow of the hills, having less of the sun, call such a spot a "sunnyside."¹ She of whom this story tells lived on such a sunnyside, from which the farm also took its name. There the snow remained latest in the autumn, and melted sooner than elsewhere in the spring.

¹ Solbakke.

The owners of the farm were Haugeans,¹ the people called them "readers," because they read the Bible more diligently than their neighbours. The man's name was Guttorm, the wife's Karen. They had a boy, but he died, and for three years they shunned that part of the church where the font stood. Then they had a little girl, whom they called after the boy. His name had been Syvert, and she was christened Synnöv, this being the nearest in sound they could think of. But the mother changed it to Synnövé, because she used to say to the baby, Synnövé mine, and she thought this was easier than Synnöv mine. However that may be, the girl grew up to be called Synnövé by everybody who knew her; and the people said that in the memory of men there had not been a lovelier girl in the valley than Synnövé Solbakken.

She was very small when the parents

¹ So called after Hauge (1771-1824), the founder of a religious sect.

began to take her with them to church on preaching-Sundays, although the little thing scarcely understood more than that the Pastor seemed to be scolding down upon Jail-Ben, as people called him, because he had been to prison once, and who now sat just beneath the pulpit. But the father wished the child to go that she might "get used to going," and the mother wished it too, for "one could not tell what might happen to her at home." If any creature on the farm, a lamb, or a kid, or a sucking pig, would not thrive, or if a cow ailed, it was made over to Synnövé, and called her property; and the mother maintained that the animals were sure to do well from that moment. The father did not quite believe in the remedy, but "it did not matter which of them owned the beasts, provided that they thrive."

On the opposite side of the valley, and close to the foot of the mountain, lay the farm Granliden,¹ so called because it was

¹ Fir side.

surrounded by a forest of fir-trees, the only fir wood far and wide. The great-grandfather of the present owner had been with a regiment, quartered in Holstein, to fight the Russians ; and from this, to them distant country he had brought home in his knapsack a quantity of foreign seeds. These he sowed all round the farm, but in course of time the plants died off ; a few fir cones, however, which had chanced to be among his treasures, took root, grew and multiplied, spreading into a forest which now on all sides overshadowed the farm.

The man who had been to Holstein was called after his grandfather Thorbjörn ; his own eldest son he called after his father Sámund ; in fact, the owners of this farm, as far back as memory would reach, had always been Thorbjörns and Sámunds in turn. But people said that at Granliden only every other owner was happy, and that was not he who bore the name of Thorbjörn. When the present owner, Sámund, came to christen