

PAUL AND CHRISTINA

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Paul and Christina by Amelia E. Barr

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AMELIA E. BARR

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CHRISTINA**

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BY

AMELIA E. BARR

AUTHOR OF "JAN VEDDER'S WIFE," "A DAUGHTER OF FIFE,"
"THE BOW OF ORANGE RIBBON," "THE SQUIRE
OF SANDAL SIDE," ETC., ETC.

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PAUL AND CHRISTINA.

CHAPTER I.

THIS SPRING OF LOVE.

Lonely, dark islands, in pale sea-water, where, dimly peering,
Passed the white-sailed ships, scornfully, silently, wheeling and
 veering,
Swift out of sight again ; while the wind searches what it finds
 never
O'er the sand-reaches ; bays, billows, blown beaches, homeless
 forever !

Love's lips are always young ;
Love's lore is very old ;

If you have ever loved, the key you hold
To all that hath of Love been said or sung.

THERE are forlorn and cheerless seas to the north of the Pentland Firth, but beyond their belts of foam, and beyond the ocean pyramids of the Orcaes, you may catch in clear weather, the grey headlands of the lonely Shetland Isles.

They are inhabited by no servile or savage race ; for they are the children of those Norse-

men who left their name and fame in France, Italy and Spain, and who a century later took service at Byzantium. Moslems in Asia and Sclavonians on the Black Sea knew the temper of their steel: and to this day the lions of the Acropolis at Athens are scored with the runes which tell of their triumphs.

It was in the Orkneys and Shetlands they took the deepest root—first helping the Pict and then the Scot, and filling all the northern isles with the stirring stories of their deeds. The step between pagan sea-kings and Christian whalers and fishermen is a long one, and it required centuries to take—even yet the old life leavens the new and the better one. Walk through a Shetland town, and it will be readily seen that the names above the doors, are those of the Icelandic Sagas, while the ordinary-spoken English has many traces of their peculiar forms.

The men preserve much of their ancient character; they are silent, indomitable, adventurous and deeply pious, inclined to be indolent but ready at any moment for an enterprise full of danger or promising great returns. The women are remarkably handsome, tall and stately, with cool, calm, blue eyes, and a great

abundance of hair, yellow as the dawn. In the old pagan days they ruled all things with a high hand, but three centuries of austere and mystical Calvinism has subdued to a more womanly temper their lofty spirits. Yet who can be absolutely delivered from their ancestors? Not only do the physical peculiarities of the tenth-century viking linger in the Shetlanders, but the superstitions of Thor, marble the natures, permeated through and through with the sternest and most distinctive of Christian creeds.

Such a man was Paul Thorsen. He had been on Arctic seas when the great ice mountains reeled around him, and he had sung hymns amid the crashing uproar, because he "knew right well that God was with him!" And yet, for Christina Bork's love he could go at midnight to the kirk at Weesdale with a charm, and offer a vow of alms "if all went as he desired it."

Coming home, he met his mate, Magnus Yool. Magnus had on his fishing-suit of tanned sheepskins, and he carried many a fathom of line over his shoulders. On the dusky moor he looked like some giant of an earlier world.

"Where hast thou been, Paul?" he asked.