

## The Hammer of Thor

by Mary H. Foster and Mabel H. Cummings

Sif was the wife of mighty Thor, the thunder-god, and she was very proud of her beautiful golden hair, which she combed and braided with great care. One morning when she awoke she was filled with grief and dismay to find that her lovely hair had been cut off in the night, while she slept. Her husband happened to be away that day, but when he came home late at night, Sif was careful to keep out of his sight, she felt so ashamed of her shorn head.

Thor, however, soon called for Sif, and when he saw what had been done to her, he was very angry. Now Thor had a quick temper; every one feared his fierce anger. "Who could have done this wicked deed?" thought he. "There is only one among all the Æsir who would think of doing such a thing!"

Thor lost no time in finding Loki, and that mischief-god had to admit that he was the guilty one, but he begged Thor to give him just a few days, and he promised to get something for Sif that would make her look more beautiful than ever. So Thor decided to give him a chance to try, and commanded him to give back to Sif her golden hair.

Now Loki knew a place where some wonderful workmen lived, so he went off, as fast as he could go, to Niflheim, the home of the dwarfs, under the earth, and asked one of them to make quickly some golden hair for Sif. Besides this, he asked for two gifts to carry to the gods Odin and Frey, so that they might be on his side if Thor should bring his complaint before the Æsir.

Loki did not have to wait long before the dwarf brought him a quantity of beautiful hair, spun from the finest golden thread. It had the wonderful power of growing just like real hair, as soon as it touched any one's head. Besides this, there was a spear for Odin, which never missed its aim, no matter how far it was thrown, and for Frey, a ship that could sail through the air as well as the sea. Although it was large enough to hold all the gods and their horses, yet it could be folded so that it was small enough to put in one's pocket.

Loki was greatly pleased with these wonderful presents, and declared that this dwarf must be the most skillful workman of them all. Now it happened that another dwarf, named Brock, heard him say this, and he told Loki that he was sure he and his brother could make more wonderful things than these.

Loki did not believe that could be done, but he told Brock to try his skill; the Æsir should judge between them and the one who should fail in the trial must lose his head.

Then Brock called his brother, Sindri, and they set to work at once. They first built a great fire, and Sindri threw into it a lump of gold; then he told Brock to blow the bellows while he went out, and be sure not to stop blowing until he should come back.

Brock thought this an easy task, but his brother had not long been gone when a huge fly came in and buzzed about his face, and bothered him so that he could hardly keep on blowing; still he was able to finish his work, so that when Sindri came back, they took out of the fire an enormous wild boar, which gave out light, and could travel through the air with wonderful speed.

On the second day Sindri threw another lump of gold into the fire, and left his brother to blow the

bellows. Again the buzzing, stinging fly came, and was even more troublesome than before; but Brock tried very hard to be patient, and was able to bear it without stopping his work until Sindri returned. Then they took from the fire a magic ring of gold, from which eight new rings fell off every week.

The third day a lump of iron was put into the fire, and Brock was again left alone. In came the cruel fly, —have you guessed that it was really that mischief-maker Loki? He bit the poor little dwarf so hard on the forehead that the blood ran down into his eyes, and blinded him so that he could no longer see to do his work.

Poor Brock had to stop just before Sindri came home, but not before the hammer which they were making in the fire was nearly finished, only the handle came out rather too short. This magic hammer was named Miölnir. It had the power of never missing its mark, and would always return to the hand which threw it.

When Loki appeared at last before the Æsir, with the two dwarf brothers and their gifts, it was declared that they had made the finest things, for the hammer, which was given to Thor, would surely be most useful in keeping the giants out of Asgard.

When Loki found that the judgment was against him, he started to run away; but Thor soon made him turn back by threatening to throw his hammer after him.

Then Loki had to collect his wits, and think of some way to escape losing his head, instead of making the dwarfs pay the forfeit, as he had expected. At last he told Brock and Sindri that they could have his head, according to the agreement, but as nothing had been said about his neck, they could not, of course, touch that.

Thus the wily Loki, by his wit, saved his life.

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