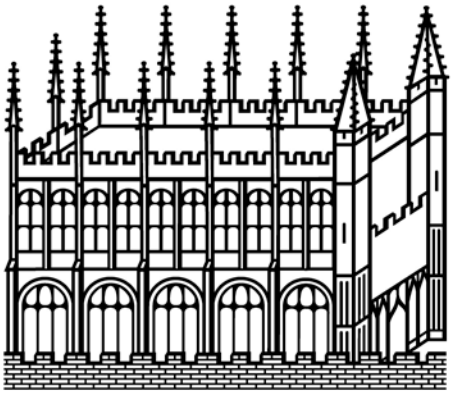

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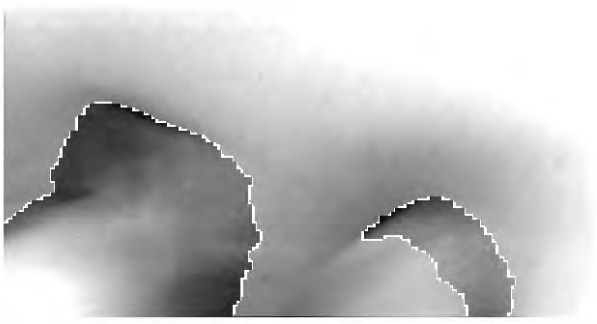

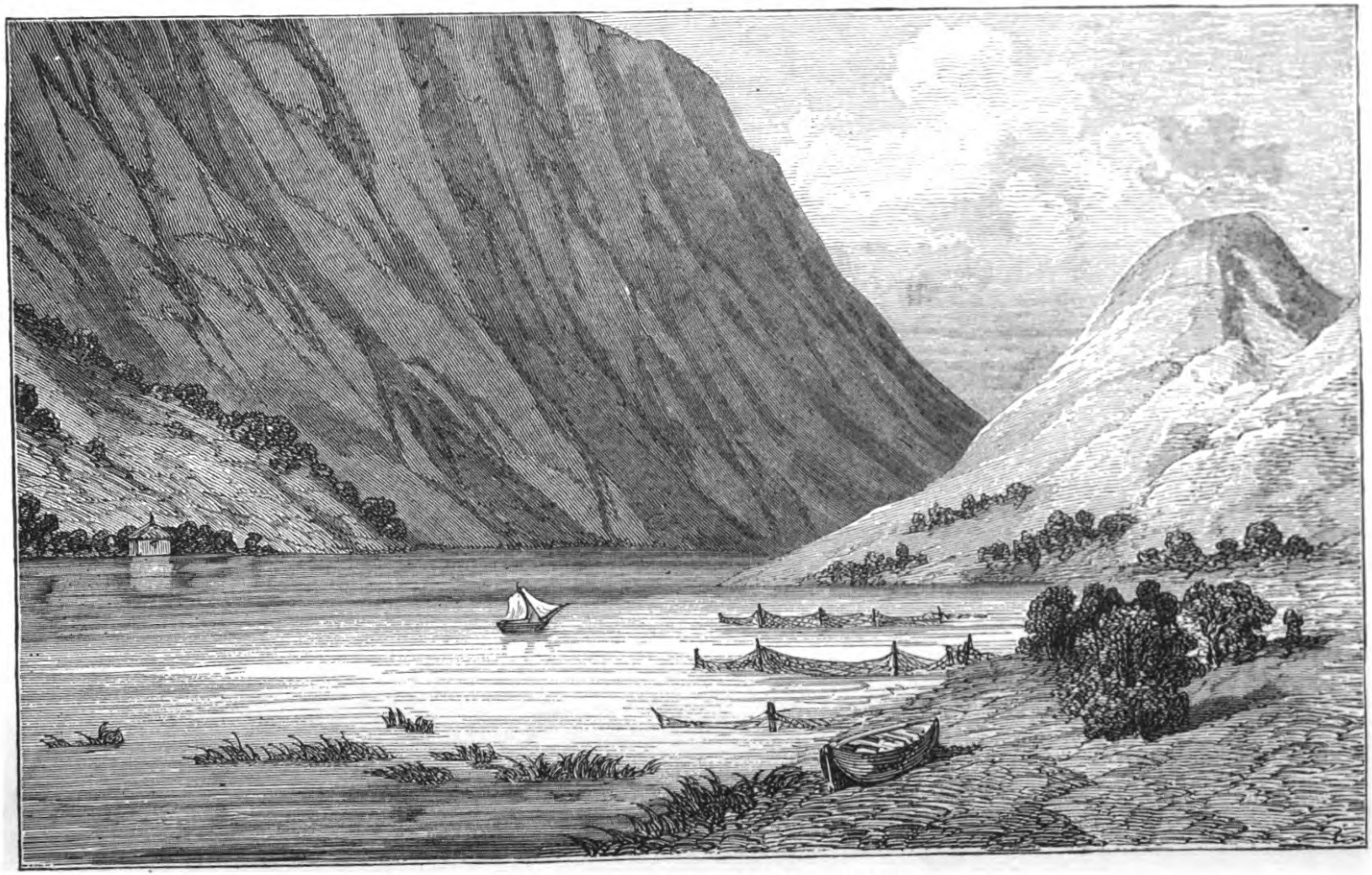

"On the banks of a broad, clear stream."

OSCAR: A TALE OF NORWAY.

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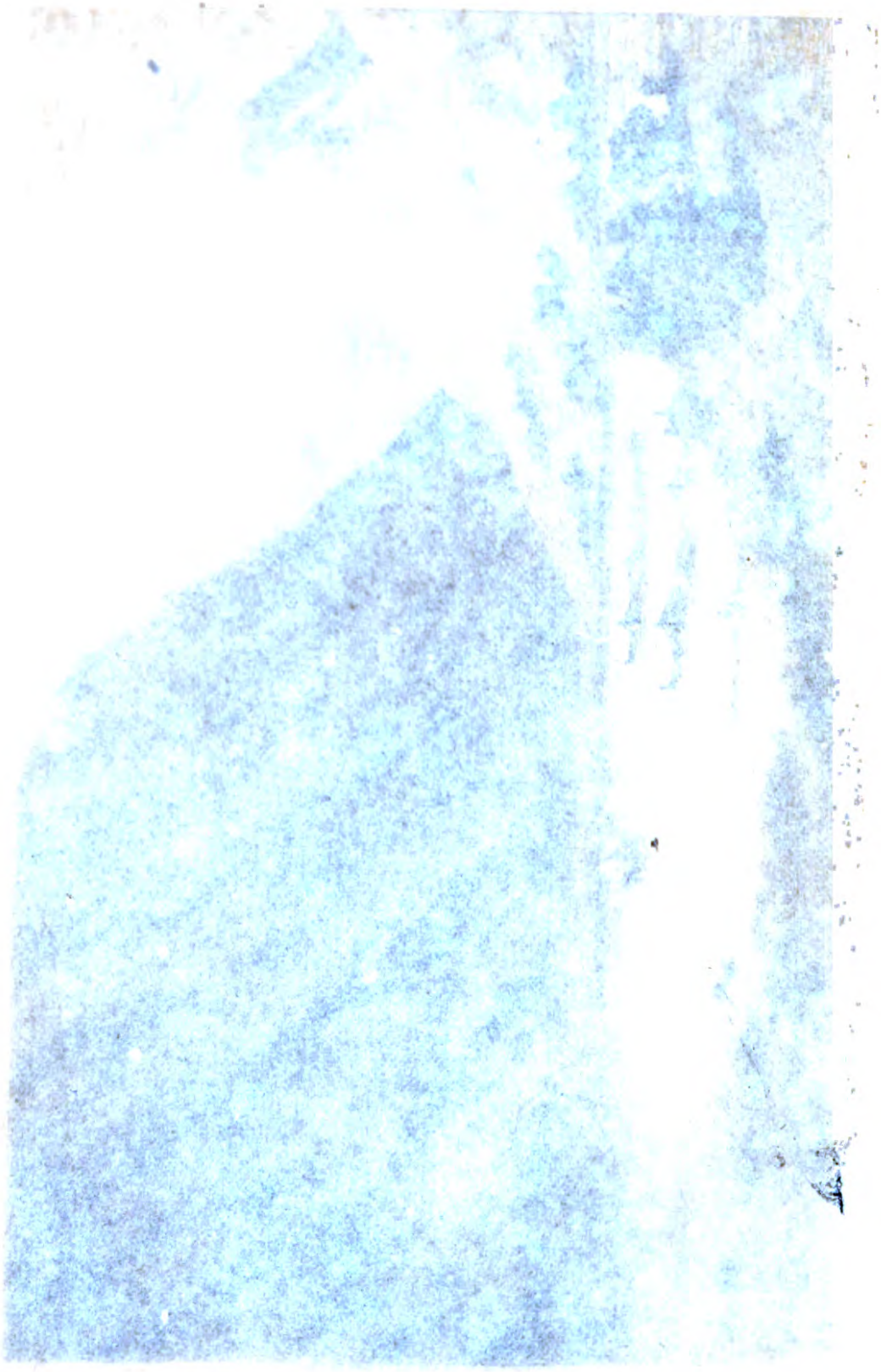


OSCAR

A Tale of Norway

AND OTHER STORIES.

CONTAINING

OSCAR: A TALE OF NORWAY.
HOME AT THE HAVEN.
THE FOUNDLING OF THE WRECK.

Illustrated.

LONDON:
GROOMBRIDGE AND SONS,
5, PATERNOSTER ROW.

THE RECOVERY OF THE MODEL.

OSCAR: A TALE OF NORWAY.

CHAPTER I.

THE FIELDE.

IT was during the twilight of a day in the spring, that a middle-aged, bluff, but good-humoured *bonde*, or Norwegian farmer, seated in one of the curious little cars of his country, drawn by a small, rough, sturdy, and sure-footed pony, was slowly making his way up a steep hill on one of those high tracts of ground called the *fielde*, which separate from each other the lowlands of Old Norway.

It is no easy matter to conceive of the desolation which reigns on those broad mountain tops. For

miles and miles across the higher part of the fielde scarcely any vegetation is to be seen; or where a few hardy trees have managed to take root, they reach to the height of but three or four feet, and show by their crooked and knotted stems through what hardships they have struggled, while the dark rocks of which the mountains are composed, stand out rugged and bare, or are clothed only with moss, or covered with almost perpetual snow.

For nine months in the year it is cheerless winter on the fielde; and during the other three, fierce storms of rain, snow, and wind are frequent. There are, however, numerous spots on every fielde which, for two or three months in the year, are lively with herds of cows and horses, and flocks of sheep and goats; for almost every farmer in Norway, in addition to his arable land in the valley, has a large extent of pasture ground on the fielde, whither, in summer, he sends his cattle, herdsmen, shepherds, and dairy-maids; and to which, indeed, with his whole household, he himself sometimes migrates. These yearly trips are holiday seasons to all concerned in them, and are anticipated with great satisfaction. Sometimes these *seaters*, as such spots are called, are near to the farm; but oftener they are at the distance of many miles—even of a long day's journey; and, in every case, a building, more or less spacious, is attached to the seater, and known as the seater-house or hut.

In the long fielde winters, which include both spring and autumn, these seaters are deserted, and travellers may pass a whole day in the bare and cheerless region without meeting either friend, stranger, or enemy. At such times fielde travelling is not unattended with danger; and this remark brings us back again to the beginning of our story.

I have said that the farmer was middle-aged and good-looking, but it would have been difficult at this time to form any judgment of either of these matters, so carefully was he wrapped up from head to foot. A large cap of sheep-skin covered the traveller's head, and was tied under his chin so as to hide the whole of his face, excepting eyes, nose, and mouth, which also would probably have been concealed, only that it is awkward travelling with the eyes shut, and very unlikely that a true Norwegian would journey any dis-

tance without a lighted pipe in his mouth. Great boots of fur, reaching to his thighs, were drawn over the farmer's ordinary dress, and a pair of long gloves of the same material, reaching nearly to the shoulder of each arm, were fastened by a leathern thong round the upper part of his body; while over the shoulders of the driver was thrown a large wolf-skin, furnished with arm-holes, and buckled tight round the waist by a broad leathern belt. Thus equipped, and squeezed into the seat of his car, which did not exceed an ordinary elbow-chair in size, and was so near the ground that an overturn would not have been attended with very alarming consequences, had an overturn taken

place—thus equipped and seated, the traveller bore with great fortitude the cutting blasts which assailed him, and the slow pace with which his little, rough, but tough and strong-winded nag—which he now and then addressed by the name of Gustaf, or Gustavus—was climbing up the long ascent.

At length this arduous task was accomplished, and the traveller and his steed had reached the highest ground on that part of the fielde. For a minute or two the panting Gustaf rested to recover breath, and Gustaf's master looked around him.

The prospect was not very enlivening: stretched before the traveller was a wide tract of wild and uneven ground, destitute of vegetation, and covered in many parts with snow. Over this desolate space wound the road, which was to be traced by tall poles placed at certain points, intended for the guidance of snow-bewildered travellers. On one side, the fielde seemed as though cleft asunder by some sudden convulsion of nature, forming a narrow valley or chasm, several hundreds of feet deep, along the bottom of which ran swiftly a mountain stream, which, viewed from above, looked like a narrow silver thread. On the other side, at the distance of many miles, was seen the great mountain of Sneehatten, or Snowy-hat, so called because the snow on its summit never disappears. Around the traveller and his horse not a living thing beside themselves was visible, nor a sound to be heard in that vast solitude, except the hard panting breath of Gustaf, and the cheering words of the driver.

Oscar Essmark—for that was the traveller's name—did not linger more than was needful on that exposed spot, for the twilight was now rapidly disappearing, and dark threatening clouds had gathered round.

"Come Gustaf, good Gustaf," he said to his pony, "we must not loiter; old Sneehatten looks spiteful to-night; and we shall be fortunate if we can get to shelter before the storm reaches us. So, step out, good beast, for your master's sake and your own."

Gustaf seemed perfectly to understand his master, for without further urging, he proceeded on his journey with renewed vigour.

But fast as he trotted over the rough road, the storm which Essmark had predicted gathered faster; and they had scarcely gone half-a-mile, before it burst upon them with fearful violence. First came a mighty gust of wind, which nearly lifted Gustaf off his legs, and brought him at once to a dead standstill. The little car, however, stood it bravely, for it had been built for such stormy passages as this. The driver, too, kept his seat unconcernedly, for this was not the first time he had passed over the fielde.

While the hurricane was yet increasing in violence, a thick mist shut out from the traveller the sight of even the nearest object; and then came driving across the mountain top a fall of snow, so heavy and so fast, as to threaten in a short time to bury car, pony, and driver.

The extreme violence of the hurricane compelled them to pause; and Essmark, wrapping himself up more closely in his wolf-skin cloak, and drawing higher around him the apron of his car, waited with patience the next turn of affairs. "If I can manage to reach the next seater," he said to himself, "the snow may come, and welcome; and if I had a sledge instead of a car, I would not be long in reaching home either. But patience, good Gustaf; if it comes to the worst, we can foot it when the storm gives over, and leave the old car to take of itself."

After a short time the first force of the hurricane seemed expended, and though both mist and snow were thick as ever, the traveller determined to make another attempt at reaching the shelter of which he had spoken. Gustaf appeared to be of the same mind as his master; and again needed only a gentle word of encouragement to urge him forward. After a few desperate plunges, he succeeded in dragging the car clear from the heap of snow which had accumulated at its side, and slowly moved onwards.

In the course of half-an-hour all traces of the road had disappeared, and neither in the sky above, nor on the earth beneath, could a single object be discerned to guide the traveller in a right course; and it was only by carefully noting the direction of the wind that he could be sure he was not going back instead of forward.

And, indeed, it soon became a matter of doubt with Oscar Essmark whether, with all the experience of himself and Gustaf in fielde travelling, they had not widely wandered from the road; for when, from time to time, he looked out into the mist, not once could he catch sight of a guide-pole, rising above the broad surface of snow which glimmered through the dreary foggy darkness.

"Courage, good Gustaf," said Essmark, after one such fruitless attempt; "we shall reach a shelter presently."

But for three hours or more after the storm first began, were the travellers—man and beast—exposed to its fury without reaching that shelter; and at length poor Gustaf showed such signs of fatigue, that Essmark, encumbered as he was with his warm but clumsy and heavy clothing, took pity on his weary animal, and, dismounting, led him gently forward,

sinking deeply at every step into the newly-fallen snow.

It was well that the traveller was thus considerate, for he had not advanced many paces before he found himself treading on the edge of a steep bank, over which a single false step might have hurled both himself and Gustaf into some unknown abyss. Carefully picking his way, with the snow still beating in his eyes and half blinding him, Essmark discovered what appeared a more gentle declivity, down which he led his beast; "for even the shelter of a bank," thought he, "is better than none at all; but where I am now passes my poor wit to find out."

Very cautiously picking his way downwards, the stout-hearted farmer at length found himself and Gustaf again on tolerably level ground, and close by the brink of a small mountain lake, the ice of which, not yet completely broken up, was floating in large masses on its surface, and covered anew with the snow which had so recently fallen, and was still falling. Above, to the height of thirty or forty feet, rose, like a dark wall, the rocky bank which he had descended.

The moment Essmark saw the lake, he uttered an exclamation of surprise. "Strange," said he, "that I have been so misled. There will be no reaching home before morning, that is certain; and to think of our having wandered so far off the road! I gave you credit for more sense than this, Gustaf," he continued, patting his pony as he spoke. "But cheer up, old friend, we will get shelter here at least;" and again he urged on his weary beast, which floundered at every step, until they once more halted at the door of a small wooden building, close under the bank, and partly covered by an overhanging rock.

No signs of life were discernible; and, indeed, the traveller knew perfectly well that the edifice, which was a small seater-hut, was at this time uninhabited; but undismayed by the knowledge of this fact, he unharnessed Gustaf as fast as his cumbrous gloves would allow him; then, lifting the latch of the deserted hut, he entered, and was followed by the pony, which, no doubt, knew that on such a night the poorest accommodation would be better than none at all.

It was evident, from the further proceedings of the farmer, that he knew how to act in emergencies like the present. In a short time, from some crypt or corner of the hut, he had drawn forth a huge armful of brushwood, which, dark as was the place, he contrived to arrange on what he seemed by instinct to know was the hearth; and, in less than a minute, a blazing fire, the first spark of which was drawn from Essmark's pocket tinder-box, was casting a strong light over every part of the building.

As a temporary refuge, the hut was well enough, for it was dry and weather-proof; but, in its present deserted condition, it was sadly wanting in every other comfort, excepting a heap of dry moss in one corner, which had, no doubt, at some former time, been used as a bed. The benighted farmer, however, was by no means particular as to accommodation, and, having brought in from his car a small leathern sack, which contained provisions for himself and Gustaf, he closed the door of the hut, heaped upon the fire several birchwood logs, of which there was a tolerable store at hand, threw off his cap, cloak, and gloves, and set himself seriously to work upon his provender.

First of all, he took a long draught from a wooden

bottle with which one of his pockets was stored; then he placed before his companion a capful of corn and chopped straw; after that, he himself ate heartily of some hard coarse cakes and dried fish, which he moistened from time to time with a more gentle application to his bottle. Last of all, seating himself on a stout log before the fierce fire, Essmark lighted his pipe, and was quite reconciled to the thought of passing the remainder of the night in that lonely mountain hut.

But the adventures of the evening were not yet ended; for, just as the farmer had finished his pipe, and was about to throw himself on the bed of moss, the distant report of a gun, and the faint barking of a dog, aroused his attention, and caused even Gustaf to prick up his ears.

In a moment Essmark was outside the hut, listening intently for a renewal of the alarm. "Some traveller more unfortunate than myself," said he, "must even now be wandering on the fielde;" and the thought no sooner presented itself than he hastened back to the hut, resumed his cap and gloves, cast another billet on the fire and sallied forth.

A less hardy or less benevolent man would perhaps have hesitated before leaving a warm and secure refuge on such a night—stiff and weary, too, with previous exposure and travel—to wander, it might be for hours, on such an errand, and perhaps to lose himself, in the hope of rescuing a fellow-creature from danger and death. But our Norwegian farmer was too brave and generous to allow such selfish considerations to weigh with him; and in less than a minute from the time of his leaving the hut, he was climbing the bank down which he had an hour before descended.

On reaching the higher ground of the fielde, Essmark had the satisfaction of finding that the snow had nearly ceased to fall, and that the mist was rapidly clearing away; so that, moonless as was the night, enough light was reflected from the snowy surface of the fielde to assist him in his search.

CHAPTER II.

PERILS ON THE FIELDE.

THE traveller in Norway cannot expect in every stage of his journey to take his ease at an inn, for few inns are to be found. But the entertainment which cannot, as in our country, be demanded as a right, will not be refused as a favour. The Norwegians are hospitable people, and a stranger and foreigner may confidently hope to be received among them with a kind welcome.

Should the host, in such a case, be a small farmer, cottager, or tradesman, he will not refuse remuneration from his guest; but if he be of a higher class, or rich in flocks and herds, he will esteem the pleasure of a stranger's society a sufficient recompence for the comfort and accommodation he has bestowed.

About the hour of noon, on the day which I have described as having so rough a close, two gentlemen stood on the margin of the bare and rocky fielde, some miles from the spot where Essmark first encountered the storm. One of them was past middle age, and wore a garb which showed him to be a parish priest or rector. His companion was an Englishman, travelling

for health and pleasure, who had been during the last few days a welcome guest at the Norwegian parsonage, and was now about to proceed on his journey towards Christiania, the capital of Norway. A long journey it was; but Mr. Barclay was, or believed himself to be, an experienced traveller, and was well prepared, as he thought, for every trifling inconvenience he might meet with on his way. Having been thus far accompanied by his kind host, whose residence in the valley below them he had just quitted, Mr. Barclay was attempting, in imperfect Norsk, to express his thanks for the hospitality he had experienced.

"No thanks, no thanks to me," said the pastor, waving his hand, "thanks to you rather for your society. But are you sure, now, you will find your way without a guide?"

"I have no fear," replied the traveller; "one who has crossed the Pampas of South America without a guide, and travelled on foot and alone through almost every country in Europe, has no need surely of such assistance in your country, where every person one meets seems more like an old friend than a stranger."

"You do my country great honour," said Mr. Aabel, making a low bow to the Englishman; "but at this time of the year you will not fall in with many folk on the fielde; and fielde travelling is not a matter lightly thought of, let me tell you, even by a native of the country. Even now I would have you wait here until I send you a trusty and experienced guide."

But Mr. Barclay smiled at the solicitude of his host: "Only think, my dear sir, what a short distance it is across this part of the fielde."

"Nearly three Norwegian miles," said the thoughtful rector; "and more than twenty of your English ones."

"I shall get across in less than six hours," said the traveller.

"You may be stopped by a storm," interposed Pastor Aabel.

Mr. Barclay pointed to the bright sun and cloudless sky.

The clergyman shook his head doubtfully. "It is not always that a bright noon is followed by a calm evening," he said; "and over these wintry wastes, there is the danger of a stranger's losing his way."

"Not with a pocket compass, a map, and such good directions as you have been so kind as to give me," replied the confident stranger.

And thus, after a cordial shaking of hands, and a hearty farewell, they parted; the clergyman descending the steep hill which overhung the small hamlet in which he lived, while the Englishman, shouldering a light gun, and whistling to a little spaniel, his travelling companion, went on his way.

For three or four hours Mr. Barclay stepped out steadily, and felt confident of reaching before dark the gaard, or farm, where he hoped to be accommodated with a night's lodging. But either the fielde was broader than he had been given to understand, or he had lost his road, for he looked in vain in all directions for the way-marks he had expected long ere this to find. While in this state of hesitation, and just as he was consulting his map, the sky darkened, and, for the first time, he noticed the threatening appearance of the clouds. In a short time the storm began to beat upon him furiously, and poor Dando, his dog, with piteous whining and drooping tail, followed closely at his heels. Still the traveller pushed on over the wild waste, until he felt almost exhausted by his exertions, and half perishing with cold. Then he stopped to

recover breath; but long before this the whole fielde was thickly covered with snow, and he himself was bewildered with the heavy black mist which surrounded him.

Nevertheless, Mr. Barclay was stout-hearted, and though he began seriously to reproach himself for having refused the offered assistance of a guide, he consulted his pocket compass as well as the darkness would permit, and again walked forward. Vain, however, seemed his hope of safety; and after what

appeared to him a long night of wandering and suffering, his strength and courage gave way, and he sank in despair upon the snow-covered fielde.

"It is hard to lose life thus," he said, in a drowsy whisper; "I will make one more attempt." But his limbs were so stiffened he could not rise. Just then he remembered that his gun was loaded. He raised it and fired; and roused by the sound, Dando, who had crept to his master's side for shelter, started forward and barked aloud.

How much longer he continued stretched on his snow bed under that cold wintry sky Mr. Barclay knew

not; for his senses were bewildered with strange fancies of home, and bright sunny spots which years gone by he had visited; and these scenes were rapidly fading away from his imagination when a warm hand was placed upon him, and he heard the welcome sound of a human voice.

"I have found you at last," exclaimed the rough, hearty tones of Oscar Essmark; "I pray God it be not too late. Rouse yourself, stranger. Help is at hand, and a shelter near."

It is wonderful what renewed hope can do! Mr. Barclay, who, some time before, had found it impossible to raise himself upon his feet, now sprang forward, and, supported by the brave farmer, struggled through the snow until they reached the friendly hut. When there, the first care of Essmark was to put to the mouth of the half-frozen and exhausted traveller the neck of his wooden bottle, which I need hardly say contained a liquid a few degrees stronger than water; and his next proceeding was to strip off the stiff and well-soaked garments of his guest, and by rapid friction to restore the languid circulation. All this passed without a word spoken; for a painful dizziness seized Mr. Barclay the moment he entered the hut, which took away all his power of speech, and the good farmer saw that prompt action at this time was worth more than ten thousand words.

After a while, the sufferer was so far relieved as to lie down painlessly upon the bed of moss, covered with a gentle perspiration, which his preserver took care should be promoted by heaping upon him his own dry garments; while he himself, seated by the fire, which from time to time he replenished with fresh fuel, relighted his pipe, and sat patiently watching over the rescued stranger. In a short time Mr. Barclay

was in a sound sleep, and Dando followed his master's example, by curling up before the fire between the feet of the farmer. As to Gustaf, he had, like a prudent animal as he was, shut his eyes as soon as his

supper was ended; so that the only wakeful eyes in the hut were those of Oscar Essmark. Indeed, it was not long before he was sleeping contentedly on the hard but dry floor, by Dando's side; and no further alarm disturbed the farmer's repose through the remainder of that eventful night.

CHAPTER III.

THE GAARD.

How great the difference between mountain and glen! While snow lay deep on the fielde, and travellers across it were wrapped in warm winter clothing, the valley, which lay hundreds of feet below, was hot beneath the bright sun, verdant with the fresh-sprung grass, and busy with industry. To pass from hill to dale in those northern regions, is to take a short step from cold to heat, from winter to summer, from desolation to cheerfulness.

On the bank of a broad clear stream which, rising in the mountains, had made for itself, centuries ago, a glorious waterfall into the valley, and then tranquilly flowed on for many a mile through fruitful fields, until it emptied itself in one of the deep and winding bays, or fiords, for which the rocky coast of Norway is so remarkable—on the bank of one of those clear rivers, called in Norway an Elv, is Jutgaard, the house of Oscar Essmark.

It is a long two-storey dwelling, built of thick and roughly-squared trunks of Norway pine, made weather-tight and warm by layers of mountain moss between them, and painted a dull red, which might look gloomy, but for the blue slated overhanging roof, and gaily decorated windows, which Madame Essmark takes care shall never be disfigured with crack or stain.

Around the house are numerous buildings, strong and spacious; for as the wood is on the farm, and any man can do the work, the number of houses on one steading is wonderful. There is a distinct edifice for

everything, so as in case of fire not to have all under one roof. The family dwelling-house just mentioned, consists of three rooms below, one of which is the kitchen, and the same number above; and at the end, with a separate entry, there is a better room, and one above it, reserved for strangers. Opposite to this dwelling is another, with rooms above, and kitchen below, for the farm servants and labourers. At a small distance from the family house, raised upon posts to exclude rats, is the store-room and dairy, where the provisions for the year are lodged. It is large and airy, with windows, and two rooms for different objects. The rest of the square, into which the buildings are arranged for the convenience of winter attendance upon cattle, consists of stables, cow-houses, barns for hay and corn; under which are the sheds for tools, carts, sledges, a cellar underground for ale, and one of large size with double doors, like our ice-houses, for preserving the potatoes. Everything is under cover, and the spaciousness of the buildings surprises the stranger. But the Norwegians are a well-lodged people; and Oscar Essmark's farm is not in this respect distinguishable from those of his neighbours.

Around this group of buildings, and stretching between them and the river, is a broad meadow, smooth and neat as an English nobleman's lawn, and at the time our story begins, the early spring crop had shaded it with a bright and dazzling green. On one side of this meadow, reaching from the river-side to the foot of the mountain, are cultivated fields, which, at that same time, were undergoing the necessary processes of ploughing, sowing, or planting, according to the nature of the crop intended to be raised. On the other side, still bounded by the river,

is a long stretch of pasture land, on which were then to be seen a full score of cows, and a large flock of sheep. Beyond this pasture land, and high up on the mountain side, is a dark forest of firs, birch, and elm, through which winds the road to the fielde. Still higher can be seen, as though reaching to the clouds—at a vast height at least, above the secluded and fruitful valley — the bare and overhanging mountain cliffs, up the sides of which, along narrow and unprotected shelves of but a few feet in width, the same road is to be dimly distinguished. And fearful does it seem to the unaccustomed eye of a stranger, when, in one of the low cars of his country, drawn by a horse, which at that distance from the valley looks no larger than a mastiff, a Norwegian traveller is seen dashing down those shelving roads, at full speed, when one false step must be destruction. But the native of the country has no fear of such danger as this.

No such fear had Oscar Essmark, as late in the day succeeding his night adventures, he guided Gustaf, with an unerring and bold hand, along that hazardous road.

"Father is coming—coming at last!" shouted little Eva from the garden house—(behind the numerous buildings of Jutgaard is a garden for flowers, fruits, and vegetables, in which is a garden house, much used in summer for tea-drinking; and because the best view of the fielde road was to be had from the open windows of this garden house, there had Eva and her brother Oscar taken their station, almost from the earliest dawn)—"Father is coming—coming at last," said she, running to her mother, who had wondered what could have so delayed the time of her husband's expected return. "I know it is father, because of Gustaf; but I cannot think

what besides he has got in the car. I must go and look again."

But when, accompanied by Madame Essmark, the little girl again reached the garden house, the car was hidden by a projecting rock. Eagerly did the little group wait for its reappearance; and very loud were the exclamations of Eva when it was again seen. "There it is—there is Gustaf—and there is—no—not my father! Mother, who can it be driving the car? It is not half fast enough for *him*."

Quite fast enough, however, would the speed of the pony at that time have seemed to an English child, had an English child been there. But Eva was right, nevertheless. It *was* a slow pace for Gustaf, and Gustaf's master, both of whom delighted in a true Norwegian gallop down the dangerous pass.

"It is not your father in the car," said Madame Essmark, turning pale; "some mischief has happened, I fear."

At this moment young Oscar, who had been watching the car with a steady gaze without appearing to heed the conversation of his mother and sister, turned round, and looking into his mother's face held up two fingers, pointed to the car, and smiled.

"So it is—so it is!" shouted Eva, who had seen her brother's gesture and sign. "Oscar, dear Oscar, has good eyes, mother; there are two in the car; father is standing up behind, and holding the reins over the stranger's head; that's why he comes so slowly. Who can the stranger be, I wonder!"

By this time the car was again hidden from the little party of watchers; and when once more it appeared to sight, it could easily be seen that Gustaf had a double load.

"I must hasten to the house, Eva," said Madame

Essmark, "and get ready the stranger's room. And, Eva, run and find Gummel, and tell him that our supper will be better for a dish of trout from the Elv."

Young Oscar was now left by himself, and he continued watching the car until it was lost in the forest. Then he departed also, and the garden house was, for the remainder of that day, as deserted as a seater-hut in December.

In a few minutes, however, the quick eyes of the boy caught sight of Gummel, the houseman, crossing the meadow, armed with a fishing-rod and basket. Uttering a wild cry, which would at once have revealed to an observant stranger that poor Oscar had neither speech nor hearing, he ran into the house, and speedily reappeared with another rod. In five minutes more the man and boy were silently floating on the stream in a small boat, busily engaged in angling.

As my readers will have guessed, Mr. Barclay was the stranger for whom Madame Essmark was preparing the guest-chamber, and for whose supper Gummel and young Oscar were disturbing the river; for the hospitable farmer had declared, at dawn of day, that he would not leave the Englishman exposed to further danger on the fielde, and plainly convinced him that if he wished to get to Christiana he could not take a nearer road than that which passed by Jutgaard. And, in truth, Mr. Barclay was not sorry to be told this; his long exposure to the cold and storm had left him weak and spiritless, and nothing could at that time be more welcome to him than the hope of a better resting-place than that of the past night before renewing his journey. So, riding by turns in the car, and making many a wide circuit to avoid the deeper drifts of snow —which accounted for their late arrival—the travellers

at length reached the edge of the fielde, caught sight of the smiling valley beneath, and then arranged themselves for the last stage of their journey in the way that had attracted Eva's notice and wonder.

I shall pass over the meeting of the kind farmer with his wife and daughter, and afterwards with his poor mute boy, who soon came in with a basket of trout; and I shall not attempt to describe the courteous welcome given to the stranger, and even to Dando, by the whole family at Jutgaard. I need say nothing of the supper which followed, except that full justice was done to the various dishes placed upon the table by Madame Essmark. Nor need I say that the English traveller was glad to retire to his neat and comfortable bedchamber, where, under an eider-down quilt, of surpassing warmth and lightness, we will leave him to his repose.

It was an hour or two after this that the light was extinguished in the family dwelling, for, tired as Essmark was, he had been absent many days from Jutgaard, and had much to tell his wife now that they were alone. In course of time, however, they retired to rest, and all was silent in and around the farm through the remainder of the night.

CHAPTER IV.

EVA.

On the following morning, Mr. Barclay was roused from his slumbers by a hard pelting rain against his chamber window, and starting from his comfortable couch, he looked out upon the prospect. Very different was its appearance from that which it had presented on the previous day. The river had overflowed its banks; the meadow, so bright and gay in the sunshine, now looked dreary and sodden. The distant view of the valley beyond the river was hidden in sheets of mist and descending rain, and the sky overhead was dark and threatening. It was evident that the storm which had fallen upon the high fielde was now visiting the valley; and it was plain, also, to the traveller, that proceeding further on his journey was at present out of the question.

Mr. Barclay had the happy art of adapting himself to circumstances, and, well satisfied with his present quarters, he thought as little as might be of his disappointment, and hastened, in the best possible humour, to dress himself.

On making his appearance in the family room, he was greeted by the hearty tones of his host, and by pleasant smiles from the farmer's wife.

"You cannot leave us to-day, sir, that is certain," said Essmark; "to-day, at least, my house must be your prison."

"And a very comfortable prison, too," replied the traveller, shaking hands with the farmer, and then

with the rest of the family, and wishing a good morning to each, at which Eva, when it came to her turn, smiled, for, in his ignorance of the language, Mr. Barclay made use of words that plainly said—"A beautiful fine morning this, Miss Eva," which certainly was very far from being correct. Mr. Barclay laughed too, when he saw his mistake, and begged the young lady to teach him better Norsk. From that time they became quite friendly and familiar.

Yes, a very comfortable prison it was, that family room. A large fire was burning in the stove; the floor had been swept clean, and was fresh and thickly strewn with the green tops of firs, which in Norway are gathered by poor people and sold for this purpose, and which fill the rooms with a pleasant perfume, as well as serve a useful purpose, and have a very pretty effect; and the breakfast table, loaded with good things in the way of reindeer flesh, dried fish, fresh fish (the remaining part of last night's sport), hot oaten cakes, cheese, delicious butter, an abundant supply of new milk and thick yellow cream, with coffee and tea. This breakfast table gave good promise to the traveller that hard fare was not to be added to his enforced confinement.

There was not much ceremony observed at this meal; each one helped himself, and ate and drank standing or walking about the room—for such is the Norway custom; and when all had finished, the table was cleared, and all proceeded to their various employments. Essmark went to his stables and barns, to look after his men and stock; and the farmer's wife and her two maid-servants to their house work and dairy work, so that presently only the traveller, Eva, and Oscar remained.

A dull, pompous, or stupid man would have been

at a loss how to act in a case like this; but dull, pompous, and stupid men have no business to be travellers. As for Mr. Barclay, he lost no time in improving his acquaintance with Eva, who had taken up some needlework, and her deaf and dumb brother, whose attention was occupied by a new book, with fine wood-engravings, which his father had brought for him from Drontheim.

"So, young lady," he said, and of course he said it in the best Norsk he could muster, though I shall take the liberty of recording the conversation in fair English—"So, young lady, am I to look upon you as a fellow-prisoner, or are you my jailor?"

"Oh, not a prisoner," replied Eva, "and you are not a prisoner. Would you not like, now, to be on the fielde?"

"Thank you, Eva; I think I am much better off here. Though if it had not been for your father, the fielde would have been my last bed."

"People shouldn't travel on the fielde without a guide," said Eva, smiling.

"But your father did, my little friend."

"Ah, that is a different thing. My father knows all about the fielde, so it did not matter. And Gustaf, too; oh, Gustaf is a clever pony."

"But for all that," replied Mr. Barclay, "neither your father's knowledge nor Gustaf's cleverness could keep them on the right road. They lost their way too."

"Yes, yes," said Eva, archly; "but they knew how to find it again."

"Yes, and to find something else too. It was a terrible night to me, I can tell you. I am told that many people have lost their way and their lives too, on the fielde."

"Yes, in winter," replied Eva. "There were two poor travellers from Sweden, only a little while ago, *would* go from here to Drontheim, and they *would* go without a guide. Oh, sir,"—and Eva's eyes filled with tears—"it was dreadful to think! They wandered and wandered nobody knows how many days, and at last they were found starved and frozen, and the horrid wolves had torn and mangled them. I saw them when they were brought back, for they were laid in father's barn before they were buried. Oh, it was a shocking sight!" and Eva shuddered, covering her eyes with her hands, as if to shut out the scene. "It was very wrong—it was really, sir. You must not think of crossing the fielde again alone till summer comes, without knowing the road."

"I certainly will not, Eva. They say in my country that experience makes fools wise!—but you speak of wolves: I have seen no wolves in Norway yet. Do they ever trouble you here?"

"Not very often," Eva answered; "they are such sly things, and such cowards: they don't like to come near where there are men, unless they are very hungry indeed. But, for all that, they are very dangerous, especially in winter, when cold and hunger makes them savage. Two years ago, in one very hard frost, many wolves came down from the fielde; and one night they broke into the barn where the poor sheep were, and killed so many of them; and then there was a grand wolf hunt, and most of them were killed. Wolves' skins make nice rugs, and cloaks, and pelisses, so that helped to pay for the mischief they had done."

"Very true," said Mr. Barclay, quite pleased that his young companion was so communicative; "and when these rough-coated gentlemen cannot get mutton to eat, what do they do?"

"Oh, there are plenty of wild deer on the fielde—rein-deer you know. They are very fond of dogs, too: there was once a man travelling in a sledge—it was winter then—and he had a little dog between his legs, and would you think it, sir, a great wolf came suddenly upon them, jumped into the sledge, and carried off the poor dog before the man could do anything. And I have heard of a boy who was riding on a horse, with a little puppy before him on the saddle, and a wolf sprang up and snatched off the puppy without hurting the boy."

"That was fortunate, certainly," replied Mr. Barclay. "Very impudent rogues these wolves must be. Your king should do as one of the kings of my country did many hundreds of years ago."

"What was that, sir?" Eva asked.

"He made his subjects bring him so many wolves' heads every year, until it is said the country was clear of them."

"*Our* king could not do that," said Eva, drawing herself up proudly; "Norway is a free country, and the king cannot command anything unless it pleases our Storthing."

"And what is that?" Mr. Barclay inquired.

"Don't you know, sir?" retorted Eva, wonderingly. "It is the great meeting of—of our people—that is, not all our people, you know, sir, but a certain number of them, which are chosen by the rest. They meet at Christiania, and make good laws, and the king—that is, the King of Sweden and Norway—cannot do anything without the Storthing."

"I see," said Mr. Barclay, amused with this description. "We have a Storthing in England, which we call a Parliament."

"I have heard of England," said Eva. "Our old

Norway sea-kings went to England. Is it a pleasant country to live in, sir?"

"We English people think so," replied the traveller.

"Are there any beautiful fiords—any rivers—any high mountains and pleasant valleys, like ours?"

Mr. Barclay readily explained to his young questioner all that she asked, and much that she had not asked, about England. When he had done, she said,

"I should not like England so well as *my* country."

"I dare say not, Eva," he replied. "We all like best the country which we call our own. Now I think Norway a fine, grand country, with its mountains and fielde, and fiord, and valleys—a beautiful valley this is, Eva, in which you live, though it would be more beautiful in the sunshine than now."

"It does not always rain," said Eva, very quickly.

"I dare say not; well, I like Norway very much indeed; and I like you kind, warm-hearted, friendly Norwegians still better; but I like England better than Norway, because it is my home. I was born there, and my friends live there. But your long, cold winters, Eva, what have you to say about them?"

"Oh, winter is a very pleasant time, I can tell you, sir. We have such pleasant parties in winter, and go and visit our friends. Then there is sledging—oh, that is beautiful!—and snow-skating, and skating on the ice."

"What! do you skate, Eva?"

"To be sure, sir: but you should see Oscar—poor, dear Oscar. He is two years younger than I; but he skates so well, though he is only twelve years old. Poor Oscar!"

"You are very fond of Oscar, I see," said Mr.

Barclay, speaking kindly and tenderly. "His is a great affliction, but he seems happy."

All this time Oscar had been busy with his new book, and had not paid the slightest attention to his sister or his father's guest; but just at this moment he looked up, and seeing his sister's eyes, moist with tears, fixed upon him, he sprang from his seat, and smiling, clasped her in his arms, and kissed her forehead. Mr. Barclay now looked at the deaf and dumb boy more closely than he had ventured before to do; and could but admire his fine, open, intelligent face, sparkling eyes, and, more than all, his affectionate manners.

"Dear Oscar!" said Eva, taking her brother by the hand, and drawing him beside her. "We can talk about him, if you like, sir: he won't hear, you know; and I like to talk about him: he is so good, and he does not mind being talked about. He knows we can't say mischief of him."

"I am glad you love your poor brother."

"Love him! Oh, yes. But do you know," and here Eva dropped her voice mysteriously—"Do you know what old Haco says of him?"

"No, indeed, I do not. Who is old Haco?"

"Oh, you don't know old Haco—to be sure not. How silly of me! Well, old Haco lives down the valley. He was my father's herdsman; but he is not now. He is too old. He says he is nearly a hundred years old. Only think! Do people live so long as that in your country?"

"Not often, Eva, I confess."

"I thought so. Ah! Norway is the place for folks to grow old in. Old Haco says so."

"And he says about Oscar——"

"Yes, yes, that is what I was just going to tell

you," replied the young lady, again sinking her voice. "Haco says that poor Oscar is certainly bewitched."

"Ah! because he cannot hear and speak, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir, and he says it was all because one day, before poor Oscar was born, a Fin woman came to sell mittens and snow-boots, and Snorna our dairymaid laughed at her, and turned her away from the door with unkind words. It was very wrong of Snorna, and so father told her; and Haco said he was sure some misfortune would happen. And so when poor Oscar's affliction was known, he laid it all to Snorna and the Fin."

Mr. Barclay knew that the Lapland people, whose country is north of Norway and Sweden, and who lead a kind of gipsy life, are called Fins by the Norwegians, and that they are generally looked upon with contempt, while, at the same time, they are feared for their supposed powers of witchcraft; and he was desirous of learning what more Eva would say on this subject. So he asked,

"But how could this Fin have had anything to do with poor Oscar's affliction?"

"I cannot tell you, sir, and truly I do not believe a word of it. Father says it is all folly, and so does my mother; and our minister preaches a good deal about these superstitions, as he calls them; so I only tell you what old Haco says. And he will have it that the Fin witches can do almost anything in the way of mischief that they please, for they have spirits underground who must obey them for a time. He says he will never believe that the fielde is not haunted with these spirits; and that the witches go to meet them, and the mountain opens, and all go together into the midst of it, miles below the mountain top; and that that is their country.

He says they have churches there like our churches here, but they do not worship God as we do, but something else, very wicked. Ah, you would like to hear Haco talk about these things, though, to be sure, they are very foolish."

"Very foolish, indeed, Eva! I am glad you do not believe such nonsense, although you do like to listen to it. There are young ladies in England who are a little like you in this particular. Well, and so old Haco thinks that your dear brother is bewitched, does he?"

"Yes; and because Oscar is so clever, and can draw and carve so beautifully—ah, you must see Oscar's drawings and carvings; I will ask him to show them to you this afternoon—and because he can read, that is can understand reading, you know, sir, and because, indeed, everything Oscar does he does so well, he says the mountain spirit must be at his elbow always. It is very silly, sir, is it not?"

"I think it is, Eva. Pray how is it you can listen to it?"

"Oh, Haco is a great favourite with us, and he says what he pleases; nobody cares about it, and nobody believes it—that is," continued Eva, correcting herself, "my father and mother laugh at it all, and I do not believe it. Gummel does, though, and so do a good many more. But it does no harm to Oscar, you know, and so we don't mind."

"And Oscar can read?" said Mr. Barclay; "that must be a very great pleasure and advantage to him. How did he learn?"

"We have a teacher, sir, every winter, to live with us, and he takes great pains with poor Oscar."

"I should not wonder, then, if you also can read?" said Mr. Barclay.

"It would be a wonder and a shame if I could not, sir," replied Eva, in a rather mortified tone. "I am not a Fin; *they* cannot read, I believe, not many of them, though some can. But I think there are not many boys and girls in Norway who don't know how to read. Would you like to see our books, sir?"

"Very much indeed I should," said Mr. Barclay, who began greatly to respect his young friend, as well as to be pleased with her conversation: "very much indeed; and I must beg you to forgive me for underrating your acquirements. I cannot say for my young country folks so much as you can for yours."

Eva made no reply to this compliment, but led the visitor to a large cupboard, made of some dark wood, very richly carved, with a date upon it which proved it to be more than a hundred years old. Before Eva could open the door, Mr. Barclay stayed her hand to admire the carved work.

"Oscar can carve better than that," said Eva, with sisterly pride; "though everybody says that is nicely done."

"It is indeed," said the traveller. "I have been told that your country-folks are very expert at carving."

"That is one of our winter employments," replied Eva; "my father's grandfather carved that cupboard. Shall I show you our books now?"

"By all means," said Mr. Barclay; and Eva opened the folding-doors of the cupboard.

Mr. Barclay was surprised to see in a farmer's house in Norway, a far greater number of books than can generally be found in a farmer's house in England; and he was talking to Eva about the subjects which these books contained, when the door opened, and preparations were made for dinner.

In a short time the kind host entered, and then the

dinner was brought in. Mr. Barclay was surprised to find how rapidly the time had passed away, and he informed Mr. Essmark, with great truth, that he had spent a very pleasant morning, and did not at all regret the bad weather which had detained him at Jutgaard.

I shall not particularly describe the dinner, which was sufficiently good to satisfy a much more dainty appetite than that of Mr. Barclay. To it all the family sat down, and when the meal was over, and all rose from the table, the first thing done by each person was to go round to all the rest, shaking hands with each, and saying aloud, "Tak for mad," or, "Wel bekomme," which Mr. Barclay understood to mean, "Thanks for the meal," and, "May it do you good."

"It would not be amiss," thought the Englishman, "if some of my young friends at home were to practise this ceremony sometimes."

After dinner Essmark lighted his pipe, and sat talking with his guest. Meanwhile Eva made signs to Oscar, who left the room, and presently returned with specimens of his drawings and carved work. And great was the astonishment and gratification which they produced. I shall have something else to say of Oscar's carving in another chapter.

CHAPTER V.

DEPARTURE.

For three days the rain continued to fall in the valley, and Mr. Barclay remained at Jutgaard. Nor was he very impatient to be gone; for with the lively Eva for a companion, with Eva's parents for his host and hostess, and with a warm and dry roof over his head, he continued to pass the time not only agreeably but profitably. Oscar, too, who from the first had excited the traveller's sympathy, soon won his admiration, for Eva had not overrated her brother's accomplishments when she said that everything he attempted to do he did well. He was so affectionate, too, and so docile; who could help feeling an interest in him?

At length, however, the weather cleared, and Mr. Barclay spoke of continuing his journey. It was a glorious morning. The sun had risen unclouded; the valley looked green and bright; and towards mid-day Mr. Barclay, having engaged a guide to the next station, was on the point of bidding farewell to Jutgaard, when an unexpected arrival once more detained him.

"Mr. Aabel—Mr. Aabel is here!" said Eva, as, catching sight of the clergyman from the window, she started to her feet and ran from the room. The next minute she came back, holding him by the hand.

Mr. Aabel was not the minister of the parish in which Jutgaard is to be found; he was, nevertheless, a favourite visitor, and the whole family at Essmark's joined in giving him a hearty welcome. While, there-

fore, Gummel was unharnessing the reeking horse which had brought the clergyman quickly and safely over the fielde—for by this time the road was again passable, Essmark was urging this new guest to throw aside his superfluous clothing, and sharpen his appetite for the dinner, which would soon make its appearance, by a draught of stout ale, or a glass of the strong home-made spirits which every Norwegian farmer knows how to extract from potatoes.

During the first bustle of this unlooked-for arrival, Mr. Barclay had politely withdrawn from observation. He now came forward, and expressed his pleasure in once more meeting his former host.

"And most delighted am I, sir," said the clergyman, heartily shaking hands with the Englishman, "to find you here in such good quarters. You must know, sir, that there were grave apprehensions at the parsonage about your fate, and, in truth, it was partly to satisfy myself of your escape from the storm of that evening that I came over the fielde to-day."

"I was wrong to slight your advice, dear sir," replied Mr. Barclay; "and I am concerned at having given you cause for anxiety; for truly, had it not been for our kind friend here, it would have gone hard with me; but I have promised my good Eva to take more care for the future." Mr. Barclay then, in a few words, told the clergyman how he had been preserved from the danger to which he was exposed.

"It was like Oscar Essmark," said Mr. Aabel, "to do as he did. Indeed, shame would it have been for any Norwegian to have done otherwise. But I see, sir, you are equipped for travelling, and have prepared yourself with a guide; may I ask if you are still bound for Christiania?"

Mr. Barclay answered in the affirmative.

"In that case," said Mr. Aabel, "we may be fellow-travellers on the first stage of the journey, if you will place yourself under my care. I am about to proceed, not till after dinner, though, up the valley, on a visit to a brother minister. The distance is about a mile—that is a *Norwegian* mile. I shall travel on foot, and can assure you of a hearty welcome, a night's lodging, and a good guide for to-morrow's journey."

As this plan did not greatly cross Mr. Barclay's purposes, he speedily gave his consent to it, and dismissing his Jutgaard guide with a gift, he once more deferred his journey for an hour or two.

At length the time came, and taking leave of his kind entertainers, who refused all remuneration from their guest, Mr. Barclay and the clergyman departed from Jutgaard, with Eva and Oscar, who, mounted on ponies, of which Gustaf was one, proposed to accompany them to the next village.

The road for some distance followed the windings of the river, and under the precipitous sides of the mountain, which, at some places, left barely space enough on the river's bank for a narrow path. At other places the space again widened, as at Jutgaard, leaving room for houses and fields. In some spots, where the mountain cliffs were particularly steep, large blocks of stone, loosened, as Mr. Aabel informed the traveller, by the wintry frost, had rolled down into the valley, and thickly strewed the ground. These stones were of great size; and as Mr. Barclay cast his eye upwards to the rocks which almost overhung the road, he felt very far from secure against an accident which, had it happened, would at once have finished his wanderings.

At one spot, the party passed by a hugh mass of snow yet unmelted, which Mr. Aabel said was the

remains of an avalanche which had fallen a few weeks earlier from the mountain-side, and beneath which were buried a herd of wild reindeer, that at the time were feeding on the scanty herbage of the valley, into

HITTERDAL CHURCH, NORWAY.

which they had retreated from the frost and snow of the fielde. And another spot was pointed out to the traveller where, a few years before, a farmhouse had been overwhelmed by a similar catastrophe.

All these matters were full of interest to the

Englishman, who almost regretted the approach of his party to a rustic bridge, which enabled them to cross to the broader stretch of valley beyond the river, and the village where he was to part company with his young friends.

For some little distance on the road the tall spire of the village church * had been visible, the building itself being concealed by a thick grove of trees by which it was surrounded. But a turn of the road, after crossing the bridge, placed the party in front of the venerable edifice; and Mr. Barclay suddenly stood still to examine and admire the building, while his elderly companion spake of its history.

I am ashamed to say that the words were almost lost upon the English traveller, who could never afterwards call to mind, with any exactness, how many hundreds of years the church had been built; by whom it was built, nor whether or not any of the old kings of Norway were either crowned or buried within its venerable walls. All he remembered of Mr. Aabel's information was, that it was the parish church of the clergyman at whose house they expected to receive accommodation for the night, and that the parish, as well as the church, was very large.

But though the ears of the traveller were negligent, his eyes were not idle: and as he looked at that singular church, where spire rose above spire, and roof above roof, like a little town, and which was composed, as far as could be seen, entirely of massive timbers, slabs, and shingles, from the ground upwards, his admiration found words too.

"Eva," said he, "if I were sure of ever visiting Jutgaard again, I would beg a boon of Oscar."

* Hitterdal Church. We are indebted to *Forester's Norway*, for the representation of this singular structure.

"And Oscar would grant it as soon as asked, I am sure," replied the Norwegian girl. "What would you have of Oscar?" she added, smiling.

"I would ask him to carve for me, in his best style, a model of this church, to take home to my country."

Eva shook her head gaily: "I have promised too much," said she; "Oscar could never do *that*, I fear: but shall you come again?"

"It is not likely, Eva; and I did but jest about the model. But should I never see Jutgaard again, I shall never forget that my life was saved by its owner. You must come and see me in England, Eva," Mr. Barclay added, playfully.

But Eva shook her head very decidedly: "I love Norway too well," she said; "I will never forsake old Norway."

"You will at least not refuse a parting keepsake," said Mr. Barclay, "from an unfortunate traveller who has no better home than old England;" and, having settled this matter to his satisfaction, the party separated, and as the elder travellers turned from the church, they heard the last sound of the hoofs of Gustaf and his companion on the wooden bridge.

"There will be sad hearts at Jutgaard ere long, said Mr. Aabel, with deep sigh; "and indeed, though my friend Essmark bears up manfully, there are sad hearts there now, I fear, though at present these young folks are ignorant of the distress which hangs over their heads."

"You surprise and grieve me," replied Mr. Barclay. "I should not have judged, from the cheerful manners and conversation of the farmer and his wife, that care presses heavily upon them."

"And yet it does. My friend Essmark has sus-

tained so heavy a loss by the misfortunes of a near relative, a merchant at Drontheim, that ere long he will be obliged to sell his farm, which has been in his family hundreds of years, and take refuge in a cottage. In short, in less than a year, Jutgaard will belong to a stranger. It was this sad business which took Essmark across the fields to Drontheim, and from which journey he was returning when he fell in with you,——."

"And saved my life!" exclaimed the Englishman. "Can you tell me, sir, the amount of his loss?"

"More than a thousand dollars, I fear."

"Less than two hundred pounds of English money," said Mr. Barclay to himself. "Is that all?" he added aloud.

"In Norway, a thousand dollars is a large sum," replied the rector: "we are a poor people, sir, though perhaps none the less happy for that."

"Let us return to Jutgaard," said Mr. Barclay, suddenly stopping short.

"To what purpose, sir?" Mr. Aabel asked.

"Can you ask, sir? The man who has saved my life must not be ruined for the want of a thousand dollars. It suits my inclination to travel on foot; but in England my neighbours are pleased to call me a rich man; and I trust, sir, that I know something of that blessed book which teaches us, in good plain English as well as in Norsk, that we are all brethren, and that to see a brother have need without doing all we can to help him proves that we don't love God."

"I rejoice to hear you say so," replied the rector, "and I should be sorry indeed to check your kind feelings; nevertheless, we must not return to Jutgaard on such an errand. My friend Essmark would be

angry with me, I fear, for troubling you with his troubles, and you would find it impossible to prevail on him to accept your kindly meant help."

"You are right sir; it would be indelicate;—let us speak of something else."

CHAPTER VI.

OLD HACO.

Snow is on the ground, the river is frozen over, and the store-rooms at Jutgaard are filled with winter provisions. Six months and more have passed since the English traveller bade good-bye to the Norwegian farmer and his family.

Cold, cold, very cold, had been the short day, which at mid-winter, and in that northern district of Norway, receives but three or four hours of sunlight out of the twenty-four which make up day and night. But the nights—oh, the long nights are glorious; and on the evening of that one day in particular, where we take up the thread of our story, the sky was so clear, the air so still, the moon and stars so bright, and the aurora borealis, or mysterious northern lights, so brilliant, that the night seemed almost lighter than the day, and the snow-covered surface of the country glistened and glittered so sparklingly all around, that one might almost have fancied it to be strewed with thousands of diamonds.

The sun had long disappeared below the horizon, but the family at Jutgaard showed no signs of drowsiness. Around the glowing stove were seated Madame Essmark, Eva, and their maid, spinning the wool which was soon to be wrought into substantial cloth for household use, while their cheerful labours were

lightened by conversation or song. Near them sat Essmark, smoking, and reading the paper which had that day arrived by a post messenger from Drontheim. At another part of the room was Oscar, and on the table before him stood what had once been a cubic block of wood, twelve inches or more in thickness, but which, by this time, under his carving tools, and the combined influences of ingenuity and patience,

had assumed the rough outlines of the parish church, and began to exhibit in various parts the delicate touches of Oscar's skilful hand. Beside the carver were many drawings of the object, taken from different points of view, with tables of dimensions and calculations of proportionate heights, lengths, and breadths.

Another person had, a short time before, been present. This was Gummel, whose employment, whatever it had been, was now laid aside, and who for that night had left the warm family room.

Instead, however, of retiring at once to his own quarters, which formed a part of the homestead of Jutgaard, Gummel was tempted by the beauty of the night to extend his walk. So, wrapping around him his thick pelisse of sheepskin, he stepped out briskly for half a mile, stopped at the door of a small cottage

near the river-side, lifted the latch, and entered. It was the cottage of old Haco, the former herdsman of Jutgaard; and, passing over the mutual courtesies which, at Gummel's entrance, were exchanged, and which all Norwegians, of whatever rank, scrupulously observe in their intercourse with each other—passing over these, we will listen to a scrap or two of their after conversation, at which were present, besides themselves, Harold, old Haco's great-grandson, a boy a year or two older than young Oscar Essmark, and Harold's mother.

Haco, wrapped in warm rugs, sat by the blazing hearth in an arm-chair more aged than himself. His sight was quite gone, his hair was thin and white, his hands shook with palsy, and his voice was weak as that of a child. The very picture and emblem of extreme age was Haco.

"I always said it was so," said Haco, in a feeble tone; "I knew from the first that the boy was——; well, well, no matter. And so this stranger—he is coming again, is he!"

"Yes, Haco; so they tell me; and right welcome will he be, I guess."

"No doubt, no doubt. And so Essmark was near losing Jutgaard, was he?"

"Ay, Haco, he was. Yes, yes, it was set up for sale, when, just at the time, comes pastor Aabel driving over the fielde; and though I did not see and hear it all, I was told of it by those that did. 'Essmark,' says Mr. Aabel, 'here is something that will set your mind at rest; and with that he puts a great roll of bank-paper into his hand.' 'What is this?' said my master, in great wonder; and then the rector tells him that the Englishman he picked up on the fielde had sent a thousand dollars as a trifling present, as he called it,

to his friends at Jutgaard. Says my master, 'I'll never take it; it shall not be said that an Essmark sold his kindness in that fashion.' 'But,' says Mr. Aabel, 'you must, for the Englishman will never look upon the money again;' and much more passed than I can call to mind; but the end of it was, that our master took the money, and soon paid off the debt; and so the sale of Jutgaard was put at an end."

Old Haco shook his head sorrowfully. "It is a sad business," said he. "Essmark had better have lost all than have taken such a gift."

"May be so," replied Gummel, "though Mr. Aabel did not think so; and he ought to know. But now, good Haco, you have been a long while in the world, and know as much as any man about such matters. Who, think you, is this stranger?"

"Who can tell?" replied Haco, mysteriously. "But who should he be but the 'Eldman of the fielde!' Ha! many a time has he led poor travellers astray on the fielde that have never been seen again. Often has he appeared, as he did to Essmark, in the form of a perishing man, in a storm of his own raising, and received help, and given gifts; but his gifts never prospered—never."

"But," said Gummel, "he was a proper sort of man, too; and if it was not for this church——"

"Ah!" said Haco, quickly, "it is easy to see through it all, if one has but the right faith. Young Oscar—I have nothing to say against the boy; but is it not plain that he has always been under a spell—a witch's charm? Is he like any other boy you ever knew? And who ever heard of such a thing as a church being cut out of wood in this fashion? Only let young Oscar finish it, and let the stranger get it into his power, and such things will be seen as are little

dreamt of. Oh, the temptations of the evil one! But there is One above all, stronger than he!"

Much more did old Haco say in this mysterious fashion, by which his fearful listeners were led to believe that on the completion of Oscar's masterpiece, and on its presentation to the stranger, at whose request it had been undertaken, and whose second visit to Jutgaard was looked for in the coming summer, the destruction of poor young Oscar, body and spirit, would be completed, and Jutgaard itself would become a heap of ruins. Had the gift been anything else besides a *church*, argued Haco, he would not have been so sure; but to him it was evident that Oscar's skill in carving was more than mortal, and that, in fact, the poor boy had been gifted with this power by the Eldman of the fielde, to serve his own unhallowed purposes. All this was very ridiculous, and my young readers are quite at liberty to laugh at it, but superstitions such as this are common among the ignorant of every country—especially mountainous countries—and I can assure them I have heard, in England, many legends equally foolish and superstitious with this of old Haco's, and have known also of their being firmly believed.

Haco's hearers had no doubt whatever of the correctness of his predictions; Harold and his mother sat eagerly listening to his long stories of churches underground — to which this model of poor Oscar's was hereafter to be added — where evil spirits are worshipped, and where witches congregate; and Gummel departed to his own home, sad at the thought of the mischief which was hanging over Jutgaard.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LAST.

It is summer, and Jutgaard is deserted. The entire family, with all the sheep and cattle, are miles away, at the seater on the fielde—the summer pasture-ground—leaving the standing crops of grass, corn, potatoes, and turnips, to ripen under the summer sun; leaving, also, Jutgaard uninhabited, except by Harold's mother, who, detained in the valley by her care of old Haco, has undertaken to see to the safety of Essmark's house and homestead. Not much care does this require; for a Norwegian farmer, when he departs thus to his seater, does not fear to leave his property in the valley unprotected.

Harold, too, is left behind, to be company for his mother and old Haco. Besides these, none of Essmark's people remain.

It was early in the morning of a bright and glowing day that Harold, unperceived, slipped from the cottage, and ran swiftly towards Jutgaard.

"They are coming back next week," said he to himself in a whisper, "and this horrid Eldman that grandfather talks so about is coming with them—it was a good thing that Gummel came down from the fielde yesterday and told us—so I must do it at once. I shall be almost afraid to touch it though."

It did not take long to reach Jutgaard, and reaching it, Harold boldly lifted the latch (the door was not even locked, so secure did Essmark feel that his property was safe) and entered. In a short time he was again outside of the house, and bearing in his arms a

small burden wrapped in a cloth, he hastened to the river-side, loosened the boat from its moorings, deposited his bundle in it, and handling his oars with great experience, began rapidly to ascend the river. For mile after mile he continued his voyage, until reaching a spot where the forest reached to the water's edge, he fastened the boat to a stump, sprang on shore, laden with the burden, and disappeared. A few minutes passed away, and Harold was again in the boat, swiftly rowing down the stream. His countenance was lighted up with strange excitement, and he uttered wild exclamations of satisfaction. He had outwitted that horrid Eldman; Oscar would be released from his power, and Jutgaard saved from destruction, for who would think of searching in that dark wood, and among those thick brakes, for the fatal gift?

"I won't tell grandfather what I have done," said the boy, "nor mother either; and nobody shall know it from me."

It was as Harold had said. The following week came down from the seater the greater part of Essmark's family. Only the dairy-maid and a herd-boy were left behind, and greatly to the satisfaction of Harold, he was ordered at once to join them. "It is all safe now," said the boy, chuckling with delight, as, toiling up the winding and steep road to the fielde, he stopped in his progress, and looked down over the forest top upon the bright river and green valley of Jutgaard.

But who shall depict the consternation of poor Oscar and Eva, when, a few hours after their return home, they found nothing but emptiness in the chest where the completed specimen of Oscar's skill had been, as they had believed, so safely placed! As hard

would it be to describe the indignation of Essmark, and the astonishment of Madame Essmark, when, after a vain search, and many questions put to Harold's mother, it was clear that some spoiler had entered their dwelling, for nowhere could *the church* be found.

As to Gummel, he could with difficulty conceal his satisfaction. The prey, in his opinion, had been delivered from the hand of the enemy. He was puzzled, too; for instead of the outpouring of wrath he had expected to witness from the mysterious stranger—old Haco's *Eldman*—on finding his plans thus defeated, there was nothing but sympathy for the disappointment of poor Oscar and his friends, and great indifference as to his own.

Rain again—rain—and such rain! It seemed as though Mr. Barclay's arrival at Jutgaard was to be the signal for rain. Day after day, for nearly a week, did rain incessantly fall, and again did Mr. Barclay bear his confinement with patience and hope.

At length the sky cleared, and the sun shone out gaily and warmly, and the valley rejoiced in its bright beams.

It was in the long twilight of one of the summer days that Essmark's fishing boat, well laden with passengers, was floating quietly on the broad stream, which having been swollen by the heavy rain, to the overflow of many a meadow, was now gradually subsiding into its usual channel. With his hand on the tiller sat young Oscar, and beside him at the boat's stern sat Eva, their parents, and Mr. Barclay, while Gummel was lazily pulling the oars.

Suddenly young Oscar sprang forward, clapped his hands, and pointed to an object on the river floating

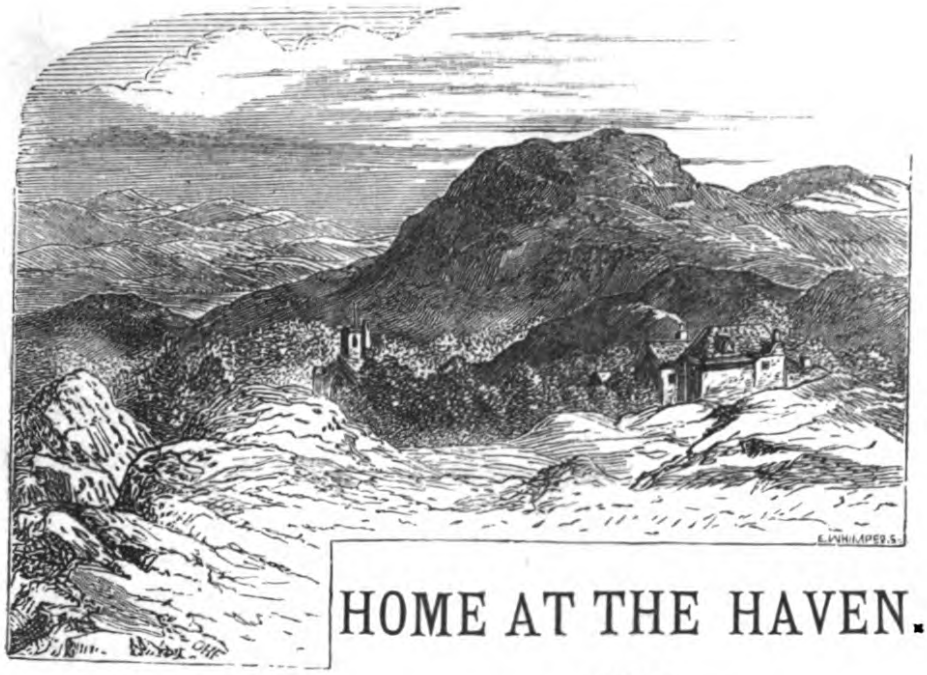
down the stream, and rapidly approaching the boat. In a moment every eye was directed towards the same object—it was Oscar's masterpiece.

Uttering a cry of horror, as he recognized the very form of the parish church floating majestically towards him, Gummel threw up his oars, and cowered to the bottom of the boat. Little heeding him, however, the eager hands of Oscar, assisted by his father and the guest, secured the prize, and with it they gladly hastened to Jutgaard.

But how could it have found its way to the river? Even Eva thought that old Haco and Gummel might, for once, be excused for believing that there was some witchcraft in the business.

It was many years afterwards—when Mr. Barclay had returned to his own country, bearing with him the specimen of Norwegian wood-carving, which now ornaments the drawing-room of his London mansion, —and after Gummel had, in terror, left the service of Essmark, lest he, too, should be involved in the ruin of his master's house,—long, too, after old Haco had been gathered peacefully to his ancestors in the churchyard of the valley,—that Harold, cured by a sound education of the superstitions in which he had been reared, disclosed to his master the true history of the mysterious church: how he had taken it away, and concealed it, in mercy to Jutgaard; and how the river, overflowing its banks, must have washed the object of his fear from its hiding-place, and restored it to its owner.

Loud was the laughter of Essmark, and great the amusement of Essmark's family, at hearing this confession; and the story of poor Oscar's enchanted church is still told in summer days on the "seater," and on winter nights at the "gaard."



HOME AT THE HAVEN.

CHAPTER I.

FINDING A HOME.

TWO children and their mother were together one morning in the front parlour of a small house in the outskirts of London. That the mother was a widow could be seen by her dress, and that she had suffered much sorrow, and was still full of anxiety, might easily be perceived by any one who noticed her pale and care-worn countenance. The children — a boy and girl—did not show any signs of care upon their faces, though they were not so lively, perhaps, as they would have been, had their mother not been so sorrowful, and had not the remembrance of their father's death been still fresh in their minds. They were living too, just then, with their mother, in lodgings, after leaving a much pleasanter home, and their mother was full of uncertainty as to where they might settle for life.

Lucy, the girl, who was about twelve years old, was busied that morning about a canary bird which hung in a little cage by the side of the window; and while she arranged about it some groundsel, which she had just bought at the door, and stuck a piece of sugar between the wires, she chatted away, half to her bird and half to her brother, hardly expecting, though, that the latter would answer her, or even listen to her, so absorbed was he over his favourite "Robinson Crusoe," which he was reading for the second or third time.

"There now, Dickey, you look quite smart," said she; "just like a lady in a yellow satin dress, sitting in a green bower! And wasn't it lucky, Edward, that I heard that old man crying his water-cresses, and that I noticed the other day that he had groundsel to sell as well? Now really, Dickey, you must give us one of your best songs this morning, only not too loud, so as to make mamma's head ache. Ah! you have found out the sugar, have you? I know you like sugar."

Suddenly Lucy lowered her voice, and said to her brother, who was crouched down in a corner close to the window with his book on his knees, which were stuck up, so as to make a reading-desk, "Edward, do you know, I think I see the postman coming down the street; but don't say anything to mamma about it, and don't cry out, 'There's the postman!' if you hear him knock. Mamma is always so disappointed when he does not bring her a letter, and she is so tired of expecting one from uncle, that I wish she would not remember that it is post-time at all."

It was a kind thought of Lucy's to try to avoid calling her mother's attention to the postman; but in spite of her caution to her brother, they both started,

and so did their mother, when a knock louder than usual came to the door; and, like their mother, they could not help waiting in breathless silence a minute or two, to see if the maid was going to bring up the letter to their room. Her step was heard on the stairs, the door opened, and she came in and handed their mother, Mrs. Osborne, a letter. Lucy saw her mother's hand almost tremble as she opened the letter, and she looked grave and eager as she began to read it. As she read, however, the anxious look cleared away, she almost smiled, she looked pleased and satisfied; and letting the letter fall upon her lap, she leant her arm upon the table at her side, and covered her eyes with her hand for a few minutes. Lucy did not know that, during those few minutes, thanks from her mother's heart were being offered to God, who had heard her prayers and sent her help in time of trouble. "Lucy, my love," said she at length in a cheerful tone, "I have got a letter at last from your uncle. Edward, do you hear? Why, where is Edward?" said she, looking round the room.

"Here, mother; here I am," cried Edward, scrambling out of his corner with his beloved 'Robinson'—"a letter from uncle, did you say?"

"Yes; and such a pleasant letter, dear children. You know I wrote to consult him about our going to New Zealand, and instead of that he asks us to go and stay with him all the summer at least, and perhaps for ever. But listen to what he says," and she read aloud as follows:—

"THE HAVEN, NEAR P——,
"HANTS, *April 25th.*

"DEAR SISTER OSBORNE,—I received your letter, dated the 5th, only this morning, having been for the last fortnight from home. I took a run down to Ports-

mouth to see an old friend, and unexpectedly went a cruise with him up the Channel, so that I did not get my letters till my return. I hardly know what to advise about New Zealand, not being acquainted with the colony, and only having touched there once or twice for water. I am sorry to find that my late brother's affairs have not been arranged as favourably as you could desire. My old housekeeper, Mrs. Brown, died about two months back, and I can't say I get on very well with my household matters, so that if you think well of it, I shall be very glad to see you here for a month or two, and longer if we find that we suit each other. I suppose you must bring the children with you. There is a good school near, that the boy can go to every day; and the girl, I suppose, can learn pudding-making and stitching at home. I don't exactly know how I shall like to have young folks in the house, never having been accustomed to them, but I suppose they know how to behave themselves. You can let me know when you will come, a day or two beforehand.

"Your affectionate brother-in-law,

"CHARLES OSBORNE.

"Please to direct to Captain Osborne, R.N., The Haven, near P——.

"P.S.—You had better take the rail on to P——, instead of stopping at the station near the Haven. There are plenty of flies to be had, which will bring you out. The Haven stands about two miles N.N.W. of the town, on the old London road."

"You will go, mother, won't you?" cried Edward; "I'm sure I hope you will! I shall like going to uncle's almost as well as going to New Zealand. It

will be nearly as good as going a voyage, to hear all uncle's adventures at sea, won't it, Lucy?"

"Much better, I should say," said Lucy; but still she did not look as pleased as Edward.

"And you will like to live in the country too, Lucy, I am sure you will like it very much," said her mother.

"Oh yes, mamma—but then Grace Martin! I am so sorry to leave Grace Martin; and at uncle's I shall never have a girl of my own age to play with, and Edward will go to school."

"That he would do anywhere," said her mother; "and you can always write to Grace Martin, as often as you please."

"Yes, mamma; but do you think we shall like Uncle Osborne? Do you know, I don't quite think he can be good-natured, or he would not have said that about our behaving ourselves, or have called us 'the boy,' and 'the girl.'"

"Not good-natured, my dear, when he asks us all to go to him, and invites you and your brother, who cannot be of any use to him?"

Lucy was too good-natured herself not to be ready to believe that her notion might be quite unfounded, and when she saw how pleased her mother and brother were about going to the Haven, she set quite aside her own little private reasons for not being so happy in the prospect herself, and she tried not to think so much about Grace Martin. Lucy had always known Grace Martin, but they had latterly been living only a few doors from where her father and mother lived, so that Lucy and Grace had seen a geat deal of each other, and been very happy together. After having had no one but a brother older than herself to play with in general, it was quite delightful to Lucy to have Grace as a

companion, who by no means despised many of the plays that Edward could now never be persuaded to play at; and besides that, was a capital hand at inventing games of the quiet kind that Lucy was so particularly fond of.

From the very morning on which the invitation came from Captain Osborne, preparations were began for leaving London. Mrs. Osborne wrote to accept most gratefully the proposed shelter for herself and children, and she undertook to do her best to make her brother-in-law comfortable, promising also for her children that they would behave well, and not disturb him in any way. She ended her letter by fixing to be at the Haven in a fortnight's time.

That fortnight was soon over. The packing time was one of great bustle, and the most beautiful spring weather seemed to make a journey into the country the pleasantest thing in the world; and even leave-taking of old friends did not seem so painful as they had all expected, for every one was so kind, and so glad that the scheme of going out to New Zealand had been given up. One pleasure, too, which Lucy enjoyed, then occupied her thoughts for nearly a whole week, and this was the choice of a parting keepsake for her friend Grace Martin. Out of her own savings she bought the prettiest of work-boxes imaginable, and with her mother's assistance fitted it up with all kinds of useful little nick-nacks and materials, such as a clever little workwoman like Grace is sure to require.

Edward enjoyed most of all the final packing up and nailing down of boxes, and cording of trunks, for then he could be of help, and as busy as any one. For a whole day he went about hammer in hand, from one room to another, and used up an innumerable quantity of nails and tacks to his great satisfaction, and no one

could have managed better than he did the writing of directions and tying on of labels. There was so much to be done, and so much bustle at last, that Mrs. Osborne could hardly be persuaded that something very important had not been forgotten, when she found herself with her children fairly seated in the railroad carriage, which was to take them to P——; but a box that she fancied must be left behind, proved to be under the seat—placed there by kind Mr. Martin, Grace's father, who saw them off; and Edward was found to have had all the while tight hold of the knob of an umbrella, that, when first inquired after, he was sure he knew nothing about! This blunder of Edward's helped them all to a smile before the train had quite got away from the station, and wiping away the tears that had started into her eyes, Lucy was able to nod and kiss her hand to Grace Martin, as she stood by her father's side on the platform. Grace's bonnet was the very last thing that Lucy saw as they steamed away from under the great station roof, and then she had to settle her pet canary, which she carried in her hand in his cage and sling him up over head comfortably for the journey, while she uncovered his cage and let him see all of the world that he chose. They had no adventures on the road during their two hours' journey. Edward read "Robinson Crusoe" the greater part of the way, and their mother slept, for she was very tired with all the bustle of the previous day, and several sleepless nights, so that Lucy had no one to talk to and was quite sorry she had not brought a book. A silent old lady in the corner, however, who was their only companion in the railroad carriage, got out at one of the stations, and a more talkative gentleman got in. He soon caused Edward to look up from his book, and answer some of his questions. He asked them where

they were going, and what were their names. Did they like leaving town and coming to stay in the country? Edward said he did very much, because he thought he should have capital fun with his uncle, who had been a sailor.

"I don't like leaving London as well as Edward," said Lucy, "because of leaving Grace Martin; and besides, I am almost afraid of Uncle Osborne, and don't know whether I shall like him."

"Hem!" said the gentleman, and he called her a chatterbox. After that he talked more with Edward than Lucy, and, finding out what he was reading, he told him a good deal about the real Robinson Crusoe, Alexander Selkirk, who was wrecked on the island of Juan Fernandez.

"I wonder whether Uncle Osborne ever touched at Juan Fernandez, in any of his voyages," said Edward, "I shall ask him when I see him."

"Ay, mind you don't forget," said the gentleman as he got out at the last station before they came to P——. "And take care Uncle Osborne does not eat you up," said he to Lucy as he pulled out his great-coat from under the seat after he was out of the carriage.

Edward and Lucy saw their acquaintance walking away from the station across some fields, which seemed to lie between them and the town of P——, which was now visible. In another ten minutes they would be at the end of the journey, and their mother roused herself up to see after all their packages, and to call to mind all that were in the great luggage van at the end of the train. Dickey was carefully covered up again, and the bags and baskets of each collected. Nothing was left behind, and a nice little carriage was found at the station in which they were soon leaving the town

again along a pleasant country road. The driver knew Captain Osborne's house, called the Haven, quite well, so that when he stopped before a pretty white house standing amidst shrubberies and flower-beds, with a smooth lawn on one side sloping down from the sitting-room windows, they felt delighted to think that so

pleasant a place was to be their future home. If they had doubted for a minute, there was the white and red flag hoisted on a flag-staff in the middle of the lawn, and on the top of a little summer-house was a brightly gilt weather-cock, with the four points of the compass shown by its letters—all which looked as if the house

belonged to one who had been accustomed to hoist flags on all occasions of importance, and to think a great deal about the direction of the wind.

Edward and Lucy, however, were almost in too much trepidation just then to look more about them. They were hunting out all their own possessions again, and were preparing to get out of the carriage, when whom should they see handing out their mother, and welcoming her very cordially to his house, but the gentleman who had talked to them in the train—the sunburnt gentleman who seemed to know so much about the sea, and who could be no one else but their own uncle, Captain Osborne!

"Well, my young gentleman, so we are met again, you see—only that I have got into port a little before you, by a nearer tack;—yes, no mistake, my man, I am Uncle Osborne himself, you see," and he shook Edward heartily by the hand. He helped Lucy out too, but he did not take so much notice of her as of her brother; and he really did frighten her a little, even at this her first arrival at the Haven, by the sharp way in which he told her to let her things alone, and leave the servant to look after them. Only once, however, did he allude to Lucy's dread of him, and this was when a large Newfoundland dog came bounding forth to meet them, as they went up the path to the house. Lucy shrunk back, rather in alarm, at the unceremonious greeting of great Rover, but her uncle said, "No fear, Miss Lucy, even of him; for he won't bite any more than his master."

Nothing, however, could be more kind or hospitable than the manner in which they were all received by Captain Osborne at the Haven, while Mrs. Osborne, after a little while, was able to remember, in her sunburnt and weather-beaten brother-in-law, the young

man that she had only known when just entering the navy as a midshipman. He explained to her that he had unexpectedly had some business that morning at a town on the line of railway by which they had come, and that after he found out who were his companions in returning, he had tried not to disturb her nap, whilst he amused himself with the talk of the young folk, without letting them know who he was. Mrs. Osborne soon felt quite at home with him, and quickly understood the mixture of roughness and kindness which was in his manners. They had, besides, many pleasant remembrances of old times to talk over together, which made them familiar and friendly at once.

Edward liked his uncle very much, and was greatly delighted with all the charming things that were to be found at the Haven, and Lucy's spirits rose as she saw how pleased and cheerful her mother seemed. She followed close behind, as her uncle led the way, all over the house and round the garden, and thought to herself how ungrateful it would be not to be pleased at the thought of living in such a nice home. Kind preparations, too, had been made for their arrival, and the prettiest of bed-rooms and sitting-rooms set apart entirely for the use of her mother and herself, and even, before they had been half-an-hour in the house, a nail found at the side of a pleasant window where Dickey could hang and sing as long as he liked. Luckily Captain Osborne did not dislike pet birds; for in the hall was a large grey parrot, on a perch, who was the most amusing and plain-speaking talker that was ever heard. It was enough to make them all feel at home, if it were only to hear this parrot, whom the bustle of their arrival had roused into a talkative fit; for nothing was heard all over the house but "How d'ye do;" "Hope you're pretty well;" "Glad to see you;" filled

up with the usual praises of her own beauty, which these birds are so fond of sounding.

"Is it not all delightful?" said Edward to Lucy, when they were together in their mother's room, unbuckling straps and unlocking padlocks. "Don't you like uncle now, Lucy? and are you not sorry you told him in the railroad carriage that you did not like coming to stay with him? Don't you think, mother, that Lucy had better tell him she is very sorry, and did not mean to say——"

"No, Edward, I do not," said his mother; "Lucy told the truth about her feelings, and your uncle knows that she did not intend it as any rudeness to him, because she did not know to whom she was speaking. He will soon think no more of it, and will like Lucy well enough at last, I have no doubt—and all the more for her being plain-spoken and truthful like himself."

The first evening at the Haven passed very happily, and Lucy tried not to fancy that her uncle had taken a dislike to her, at the same time that she was really quite glad to see what good friends he and Edward were going to be.

CHAPTER II.

TRYING TO PLEASE.

BETTER acquaintance with the Haven only made everybody like it still better, and Edward, in particular, seemed to be happier and happier every day. No house that he had ever lived in had in it such very interesting things, and no garden had ever afforded so much amusement to him. Before the first morning was over, he had grown quite expert at hoisting and taking down the flag on the flagstaff; he knew the dogs all by name, and had fed the pigeons. He had been introduced to his uncle's grey mare in the stable, and had been taken up into what was called the workshop, over the kitchen, where were the turning-lathe and chest of carpenter's tools; and he had been to the very farthest end of the orchard, and into every corner of the kitchen-garden. But it was what his uncle called his "state-cabin" that

pleased him most of all. This was a room indoors, which his uncle considered particularly his own, and did not like anybody to go into unless he was with

him. It was quite a museum that little room, and all around it were curiosities, which Captain Osborne had brought home from different parts of the world in his voyages. Shells, pieces of branch coral, sea-weed, ostrich-eggs, stuffed birds, and such objects of natural history, but also things even more interesting to Edward, such as pictures and models of celebrated ships, telescopes, a quadrant, and a mariner's compass, both of which latter things he wished much to understand. Here, too, it was that Captain Osborne kept his fishing-tackle, and made his own flies for angling; which was, perhaps, the reason why he did not like people going into his room when he was away, for fear they should disturb the little delicate materials with which he made them. Edward passed several hours of each day with his uncle in this room, when he was not at work in the garden with him, or accompanying him in a ride in his gig. No companion that Edward had ever had, of his own age, was half so entertaining to him as his uncle, and he liked to be with him too, because he was always learning from him the kind of knowledge that was particularly interesting to him. His uncle, for instance, could tell him everything about ships and navigation that he wanted to know. He learnt from him the names of all the parts of a vessel, and the names of the different kinds of vessels, and how to distinguish them. He had long wished to understand rightly the difference between a brig, a frigate, a cutter, and a schooner; to say nothing of all the names for the different sails and masts, which he often found alluded to in books, without exactly knowing what they meant. He was never tired of asking questions about such matters; and it seemed as if Uncle Osborne was never tired of giving explanations. Then what interesting stories his uncle could tell him about his adventures at sea, and about

all the grand sea-fights that had taken place when he was a little midshipman,—those especially in which Lord Nelson had distinguished himself. Edward was sure he never *should* be tired of hearing all about Lord Nelson, and he longed for the time when he should go to Portsmouth to see the "Victory," the ship in which he was killed, and which his uncle promised to show him some day.

Lucy, meantime, went on with her mother much as she usually did, wherever they were, with her books and her work. She was very happy, and she liked the pleasant garden and the pretty country walks very much, but she would have been glad to have had a young companion of her own age, or to have been a little more with Edward. It was impossible, too, for her to take so much pleasure as Edward in her uncle's talk about ships, for in fact she did not half understand what it was all about, from the strange sailor's expressions that he made use of. She was a long time before she found out that *starboard* and *larboard* meant the right and left sides of a ship, *fore* and *aft*, the front and back parts, and when her uncle talked of "jib-booms," and "foretop-gallants," and about "taking the sun," and "getting soundings," it seemed to be quite another language, and she despaired of ever being able to understand it all. Regularly every evening, when her uncle and Edward came in to tea, when it would have been so pleasant to have heard what they had been doing all the afternoon, they were sure to have some long story about a shipwreck, or about one of Nelson's sea-fights to finish off, which, for want of having heard the beginning, was quite unintelligible to her; and very often all the cups and saucers and plates would be arranged about the table, to show the positions of the different vessels at the

battle of St. Vincent, or Trafalgar; and if Lucy did try to understand how it was, she was sure to make a blunder, and get confused about the English and French ships, fancying perhaps all the time that the sugar-basin had been on the French side, when it had been fixed on for Nelson's ship. All this made Lucy much more silent at the Haven than she had ever been before in her life, so that Uncle Osborne had no op-

portunity of calling her a chatterbox again, as he did in the railroad carriage. To tell the truth, her uncle did not take much notice of Lucy in any kind of way, unless it was to ask her every day how she got on with her "sewing," which he seemed to think the only thing she had anything to do with; and when he found out that she had never learned to mark, he used to teaze her a little about it, always asking her when

she was going to begin a sampler, which Lucy did not at all see any necessity for doing, considering how neatly her mother marked everything with marking-ink. Lucy took the teazing very good-temperedly, however, we ought to observe, and was always so obliging, that she never on any occasion omitted doing any little thing for her uncle that she could; and her mother had only to say, "Lucy, your uncle's slippers," or "Lucy, your uncle's hat," before she was off as quick as lightning, to fetch them. She and her brother both tried to please their uncle, to whom they were so much obliged; but it was in different ways—Lucy with actions, perhaps, and Edward with words. Edward was too anxious to please his uncle in this way, and he was not long at the Haven before his mother began to fear that this might have a bad effect upon his character. This trying so much to please one person is rather a dangerous thing at all times, and is not nearly so safe as trying to do and say what is right. Now, Captain Osborne could be rather sharp and severe when things did not go on quite smoothly, or when any one disobeyed his orders and wishes. Having been accustomed the greater part of his life to have the command of a large crew of sailors on board a ship, where nothing can be done except through the most strict obedience to the words of the captain, it was natural that he should be vexed and displeased if any one seemed for an instant to forget his orders. Edward was exceedingly fearful of causing his uncle to express any such vexation; and yet at the same time he was by no means accustomed to be very punctual or particular, so that he very often had recourse to excuses to prevent his uncle from being angry with him.

"Come, come! Master Edward, I don't like being

kept waiting," said his uncle, one day when they were going out for a walk.

"Yes, uncle; but my shoes were not cleaned, and I had to wait for them, uncle," said Edward, although, long after he had put on his shoes, he had been seen by his mother and Lucy playing in the yard with the dog.

"Edward should not have said anything about the shoes," said his mother, looking very grave. The very next day, Edward had been helping the gardener's boy to hoe some lettuces, and instead of putting back his hoe in the tool-house, he had thrown it down, so that his uncle had picked it up when he went round the garden. "I like my tools put back in their proper places," said he to Edward.

"Yes, uncle, I know; and I am always very particular, so I cannot help thinking that must be the hoe that Jack used." There was something in the tone of Edward's voice as he said this, which made Lucy, who was present, feel quite uncomfortable.

"Don't you think you forgot to put it away?" said she in a low voice to him. Lucy often wished that Edward was not so afraid of Uncle Osborne, and had courage to tell him the exact truth about such little matters. How different it was with herself—although it might have been thought beforehand that she would be likely to feel much more afraid of her uncle than Edward. It happened one day, when Captain Osborne was out, that Lucy was sent by her mother to fetch a letter which lay on the table in his room, and which they knew he particularly wished to be sent to the post, so that Lucy had no hesitation in going there by herself to fetch it. She had found the letter, and was leaving the room with it, when she felt something pull at her elbow, and, looking round, she found that one

of her uncle's fish-hooks had caught in her sleeve. It had a long piece of twine fastened to it, and this twine had brought with it other pieces of horsehair and catgut, and all sorts of bristles, and feathers, and artificial flies, had been scattered over the floor. Lucy was at first in terrible alarm about the mischief she had done, but, extricating the hook from her sleeve, she picked up the rest of the tackle, and put it back on the table, fearing to make matters worse by attempting to replace them as they had been before. She was very vexed about it altogether, because it was the very first time she had ever been in that room alone; but it never occurred to her to try to prevent her uncle from knowing that it was she who had disturbed his things. She even went and stood by the garden-gate, so as to be ready to tell him directly he came in from his walk, and she said at once that she was afraid he would find that she had done some mischief. "I think, too, uncle," added she, "I ought to tell you that I remember I put your letter into your letter-weight, which I need not have done, because it was very light, and I daresay I leant my elbow on the table for a minute, and did not see that there were any hooks there."

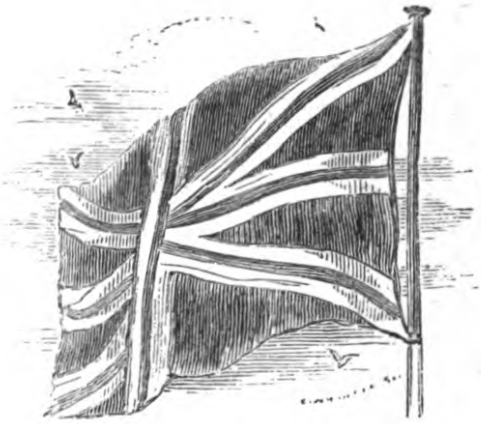
Lucy followed her uncle into the room as he went to see what was the matter, and she begged to be allowed to try and disentangle the twine and horsehair, which she did very patiently, so that it ended by her uncle saying that no great harm had been done; and any one could see that he was pleased at Lucy's frankness and truthfulness in telling him about the affair. Perhaps it was about this time that their Uncle Osborne began to see the difference between the characters of Edward and Lucy; for a little circumstance, which happened a day or two after, showed it very plainly.

Captain Osborne and Edward were flying a kite upon the lawn, and the latter was sent to the "state cabin" to fetch a card which was to make a messenger to be sent up the string. When he came back, his uncle said he hoped he had not meddled with anything, and Edward too readily replied, "Oh, no, uncle, indeed!"

Presently Captain Osborne went to fetch something which no one but himself could find, and when he came back Edward and Lucy saw in an instant that he was displeased. "I thought, young gentleman," said he, "that you said you had not meddled with anything."

"No, indeed, uncle, I did not," said Edward again.

"Take care, Master Edward, what you are saying," said his uncle; "for, if you did not meddle with anything, how was it that I found my hour-glass running when I went into the room?"



THE UNION JACK.

Edward blushed, and stopped for an instant to seek out an excuse; "You said *meddled*, you know, uncle, and I did not say I had not touched anything——."

He was going on, but his uncle looked at him very sternly, and said, "People who speak the truth speak it according to the meaning of words;" and he would not have another word from Edward on the subject, nor

did he talk as usual with him that evening at tea, but read the newspaper aloud to Mrs. Osborne.

All this time Mrs. Osborne had been looking out for a school for Edward, where he could go for several hours of the day, and where he would have more regular occupation; and such a school being now found, she began to feel that they were now quite settled at the Haven, for many months, at all events, while Captain Osborne would sometimes talk as if their stay was to be for years.

CHAPTER III.

HARVESTING.

EDWARD and Lucy had not long been at the Haven before a little acquaintanceship sprung up between them and the children of a farmer who lived very near, and whose farm stretched down to the roadside opposite the Haven, through which, by pleasant pathways over fields of wheat and barley, they went to the farmhouse. Haymaking time was scarcely over, before the children began to look forward to the harvest, when, for the first time in their lives, Edward and Lucy were to be gleaners. Farmer Whicher always had a most merry harvest-supper for his labourers; and this year Mrs. Whicher promised her children also a little treat in the way of a supper, to which they were to invite all their young friends, as well as the children of the farm-labourers who lived in the neighbouring village.

Now, Edward and Lucy were invited to this harvest feast, and looked forward to it with no little pleasure—watching the weather and the ripening of the corn almost as anxiously as Farmer Whicher himself. When the morning came that, on looking out of the window as she was dressing, Lucy first descried a band of reapers, cutting away with their bright sickles at the edge of the waving sea of wheat which lay beyond the roadside hedge, she called out to Edward the joyful news that the harvest was began; and, before the day was over, the farmer's children came down to tell them that their little harvest-home

supper was fixed for the following Thursday, when their father expected that the greater part of his corn would be got into his barns. The large wheat-field, which lay between the Haven and the farm, would, at all events, be *carried* that day; and it was expected that, at about five o'clock in the afternoon, the gleaners would be able to take possession of the field. Long before that time, on the appointed day, Edward and Lucy, and a group of the village children, were at the gate of the field, ready to begin operations the very moment that the last cart should drive out; for, as is usually the case, Farmer Whicher did not like the gleaners to be admitted until his crop of corn was fairly off the field. It was very amusing at first to watch the men pitching up into the carts the heavy sheaves; but the children had not watched this long before they began to feel impatient about the progress of their labour, for it seemed as if the field would never be emptied. Five o'clock had struck long ago, and it was not very far off six, when a message came out from the farm, to say, that as the men were likely to be quite another hour before they had carried all the corn, the children were to be allowed to enter, and glean in the lower part of the field, away from the remainder of the still standing sheaves. The children shouted joyfully, as this permission was given, and the gate being opened, in they rushed; and, scattering about the field, were soon seen busy stooping and gathering up the scattered ears of wheat which had been left behind. Who should glean the largest bundle was the cry—and no one was more eager than Edward to prove a good gleaner. He was not so steady at his work, or persevering, however, as Lucy, who went quietly on, travelling up the furrows, and taking care not to go to parts where others had been

before. Now and then all agreed to rest awhile; for they grew hot and tired with so much stooping; and then there were other things to look at and divert their attention, such as the nest of a field-mouse full of young ones, and a hedgehog, which one of the young Whichers turned out of the hedge, and which rolled itself up into a round prickly ball. Edward had never before seen a hedgehog, and he stayed looking at it, and trying to make it unroll itself again, long after the rest had returned to their gleaning. Presently, the eldest Miss Whicher came out from the house, to summon all the gleaners in. The tarts and cakes were out of the oven, she said, and the fermety, which was to be the principal dish on the supper table, would be ready in another hour. She invited all the gleaners to come on to the lawn, at the back of the house, and there, in the cool arbour, they could rest and bind up their sheaves, and then have a game of play. The children obeyed the summons very gladly; for, altogether, it was thought they must have gleaned what, when divided amongst the village children, would make a famous sheaf for each to carry home. Lucy, with the rest, was leaving the field, with a charming large bundle of wheat in her apron, when she looked round to see after Edward. He was only then coming away from a corner of the field where the hedgehog had been found, and, as he came up to her, Lucy was quite vexed to see what a small quantity of corn he had gleaned; really not more than he could hold in one hand.

"Oh, Edward!" said she "how little you have got; what have you been about?" Edward never liked being behind others in what he did, so that he was sorry, now it was too late, that he had not gleaned more industriously. He and Lucy were passing at

this moment up amongst the shocks of corn which were yet standing; and what was Lucy's concern, to see Edward stay behind, and draw out of one of the sheaves several fine ears of corn to add to his own small bunch. "Oh, Edward, you must not take that corn—you know you must not! Farmer Whicher has trusted us to leave those sheaves alone. Oh, pray don't, Edward! It is really quite like stealing," said she, the tears coming into her eyes at the very thought.

"What nonsense, Lucy,—you do say such things. Just as if the corn did not all belong to Farmer Whicher,—and just as if it mattered to him. You see I have not taken more than a dozen ears of corn at the very most." And Edward ran past her into the house.

Lucy stood for a few minutes in painful thought, wishing she could do anything that would make Edward bring back that corn again, and see things as she saw them, and feel as she felt; then, suddenly a plan occurred to her, which would make matters better, at all events, in this case; then, taking out of her own gleanings twelve nice full ears of corn, she laid them at the top of the sheaf, from which Edward had so dishonourably helped himself. She was turning away from the sheaf, when she started to see Farmer Whicher leaning over a gate close by, watching the filling of the last cart. Lucy hoped he had not seen her put back the ears of corn, or rather that he had not seen Edward take them.

The children enjoyed themselves much in the arbour, binding their little sheaves and portioning them out among those whose homes would be gladdened by the prospect of an extra loaf or two of bread during the coming week, and when their work was

done, all were ready for a game of play upon the smooth green lawn.

Prisoner's base was the game fixed upon, which the girls soon learned to play at, although they had never heard of it before, and the arbour was an excellent prison for the prisoners who were taken in the chase. The sun was sinking behind the hills and sending its slanting rays through the trees of Farmer Whicher's orchard, and the shadow of the great cedar of Lebanon had stretched quite across the lawn, and made the prison where Lucy was in confinement, beautifully gloomy, when a voice was heard calling all the party of runners and catchers in to supper. Such a bustling and crowding there was into the supper-room, the old-fashioned parlour where the large table was laid out for the children's harvest feast. Dishes piled high with all manner of good things, fruit, pastry, and a variety of choice cakes, were arranged upon the snow-white table-cloth, and in the midst a large china bowl full of smoking hot fermety. There were nosegays of flowers too upon the table, by way of ornament, and the eldest Miss Whicher had made a most beautiful garland of blue corn-flowers, which lay on the table, ready to crown, as she said, the queen of the gleaners. The children were soon seated down each side of the long table, and the fermety was being ladled out to them and the cakes handed round, when Farmer Whicher came in, bringing with him Captain and Mrs. Osborne, who had walked up to the farm to fetch Edward and Lucy—as every one said, a great deal too soon. They consented to wait, however, until the children's supper was quite over, and were glad to see the pleasant sight of their happiness. Farmer Whicher had something merry to say to each child as he walked round the table—now patting a

boy on the head, and now chucking a little girl under the chin. At last he came to Lucy—"Ah, here is my little friend, Miss Lucy," said he, "my good little honest friend, who would not let me be defrauded of any of my corn. She it is who deserves to be crowned queen of the gleaners." And as he spoke he took up the garland of corn-flowers which lay upon the table, and popped it upon Lucy's head.

Lucy held down her head, blushing deeply.

"What is this all about?" said Captain Osborne, whilst everybody round the table looked anxious for an explanation. Farmer Whicher jokingly told how Master Edward had made up for his bad gleaning by helping himself from one of his sheaves, and how Miss Lucy had been too honest to let him be cheated that way. He had seen it all, he said, as he stood hid by the hedge whilst he was looking after his men; they little knew that he had seen it all.

It was now Edward's turn to hold down his head, and though Farmer Whicher seemed to think it a very good joke, there were those present who could not think it so. Mrs. Osborne looked sorry and grieved, and Captain Osborne said in a very severe tone to Edward, "You ought to have been ashamed to do such a thing. It was no better than stealing, to take the corn in that way." Luckily for Edward, the noise of talking and the rattle of plates and spoons, together with the praises of Lucy's honesty which were sounded round the table, prevented these words from being heard by the rest of the children. Lucy got rid of the crown which made her feel so bashful, and it reached at last the little girl who had been fixed on as a queen of the gleaners, because she really had gleaned more than any of them, but as Miss Whicher took the garland from Lucy, she said, "After all, Miss Lucy, it is a more

unfading crown than mine you know, that is reserved for the Upright and the Just." There was plenty of fun and merriment to finish out the evening and prevent any one saying anything more about the affair of the stolen wheat-ears, so that even Edward had partly succeeded in forgetting it. His mother and uncle, however, could not forget it. When they had at last taken leave of the farmer's kind family and were walking home, Mrs. Osborne went on before the others with Edward, to whom she had something to say, whilst Uncle Osborne and Lucy walked together. It would have been quite dark but for the very bright stars overhead and just a faint tinge of red left in the sky to the west. Lucy felt that her uncle was so very kind in taking care that she did not stumble over the stiff stubble, or slip into the furrows as they crossed the now empty corn-field. He kept quite tight hold of her hand, whilst he carried for her her bunch of nice long straight straws which she was taking home to plait. Her uncle assisted her, too, so kindly over the very awkward stile, which had a ditch and a foot-plank on the other side, and he talked to her so very pleasantly all the way home. They talked about the stars. Her uncle showed Lucy which was the pole-star, by which sailors at sea could find the north and steer by it.

"All over the world, can they see it?" asked Lucy.

"No, not all over the world. When ships sail in a southerly direction and approach nearer and nearer to the equator, the pole-star seems to sink down nearer and nearer to the horizon, until at last it is quite lost sight of; and when sailing in the southern hemisphere, people see quite a different set of stars in the sky to what we do in England—quite different groups of stars or *constellations* as they are called, and the *constellations* have different names."

This little lesson on the stars was just ended as they arrived at the gate of the Haven, where Mrs. Osborne and Edward were standing after having rung the bell. As they got up to them, Captain Osborne and Lucy knew quite well what Edward and his mother had been talking about, by the last words that were spoken.

"Now, do, my dear Edward, try to be more particular in future."

"I will, mother,—indeed, I will," said Edward, and he spoke as if he was quite in earnest as he made the promise.

"Yes, my boy," said Captain Osborne, laying his hand on Edward's shoulder, "learn to steer by the pole-star truth and honour, and then you will never run aground on shoals, or break on rocks."

CHAPTER IV.

BOAT-BUILDING.

AFTER the conversation which her uncle and Lucy had had together about the stars, in which the latter had shown that she liked to understand such matters, her mother observed that Captain Osborne often stopped in the middle of what he was relating to Edward, in order to explain sea terms, and such sailors' expressions as he thought she might not understand; and these explanations began to make his stories of shipwrecks and adventures at sea much more interesting to her. Her mother's prophecy that Captain Osborne would like Lucy, when he came to know her well, had come to pass; and whilst he liked her for being so obliging and intelligent, he quite loved her for her truthfulness and strict feeling of honour.

What made Lucy at this time particularly glad that she was beginning to understand more about ships and boats was, that her uncle and Edward had a grand scheme for building a boat large enough to be rowed on the pond at the bottom of the lawn. Now we must explain that this pond, though a very pretty object to look at from the house, with its weeping willow hanging over it at one end, was rather an inconvenience to those who lived at the Haven. It lay between the kitchen-garden and lawn; and in order to get to the former, it was necessary to go rather a long way round, through the yard at the side of the house, and down a strip of ground that was used for drying linen. At the time that the strawberries were ripe, and afterwards, when the cook was busy preserving, it was felt to be quite tiresome to have to go such a long way round with

the baskets of fruit. Edward had often asked his uncle why he did not build a bridge over the narrow end of the pond, but this was never thought of seriously. One day, however, when Edward was at home, on one of his half-holidays, it was raining so heavily, that there was nothing to be done but to get up in the workshop and do some carpentering, and then it was that the making of a boat was first planned. When they came in to tea that evening, Edward was full of delight and full of talk about the real proper-shaped and proper-sized boat they were going to build for the pond. It was to be large enough to hold three persons, and Uncle Osborne thought that they might get it finished in time for gathering of the late apples and winter pears, so that it would be really useful to bring the baskets over from the other side, and land them where they would be carried up to the apple-room in no time.

Lucy liked the idea of the boat very much, and had no fears about its *capsizing*, as her uncle called it, because the bottom of the pond could be seen so plainly, that she was sure no one could ever be drowned in it. She listened quite patiently to the description of how it was all to be managed—how the frame of the boat was to be made of five long pieces of deal, and how the ribs were to be of flexible ash-wood; how a piece of zinc was to be fastened along the keel; and lastly, how canvas was to be stretched over the outside, because it would be impossible for them, as Captain Osborne said, to get planks warped into the right curve for nailing outside, in the manner of boats in general, and the canvas would make it light and easy to carry. There was nothing talked of but the boat all that evening, and when the tea-things were removed, pen and ink and paper were brought out to

make a list of all that would be wanted of nails, screws, and tin tacks, zinc, ash-wood, and deal—all of which things Captain Osborne was to have in readiness to begin operations with the very next evening. So many hours work on half-holidays, and so many half-hours before breakfast and after tea, on ordinary days, would, they thought, complete the boat in three weeks' time, so that the grand day of the launch might be fixed for Lucy's birth-day, which was at the beginning of September.

Everything went on very pleasantly and smoothly with the boat-building between Edward and his uncle, so that Lucy and her mother were quite pleased to see how much more careful he had become, whilst he was always diligent over his lessons, and punctual at school, which his mother was very particular about. It cannot be said that Edward never made excuses at this time, and did not sometimes misrepresent a little when he was in fear of being blamed, but every one thought he was trying to cure himself of his faults, and made allowance for the difficulty of breaking himself of a settled habit.

Lucy was very glad to be allowed by her mother to go occasionally up to the workshop to watch Edward and her uncle at work upon the boat. She was surprised to find that it required such downright *hard* work, and used to wonder that they liked to make themselves so hot and tired with their hammering and sawing. At first it was thought that it would not be necessary to have a rudder to their boat, considering what short voyages it would have to perform on the little pond, but Edward maintained that it would be quite a pity not to make it a real boat in every respect, so that a rudder was decided on, and Captain Osborne thought that he knew of a man in P——, who would be

able to furnish them with a set of rudder-irons small enough to suit their little boat. These irons were the sort of hinges which were to connect the rudder to the boat, and enable it to move from side to side, at the will of the steersman, but they were so contrived, that the rudder could be taken off, or *unshipped,* as Captain Osborne said, when it was not wanted. The rudder, and the piece of wood which fitted on to the top of it, called a *yoke,* with its two pieces of rope, which were to be pulled first on one side and then on the other, as they steered, was thought by Lucy to be the prettiest part of the boat, although it was altogether, as her uncle said, "as trim a little craft as ever was built."

Lucy's birthday drew near, and there was nothing to be done but the pitching and painting of the boat, and the making of a pair of oars. A painter who was coming to re-paint the greenhouse was to do the former, and Uncle Osborne undertook to get the oars finished off whilst Edward was at school the last three days. Lucy thought something very terrible had happened, from Edward's look of consternation, as he came in one evening to tell his mother and her quite an unexpected difficulty about the boat. All finished as it was, and ready for pitching and painting in the open air, it could not be got down the crooked little staircase that led up to the workshop! Captain Osborne had always expected that it could be hoisted up on end in such a manner as to come down very easily, but it was now found that this could not be managed, so that there was nothing left, but to take out the window of the workshop and lower the boat with ropes into the yard below. Jack had been sent up to Farmer Whicher's to borrow some ropes for this purpose, and when they arrived Mrs. Osborne and Lucy, and the maid-servants, went out into the yard to see

the operation of letting down the boat. It took half-an-hour before this was managed—the gardener and Jack, Captain Osborne and Edward, all hard at work, very hot and very eager. Quite safely, however, and, without any damage to it, the little boat was lowered to the ground, and those who had never seen it before thought it most beautifully and cleverly made. Edward was very delighted, and very impatient to see it launched upon the pond. He could hardly, in fact, make up his mind to lose sight of it, when his uncle proposed its being carried into an outhouse and left for the night. They had, however, to discuss together the important point of what colour it was to be painted, and the still more important point to settle of what it was to be called. Black outside with the pitch of course it would be, so it was thought that a bright green inside, with lines of white, would give it a light and pretty effect; but as to the name—*that* was most difficult to settle. Uncle Osborne did not care about the name, and said Edward might call it what he liked, and Mrs. Osborne could not suggest one. Edward and Lucy tried the sound of several, when all at once Edward declared that he had thought of the best name in the world, and was sure everybody would think so too; but as Uncle Osborne had said he might choose the name, he would not tell what he had fixed on until the painter had painted it in white letters at the stern. He made Lucy promise that she would not go to look at the boat again until it was painted, and ready for launching, because Edward was certain she would like the name, and wanted to surprise her; and Lucy never once tried to make him tell her what he had fixed on, and never even tried to guess it. She told her mother, in fact, the next day, that she was nearly sure she knew what it was to be.

During the pitching, and painting, and drying of the boat, which took quite three days, Lucy was busily employed, in her leisure time, in making a little flag to hang at the stern of the boat. It was to be a "Union Jack;" and her mother having procured her some pieces of red, blue, and white calico, Uncle Osborne left her a picture of the flags of different nations to copy it from: but it was to be quite a surprise to Edward, and only when his secret about the name came out was Lucy to present her nice little flag, which she was sure would please him greatly.

All was ready by Lucy's birthday; and the painter pronounced, that if they could only wait until the evening, there would be no chance of the paint coming off on Lucy's frock during her first voyage round the pond, after that Uncle Osborne and Edward had made a sort of experimental trip. The beautiful iced plum-cake, which was to be served up at tea that evening, made by the cook in honour of Lucy's birthday, was hardly thought of by any one, so full were they of the launch of the boat.

At about five o'clock, Lucy and her mother were out on the lawn, and were sitting on the bench under the plane-tree, ready for the ceremony, when presently there came quite a procession across the lawn from the yard at the side of the house. First came the boat itself, hoisted on the shoulders of the gardener and Jack—then came Uncle Osborne with the pair of oars, and lastly Edward with the rudder and its yoke. In a few minutes more the boat was shoved off on to the pond at a point where the lawn sloped down very gradually to the water, and Mrs. Osborne and Lucy were summoned to approach. All this time Lucy had been holding under her apron, to conceal it, the gay little flag which was to surprise Edward so much; but

then waving it up in the air, she came forward to present it, and be surprised herself about the name of the boat. She *was* surprised, and, it must be confessed, a little disappointed, although she could not deny that it was an excellent name. Edward had called his boat the "Crusoe," and Lucy only wondered that she had not also thought of this name, considering that "Robinson Crusoe" was still his most favourite book. She had been thinking of quite a different name, and it had put "Robinson Crusoe" out of her head.

Edward was so delighted with the little Union Jack, and with the admirable manner in which the "Crusoe" righted herself upon the water and made the first voyage round the pond, that he never noticed anything like disappointment in Lucy's manner. She was, besides, too pleased herself at the success of the boat to feel it long, and she was not in the least afraid when the time came for her to step into the boat and

go round the pond with Uncle Osborne, and, after a little instruction from him, he said she made a very good steersman.

Tea had been waiting long, and the urn had ceased to boil, so that fresh warm water was wanted, before the party could make up their minds to moor up the boat and return to the house. People ate Lucy's delicious plum-cake, talking all the time about the boat and praising it, and planning all sorts of things which were to be done for it, and with it, when all at once Edward turned to Lucy and said, "Now, do tell us, Lucy, what was the name you thought of for the boat—you have never told us yet."

Lucy blushed very much, and she hesitated—she could hardly make up her mind to tell them, for she thought they would think it so silly. At last, she said that "she had thought—indeed, from something Edward had said, she had almost felt sure—that he was going to call the boat the 'Lucy.'"

Lucy had no sooner said this than Edward quite wished he had thought of calling it after his sister, and he said so—and Captain Osborne also wished that Lucy's name had been given to the boat; and he did not think it at all strange or wrong that she should have expected it. He liked too, very much, that she should have been so frank in telling them all her thoughts, when it would have been easy enough to have concealed them. It was possible, even for Captain Osborne, who had been all his life a brave sailor, to admire this kind of courage in a very little girl; and without any one knowing how it came about, Lucy was presently sitting on her uncle's knee, with his arm so kindly round her; and before the evening was over, he remembered that upstairs he had a most beautifully carved ivory fan, that he had brought home from India, in one of his

voyages, which must have taken quite a year of a Chinaman's life to carve; and he brought it down and gave it to Lucy, as a birthday present and keepsake from him, and in remembrance of the launch of the "Crusoe."

CHAPTER V.

PEACE DISTURBING AND PEACE RESTORING.

THE "Crusoe" was a continual source of pleasure to every one at the Haven, and no day passed without her performing many voyages round the pond, and passages across it. Even Captain Osborne seemed quite satisfied with her success, and would stand for an hour together on the bank, giving Edward instructions in rowing, and telling Lucy how to steer. There were not any rocks or breakers in their little sea, but, as it required, they always maintained some skilful steering, to keep clear of the old stump of a post that stood up out of the water at one end of the pond, and to keep away from the branches of the willow-tree at the other end, which would have carried off Lucy's bonnet perhaps if they had got among them.

Edward became very expert in managing the "Crusoe," and in mooring her to the stump of a laurel at the side of the pond, which his uncle had cut down, all but the main stem, so that she might have safe moorage; for, before this, the "Crusoe" got adrift one windy night into the middle of the pond, and it was difficult to get her back to shore the next morning.

Edward and Lucy never allowed themselves to doubt of its being very convenient to get across to the kitchen garden, by means of a voyage in the "Crusoe;" and, to please them, the gardener, when he gathered his pears and apples, brought them all down to the side of the pond, to be rowed over by Edward, though he confessed to others that it would have given him very little more trouble to have taken them round by land all the way.

Mrs. Osborne, as she sat at work at the drawing-room window, thought she had never seen anything prettier than that little boat, going backwards and forwards with its freight of rosy apples and russet-brown pears—Edward rowing, and Lucy steering—and the bright-coloured little flag hanging at the stern. She thought it look very pretty, and she rejoiced to see her children so happy—saying to herself that she really hoped the time had come for Edward to cure himself of his one fault.

Bad habits, however, such as Edward's, are not to be got rid of all at once; especially, as the desire to *seem* to do right leads to the repetition of the fault. It was a great grief to everybody when Edward again forgot his promises of amendment, and did wrong in a matter connected with the favourite boat, which had given every one so much pleasure.

At the time of the building of the boat, Edward had had a good deal to do with the purchasing of various articles wanted for it, and when it was quite completed he was sent into the town one day with Jack, the gardener's boy, to settle for everything that had been ordered and left unpaid. He had besides some commissions for his mother to get that day, some paper and sealing-wax, and pens, and a list of all the things to be bought and paid for were given him, together with the

right sum of money that would be required. Now, Edward and Jack had become great friends, and were too fond, perhaps, of each other's company. Jack was good-natured, but very ignorant, and because Edward could tell him such nice stories about Robinson Crusoe and Lord Nelson, he fancied Edward a great deal wiser than he really was, and was more ready to be guided by him than was quite safe, considering that the greater part of his time belonged to his master. Several times had Jack been in disgrace for neglecting his work because he was with Master Edward, or when sent into the town with Edward, for staying away too long. It happened on this day we are telling of, that both Jack and Edward remained away much longer than there was any occasion for, so that every one at the Haven got quite alarmed about their not returning, and Captain Osborne was about preparing to set out in search of them, when they made their appearance. It came out that they had been tempted when in town, by the presence of a wild-beast show, in which there were lions and tigers, and other animals that Jack had never seen. They had both gone into the show, and had been induced to stay much longer than they at first intended, by the hope of seeing the animals fed. Jack told all this very faithfully, and tried to take the blame on himself, because Master Edward had, he said, been so anxious for him to see the lions and tigers. But Captain Osborne did not excuse either Jack or Edward, and was much displeased that they should have done anything of the kind without permission. Jack was ordered never on any pretence whatever to go out again with Master Edward, and Captain Osborne said something very angrily about not liking to have his servants disturbed in their duty to him by his visitors. Even after all this had been settled, and Edward had

been very seriously reproved by his mother, the whole blame was not exposed of that afternoon's visit to the town. Edward's mind was very uneasy about the commissions and the money that had been given to him. When required by his mother to give an account of the money that he had spent in the town, he was confused and embarrassed. It had been his own money which had paid for the entrance of Jack and himself to the wild-beast show, but there ought to be a shilling left to give back to his uncle, aud he had only threepence remaining in his purse. It was found necessary to apply to Jack for an explanation of this; and it was after scratching his head several times that he said something about "nuts and apples that they had bought to give to the elephant and monkeys;" and then Edward had to confess with many blushes and tears of shame, that in this manner the missing halfpence had been spent.

We will spare our readers the description of Captain Osborne's deep displeasure at this exposure of Edward's want of truth and honour; and we *could* not describe his mother's grief. Lucy too—she left the room to hide her tears, and did not hear all the angry and bitter reproaches cast upon her brother by his uncle. There seemed no chance of Edward ever regaining the confidence and affection which he had lost, and Mrs. Osborne saw plainly that she and her children must not remain to be a cause of disturbance at the Haven; for she called to mind that the latter had only been invited to come, provided they could behave well. Before that day was over, she had quite decided on leaving the Haven, and had told Captain Osborne of her intention. She told Edward and Lucy, too, that the Haven was no longer to be their home, and that they should return in town in another month; and she

did not scruple to point out to Edward that his conduct was the cause of their giving up the pleasures and comforts that they were enjoying.

Lucy was quite frightened to see how Edward was distressed at this announcement from her mother. He kept in his own room for the whole of that day, and he was very miserable. It was quite as well that this time he should make no promises for the future, but it grieved Edward more than anything to see that no one asked him to do so. His mother had grown tired of hoping that he would keep any promises of the kind, and she knew that his uncle would place no reliance on them. Lucy never once said "Do promise, Edward, that you will be more particular in future," because she said it only made matters worse to have these broken promises to look back upon. At the same time Lucy did believe that from this time forward Edward would speak the truth on all occasions, and she told her mother so.

"When you come to think, mamma, how very much he will grieve to leave the Haven, and the 'Crusoe;' and above all, to go away from Uncle Osborne, whom he likes so much. Oh! I do think, mamma, that he will always be careful in future."

From the time of this painful affair at the Haven, all seemed changed in the once happy family party. Edward and his uncle talked no longer together as they were used to do, and Lucy, if she was merry for a few minutes, was sure to see some grave look from some one which reminded her of what had happened and what was going to happen. Her mother now wrote letters to town, and looked anxiously for answers, and seemed to be arranging plans for the future in her mind. As for Edward, each day seemed to increase his sorrow and shame, as he saw his

mother's former grave and sorrowful looks quite fixed on her countenance again, and at each little occurrence that took place with regard to their leaving the Haven, his own grew more sad. Preparations, too, for leaving were made, which showed that there was no doubt about his mother being in earnest. His schoolmaster was told that he would leave in a month, and he knew that Grace Martin's father had been written to about their having the same lodgings in town that they lived in before they came to the Haven. And if these tokens of leaving grieved Edward, they did not the less disturb his uncle. He never alluded himself to their going away, and if any one else did so, he always looked grave, and said nothing in reply. Once, when he was walking round the garden with Lucy, he showed her where he always threw down crumbs for the robins at Christmas time, and added, "You will see how they will pop out of this privet-hedge, where they have their nests, to eat their roast beef and plum-pudding."

"Ah! but, uncle, I shall not be here then, you know," said Lucy, in a low and sorrowful tone.

Her uncle said nothing, but Lucy thought he grasped her hand tighter than he had done before during the rest of their walk.

As the time fixed by Mrs. Osborne for leaving drew near, both Edward and his uncle seemed more sorrowful about it, and the latter made several attempts to persuade Mrs. Osborne to change her mind; and Edward, too, talked with his mother about it, and said he thought that others ought not to suffer for his fault.

"No, my dear Edward," said his mother; "but unfortunately it is always the consequence of misconduct that others do suffer for it. It is my duty

to do the best I can to make you grow up a good and honourable man; and I think that if you were placed at a good school, and away from all the indulgences of the Haven, it would be better for you, perhaps."

Edward turned these words of his mother over in his mind, and they gave him courage for what neither his mother nor Lucy would ever have expected of him. They were quite taken by surprise the next day, when sitting with Captain Osborne, to see Edward come into the room on his return from school, and going up to his uncle, say in quite an open and courageous manner—

"Uncle, I really am sorry and ashamed to think that my behaviour is making us all go away from the Haven. Don't you think, uncle, that I might be sent away to school, and that then my mother and Lucy could stay on with you? I think it would be the best plan in the world, if you will only persuade my mother."

"I do think it would be a good plan, Edward, and the best way of all to settle the difficulty," said his uncle; and he held out his hand to Edward, and added, "I am glad, too, to see that you are learning to speak out and be straightforward, my boy; and I hope that the day may come when you will see that a ship might as well attempt to sail without either rudder or compass, as for a man to go through the world without a character for truth and honesty."

Captain Osborne, after this, had a long consultation about Edward with his mother; and this time he really did persuade her to stay on at the Haven. It was decided that Edward should become a boarder at a school which was several miles off, which they knew had a strict but kind and just master, and where he

would be allowed only to come home once a month. Mr. Martin was written to, to say they were not going to return to London; and preparations were now only made for Edward's departure, and for providing him with all that he would require at school.

During the fortnight previous to Edward's leaving the Haven, Lucy was so busy hemming pocket-handkerchiefs, and stitching wristbands for him, that she had hardly time to think about how she should feel when he was gone; and she tried, too, to keep up Edward's spirits about leaving them, and to persuade him it would be for the best in the end.

"After all, Edward, it is only a month before you will see us again," said she, as Edward stood on the bank of the pond, looking at the "Crusoe" with very melancholy looks — "and, anyhow, uncle says the 'Crusoe' must be laid up for the winter, and not used any more for some months."

The parting with Edward, was not, however, without tears from Lucy, though Edward bore it very well. The Haven seemed very dull the next day; and perhaps it was a little sadness in Lucy's manner that made her uncle say, that he hoped she did not regret that her mother had not gone back to London.

"Oh no, uncle," said she, "I should like to stay at the Haven all my life, for I am very happy here; and I never wish to go to London, except to see Grace Martin; but I should like to see Grace Martin again very much."

Only a week after this, Lucy was surprised one morning when she got up and looked out of the window, to see her uncle very busy with the flag-staff. He was hoisting the flag, which was only done when a visitor was expected at the Haven. Who could be

coming there that day ? As Lucy wondered, she also thought to herself how very pleasant the Haven would look to any one who might see it for the first time that day, though it was November. The sun was shining so brightly on the many coloured leaves of the shrubberies, and the scarlet berries of the mountain ash looked so brilliant among the different shades of yellow, gold-colour and brown, to say nothing of all the chrysanthemums, which were still in flower.

Nothing was said about a visitor, however, at breakfast, but soon after, Uncle Osborne set off in his gig for the town.

"I do think uncle must be going to fetch some one from the railway station," said Lucy to her mother.

"We shall see," replied her mother. Lucy cleared out the cage of her canary, and filled his glass with water; and she fed the chickens, and gave some peas to the pigeons, and then sat down to work. She had not worked long before the gate bell rang. She looked up, and could see between the bushes a part of the grey mare, and the corner of a brown hair trunk, which projected from the splash-board of the gig.

"Run out and meet your uncle," said her mother.

In the hall, the servant was bringing in a number of parcels—but what she said in reply, when Lucy asked who had come, was not to be heard, for Poll was screeching her very loudest, "How dy'e do"—"glad to see you—hope you're pretty well."

Uncle Osborne was bringing some one in—a short person—in a bonnet—a little girl—Could

it be? Yes! It was indeed—it really was Grace Martin!

And Grace Martin spent a most happy month at the Haven, with Lucy, and towards the end of the time Edward paid his first visit home from school. And by his account of himself, and of all that he was doing, he made everybody feel hopeful, if not quite sure, of his improvement.

Many things occurred during his short stay to lead them to feel this. He spoke frankly and openly of the little difficulties he had met with on first leaving home, and owned to some terrible blunders that he had made, because he was more backward than his schoolfellows in some things. In giving an account to his uncle, too, of an expedition which had been made by some of his companions to the top of a hill near the school, from which they had seen the sea, and even, with a telescope, the ships in Portsmouth harbour, his uncle had inquired how it was that he had not been of the party. "I don't know, uncle," were the words that came first to Edward's lips, but he stopped himself in time, and replied, "It was because I had been idle, uncle, and had not got my Latin done." And from such tokens of newly-acquired courage to bear the blame, did Edward's friends now begin to hope that he was learning, through truth and uprightness of conduct, to avoid all cause for blame.

And our young readers will like to know that these hopes were fulfilled. When Edward grew up, he became a sailor, and, as a man, he has gone through many of the same kinds of adventures at sea that, as a boy, he liked so much to hear of and read about. He has not, it is true, turned out such a distinguished commander as Lord Nelson, nor has he ever been left

upon a desert island, like Alexander Selkirk; but, what is quite as good, he has proved a brave and skilful captain, doing his duty on many trying and difficult occasions, and earning for himself a character for courage, integrity, and truth.

THE FOUNDLING OF THE WRECK.

CHAPTER I.

A SHIPWRECK.

IF our young readers will take a map of Europe, and look to the west, they will see a broad wide sea called the Baltic, stretching northward, and separating the countries of Norway and Sweden from Russia. To the east of this sea is a gulf, called the Gulf of Finland, and at the extremity of that gulf, at the mouth of the river Neva, stands the city of St. Petersburg, the capital of Russia in Europe.

St. Petersburg is at the present time a populous

and beautiful city. It contains so many splendid buildings, that it is sometimes called a city of palaces, but about the beginning of the eighteenth century (which is a hundred and fifty years ago), the ground on which it stands was an immense bog, or marsh, surrounded by dreary forests. The only persons who dwelt on the then desolate spot were some fishermen who built a few little cabins near the water's edge; but as the river at certain seasons of the year frequently overflowed its banks, and the cabins were sometimes washed away, even these few little tenements were often deserted.

I dare say most of our young readers have heard or read of Peter the Great, the celebrated Emperor, or Czar of Russia. He built the city of St. Petersburg, and called it after his own name; but of that we shall speak hereafter; at present we have to do with a humble individual, named Michael Kopt, who lived in one of the cabins we have spoken of.

Michael's father was a Swede, and could read and write, and was, therefore, far in advance of the ignorant Russian serfs, among whom he lived. Having been carried prisoner to Russia, during one of the numerous wars between the Russians and Swedes, he had been compelled to obtain his living as a fisherman. He taught his son Michael all that he had himself learned, and also brought him up to his trade. When Michael became a man, he married a young woman, the daughter of one of the same craft; they were very poor, but they lived happily together, for Margaret was thrifty and affectionate, and Michael steady, sober, and industrious. During the fishing season, Michael applied himself very diligently to his business, and, with his wife's assistance, dried and salted the greater part of the fish which he caught; then, when the floods

were expected, they removed to a village some miles distant, and there lived on the produce of their joint labour.

One season Michael and his wife remained in the fishing-hut, a few weeks later than usual, on account of the fineness of the weather, and there being no signs of the floods. However, on the day before that fixed for their departure, a violent storm suddenly arose, and it was evident that the cabins were in danger of being swept away, either by the strong gale which blew from the sea, or by the water. Terrified by the prospect, the two or three fishermen who had been their companions hurried off, even in the midst of the storm, hoping to reach a place of safety before the floods overtook them; and Michael and Margaret were preparing to follow their example, when they were startled by hearing the firing of guns, as from a ship in distress. The fisherman and his wife looked at each other in deep concern, but neither spake. What could they do to assist the unhappy mariners, and the delay of one hour might be death to themselves.

"Shall we go, Margaret?" Michael at length broke the silence by saying.

"Can we help those poor creatures?" she asked.

"We cannot do anything to save the ship," he replied, "but we may, perhaps, be of some service should any of the people be thrown upon the strand."

"Then we will stop awhile, and trust to God's protecting care," she nobly rejoined; and as she spoke, she laid down the little bundle of clothes which she had hastily put together, intending to carry with them.

Michael now ran to the front window of the cottage, with the idea of getting a view of the vessel in distress, but he only reached the spot in time to see her

go down. The wind had driven her with violence against a rock, which had made a large opening in her keel, through which the water rushed so fast, that all attempts to check it proved vain, and she sunk almost instantly to the bottom.

"All are lost!" exclaimed Margaret, who had followed her husband, and was now standing behind him with her hands clasped together, and her eyes raised toward heaven in an attitude of prayer.

"Nay, dear Madgy, it is possible that some poor creature may be drifted on the shore," cried Michael; "I will at all events go and see."

Margaret's heart quailed with fear, lest her husband's life should fall a sacrifice to his humanity; but she could not oppose his generous resolve; so she suffered him to go without a word of remonstrance.

As soon as he left the door, she fell on her knees, and prayed that he might be protected in his perilous enterprise.

She arose in a more composed state of mind, and then sat down to await her husband's return. Her patience was not long tried; he came in shortly after, bearing in his arms a wicker basket bound up in a sheet of oil-cloth. The poor woman's first words were an exclamation of thankfulness for his safe return; she next eagerly inquired what he had brought with him.

"I have brought thee a child, Madgy, what say you to that?" cried the fisherman, looking at her with a smile.

"A child!" she repeated.

"Yes, a brave boy. I found him in one of the holes in the rock."

"Is he alive?" asked Margaret, drawing back the l-cloth, that she might get a sight of the babe.

"Alive, yes; the urchin seemed to be quite enjoying his new home."

"Don't jest, dear Michael," cried Margaret; "the mother of this poor little creature has most likely found a watery grave."

"True, but you will be a mother to him, won't you?"

"Ay, that I will," responded the kind-hearted woman, catching the child in her arms, and folding him to her bosom. "Ay, that I will, Michael, I'll carry him myself, if you will take the baggage. But is this poor babe the only creature who has escaped?"

"I have reason to believe so," returned the fisherman; "but I could not remain longer on the shore, the water flowed in so fast. We must haste now, dear Madgy, or we shall be too late."

Margaret wanted not a second bidding, but after having hastily wrapped the babe in a bear's skin, she and her husband quitted the hut.

CHAPTER II.

A JOURNEY AND A WELCOME HOME.

MICHAEL and Margaret had, as our young readers may suppose, a very unpleasant and perilous journey over boggy land, in the midst of a violent storm too. The charge of an infant of three or four months old, of course, added to their cares and difficulties; but both the fisherman and his wife had stout hearts, which would not soon sink under dangers; and the Russians are naturally a hardy people. Their winter abode was the cottage in which Margaret had spent her childhood and early youth, which was still occupied by her parents; they were, therefore, sure of a hearty and affectionate welcome when their journey was over. The old people had been very anxious about them, fearing from their long stay that some evil had overtaken them, so the present meeting was every way delightful.

"We have brought some live stock with us, mother," said Michael smiling, and looking significantly at his wife's mother.

"Live stock," repeated the dame; "why, what have you got?"

Margaret here took off the bearskin covering and displayed her little charge to view.

"What, a baby!" cried the old woman in a tone of amazement.

Wet and weary as the travellers were, it was not a time to keep up a jest, otherwise Michael would have let the old people guess for a while before he told

them in what way the little foundling had been thrown upon their protection; as it was, he explained all in a sentence, and then begged that they would let him have something to eat.

Margaret felt more disposed for taking rest than for sharing in the meal, so she and her mother retired together into one of the sleeping-rooms, taking the infant with them.

The storm subsided in the course of the night, but no effort could be made to rescue the shipwrecked people, even should any of them have drifted to the shore, for the river had by this time so far overflowed its banks, that the path the fisherman and his wife had so recently trodden was not now to be seen. As there appeared but little probability that the child would ever be claimed, Michael and his wife resolved on adopting him, and treating him in every respect as if he were their own. The little fellow seemed very well satisfied with his new friends. He smiled and cooed at Margaret in return for her caresses, and tried to imitate Michael's loud ringing laugh. With Margaret's mother, too, he was an especial favourite, and even the old man was much pleased with this addition to their family.

The matter to be decided on next was what name the little stranger should bear. Margaret was reminded by his wicker-cradle and the perils of his infancy of Moses in his ark of bulrushes on the banks of the Egyptian river. She could not help thinking, she said, that a *mother's* tender hand had fastened him so securely in his little bed, and that a mother's prayers had saved him from a watery grave, and she proposed that he should be called by the name of Moses. However, when the swaddling-clothes in which he had been found in were

closely examined, an almost indistinct mark was found on one of them, which, after some little difficulty, was discovered to be *Gerald*. It was, therefore, determined to call him by that name.

CHAPTER III.

A GLANCE AT RUSSIAN HISTORY.

TEN years glided away, and very little change took place in the fisherman's family, excepting that the infant foundling grew up by degrees into a fine intelligent boy. In the long nights of the Russian winter, unless there is some kind of mental employment, time passes very wearily. Michael had so far profited by his father's instructions as to be able to impart the elements of useful knowledge to Gerald, who was both an apt and eager scholar. His natural intelligence had thus been quickened, and his thirst for knowledge increased by the humble but useful instructions of his kind foster father. While they used to sit round the large warm stove, when they had read from the Bible or some other of the one or two books which Michael inherited from his father, Michael would then relate incidents in the history of Sweden, or talk about the great Protestant reformers—or the learned men his father had known or heard of at Upsal, his native city. Gerald was never tired of hearing about these things, and the thoughts that came into his mind when Michael talked about the famous university of Upsal, where so many people passed their time in acquiring or imparting knowledge, were quite exciting, and he could not help hoping that something or other might occur

that would place him in the way of acquiring more knowledge than he was likely to obtain in the hut of a poor fisherman, dearly as he loved his kind benefactors. Gerald was a good and grateful child, and desirous of doing all he could to assist those generous friends who had acted the part of parents to him. Even when quite a little boy he tried to help his father, as he called him, in his craft. He was very fond, too, of his good mother, as he called Margaret, and you may be sure they loved him very dearly.

Previous to the reign of Peter the Great, the Russian Empire had been far behind the other nations of Europe in the progress of civilization. Even the highest classes amongst the people were extremely ignorant, very few of them could even read or write, and they spent the principal part of their time in feasting and drinking. They had neither ships nor sailors, and no manufacturing class of people, except a few of the serfs, who worked for the sole benefit of their masters. The fine arts were unknown, and the most useful arts were very imperfectly understood. At that time Peter shared the throne with his elder brother, Ivan; but Ivan, being only a little above an idiot in mind, was a mere cipher. Peter, on the contrary, was possessed of a powerful intellect and great sagacity, and he had, moreover, an enterprising spirit. One of his early acts on ascending the throne was to send a number of the young nobles of his court into Italy, Germany, and Holland, to gain instruction in military and naval affairs. He also sent to foreign countries for shipbuilders and various artisans; but, not satisfied with that, he afterwards resolved on visiting some of those countries himself, for the express purpose of learning how his own kingdom might best be benefited.

In pursuance of this plan, he, together with a few chosen associates, first went to Holland, at which place he worked as a common labourer in the dockyards, no one but those of his own party knowing who he was. He next came to England. It was his purpose to visit Italy likewise, but a revolt amongst his people at home, and rumours that his sister Sophia was trying to make herself Empress of Russia, obliged him to return after an absence of only two years.

Having now acquired considerable knowledge in shipbuilding and other valuable arts, Peter began to see the advantages which would accrue to his country by the establishment of a port on the Baltic Sea at the mouth of the Neva. There were many difficulties in the way of such an undertaking, and one of the most formidable was the low marshy state of the land. These difficulties, however, he determined upon conquering. Had the Czar attempted to accomplish the same ends by justifiable means, we should admire his forethought and genius; but as, on the contrary, he carried them out by force and cruelty, every humane heart must condemn the act as one of tyranny and oppression. No seemingly desirable end can justify us in using unlawful means.

To provide workmen for the undertaking, the Emperor, in the year 1703, sent bands of soldiers into the villages with orders to compel those men who were capable of labour to engage in the task. Our young friends have, no doubt, heard of the press-gangs which were at one time allowed in England, and of the conscription in France. Well, this was a somewhat similar procedure, only instead of being forced to become sailors and soldiers, as the pressed men and conscripts were, these poor people were compelled to make roads and rear a city in an immense

bog. The peasants, or serfs (as they are called in Russia), were at that period in a very degraded state. They were considered as much the property of the nobles on whose estates they lived as any other live stock. Their houses mostly consisted of but one room. In the centre of this room was a large brick oven; in

this they baked their black rye bread, and the top served for a bed for the whole family at night. Their only articles of furniture were a lamp suspended from the ceiling, and a rough bench or two fastened to the walls. They were clothed in sheepskins, and their food was of the coarsest kind. Bad as was their lot,

however, very few, if any of them, were willing to exchange it for labour on public works of any kind, especially in such an unhealthy situation as the marshes we have spoken of. The impure air which rises from swampy ground is almost sure to bring on fevers and other disorders. Then no care was taken to make them as comfortable as the circumstances would have permitted; no houses were provided for them to sleep in, and the tools they had given them to work with were so unsuitable and bad, that their labours were thereby made much harder than they would otherwise have been.

Exposed thus to hardships of every kind, the men, as might be expected, perished by hundreds. But these disastrous results were not allowed to interrupt the work; for as fast as they died off, others were pressed into the service and marched off to the place. In Russia the Emperor has absolute power over all his subjects: even the nobles, therefore, dared not oppose the mandate, had they been so disposed. Among the unhappy individuals who were chosen for the purpose of filling up vacancies made by the sick and deceased was our friend Michael Kopt. His general home being away from any of the villages, he, for some time, escaped observation; but when strong, healthy men became scarce in the neighbourhood, he and some of his companions were pressed into the service, only a few minutes being given them for preparing, and bidding adieu to their weeping friends.

Poor Margaret was for some time inconsolable, and Gerald was almost in as much grief at seeing her suffer. He tried to cheer her by every means in his power; but finding that she was hopeless of ever having her husband back again, he formed a resolution which our young readers shall hear at another time.

CHAPTER IV.

A GENEROUS RESOLVE.

At the mouth of the river Neva were several little islands; on one of these islands the Emperor had a hut built for himself, and a wooden house for his favourite minister, Prince Mentzikoff, who was his companion in all his enterprises. It was Peter's fancy to take up his abode on that wild spot and watch the progress of the city he had planned. On another of these little islands a fortress was reared, surrounded by a rampart of earth. This fortress was the station of the engineer who directed the works, and the home of a few of the soldiers. The inhabitants of Moscow were at first jealous of the new city. They foresaw that it would, in the course of time, from its very situation, be a more desirable abode for purposes of trade than the ancient capital; and they greatly opposed the plan, lest their dignity should decrease as well as their interests suffer. But the Czar was not a man to yield to any, however high their rank might be; and he persevered with his plans without regarding the dissatisfaction which was so generally expressed. The houses of the new city were at first built wholly of wood, and chiefly inhabited by foreign artisans. Peter, seeing that the Russian nobles and wealthy merchants would not of their own free will take houses in St. Petersburg, published a decree obliging them to do so. At the same time, however, he gave orders that the houses in the best part of the city should be built of bricks and roofed with tiles. He also made a law (there being no stone-quarries in the neighbourhood)

that every large vessel which came into the port should bring thirty stones, and every boat ten, towards the erection of bridges and other public buildings. Every peasant's cart was likewise compelled to bring three stones; and by these means materials were raised free of cost for the public works.

As the place at which Michael was set to work was not many miles distant from the abode of his family, he had an opportunity of seeing them occasionally, which was a pleasure denied to most of the labourers. Margaret and Gerald often went together, and though it was frequently the case that they were only allowed to speak with him for a few minutes, they were glad to undertake the journey even for that brief joy.

As Gerald was too young to carry on the fishing craft alone, he and Margaret resided wholly with her parents. Gerald helped the old man to make and mend fishing-tackle, which was now their principal means of support; and Margaret did anything she could to earn a trifle, still their circumstances were very much worse than when Michael was at home following his trade. Though Michael was naturally strong, and had all his life been used to hardship, he could not bear the labour to which he was set, so well as many of his companions. The air of the marshes was very different from the sea-breezes, but the principal cause of his sinking under his toil was, his spirit was crushed. While a man possesses a feeling of independence, he may meet difficulties and hardships with a bold front; but when he feels himself to be a slave (and these poor people were slaves though they bore not the name), his energies are in most cases benumbed, and his spirit is broken.

Margaret used to look very sad, and often to weep, when she and Gerald returned from their visits to the

works, for with the keen eye of affection she saw what he was suffering, though he said not a word. On the contrary, when in her presence, he put on as cheerful an aspect as possible. At such seasons Gerald always tried to comfort her, "Good mother," he said one day, "do not, I beg of you, give way so to grief; I am sure you will have father at home again before very long."

"How can that be, child?" she asked. "You see the Emperor does not let any of the men give up the work until they are carried off by death. No, there is no hope for my poor Michael; for he will die before this huge city is finished."

"Oh no, he will not die, mother," cried the boy, "I feel sure he will not die! You know you have yourself taught me that God takes care of good people, and I am sure father and you are good. You have taught me, too, that God hears our prayers if we pray to Him with sincerity; and I have prayed very earnestly and very often that He would bring dear father back. Courage, good mother, do not weep; you will have him with you again, and that before long."

We must now tell our young readers that Gerald had formed a determination to offer himself as a substitute in Michael's place. He made this resolution very soon after the fisherman was taken from his family; but he well knew that would not be the time to put it into practice, as he was not then eleven years of age. He hoped, however, in about two years' time, to be suitable in appearance as well as strength, and otherwise fitted to undertake the task.

CHAPTER V.

THE PROPOSAL.

THIS one idea was so constantly in Gerald's mind, that it could scarcely be said to be ever absent from his thoughts. He dwelt on it as he sat over his work by day; he dreamed of it at night; and he prayed constantly for the blessing of God upon it. Still he said not a word to any one, being afraid that should he do so, his plan might meet with opposition. He feared that Margaret would say he was too young to engage in such work.

When a little more than two years had elapsed, he began to think that he might make known his plan with some hope of success. He was by this time a fine tall lad of nearly thirteen. He thought the most suitable season for making such a proposal would be as he and Margaret were returning from one of their visits to the works. The state of health in which they found poor Michael, at the next visit, favoured the project. He was evidently much worn, and Margaret was almost broken-hearted when she parted from him, thinking it probable that she should never see him again alive.

As they walked home, the poor woman leaned on Gerald's arm and wept bitterly. "Now," thought he, "is the time for me to name my plan;" so, looking up tenderly in her face, he said, "I have something to say to you, dear mother, which I hope will make you dry up your tears. I have often tried to cheer you with the prospect of a happier time, but now I think it is nearly come."

"You mean," said Margaret, sorrowfully, "that I

and my poor Michael shall soon be together in a happier world."

"No, good mother, I don't mean that," Gerald eagerly returned, "I hope you will meet together in heaven at last; but not very soon. Oh no, I mean that you will ere long be happy together in our own home."

"Never, never, my dear boy," she cried, weeping afresh.

"Don't weep so, mother, but listen to what I am going to say to you," Gerald added, and a bright smile lighted up his intelligent face. "I am now a tall, strong boy—almost as tall, and quite as strong, I think, as dear father was when he was carried off; and I mean to take his place, and let him come home to you."

Margaret looked up in amazement, but she did not speak, for her feelings were too powerful to admit of words.

"I mean," Gerald proceeded, "to go to the Czar, myself. I hear that he is generally to be found, either at his cottage on the island or else overlooking the works. I am not afraid of the Czar, mother: the errand on which I shall go will take away all fear. I feel as bold as a lion—ay, and as strong too."

"Thou art a noble boy, Gerald," cried Margaret, at length finding utterance. "Go," she added, "and may God bless thee."

"You consent then, good mother, you consent?" cried Gerald in an ecstasy of delight. "My only fear was lest you should oppose my plan; but if you consent, it will, it shall be done."

"Nay, my dear child," Margaret said, "I am not the only person likely to oppose your plan; the Czar may not be willing to make the exchange."

"Surely he will," cried the boy; "surely this strong limb—holding out his right arm—can do him better service than poor father's now weak one can do; and gratitude and affection for one who has done so much for me will nerve it for its work."

Gerald then begged Margaret not to say anything at home concerning his design, and that she would allow him to put it into operation immediately.

He had heard that it was the Emperor Peter's constant practice to rise at five in the morning, and he determined on seeking him at that early hour, before his attention was taken up with the business of the day. There were difficulties, however, in the way of his carrying out his purpose. The little island on which Peter made his home, was a good day's journey from their village, and as the only houses built upon it were the Czar's (which was but a mere hut), the prime minister's, and a sort of inn where Peter and his friends mostly spent their Sundays, he was fearful lest he should not be able to get any conveyance across the water.

Nothing daunted by these seeming obstacles, he resolved on setting out for the place the very next day.

CHAPTER VI.

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE PRIME MINISTER.

LEAVING it to Margaret to explain to the old people the reason for his absence, Gerald started the next morning soon after dawn. When she saw him ready to set out, the good woman almost repented of having consented to his going; still she made no attempt to dissuade him from his purpose. She provided him with the best food the cottage could afford, and with tears in her eyes, bade him "God speed." The day was favourable, and he tripped along with a light heart and a light step. No one, to see him, would have imagined that he was seeking to be placed in circumstances, at the thought of which many stout-hearted men quailed. He did not dwell, however, on the hardships and dangers that might await him; he only thought of how he should gladden the spirits of those who had so long acted the part of parents to him. He knew that they would be grieved to purchase their own comfort at the sacrifice of his liberty, and it might be of his health also; but he hoped that his youth and good constitution would enable him to bear the toil for a time; "and perhaps," thought he, "I may find favour in the sight of the Czar, and he may not doom me to spend all my best days at such work."

In his way to the island where the Emperor's humble Court was kept, Gerald passed the spot where Michael's cottage had once stood, the spot where he had been rescued by his kind guardian from a watery grave. The view of this place, and the recollections it called forth, seemed to give him new strength and

spirit for his undertaking, and though wearied with his journey, he went on even brisker than before.

Some of the fishermen's huts were still occupied, and Gerald stopped at one of them to inquire his way. One of the men directed him, supposing him to be the bearer of a message from some person in authority; for he took the precaution to keep his plan secret from everybody, lest the telling it should by any means mar its success.

It was nearly dark when he reached that part of the river's banks which faced the island; but late as it was, he resolved on trying to get over that night. While he was standing considering what would be the best means to adopt, three men came within sight, and jumped into a boat which was moored hard by. Gerald ran eagerly down to the beach, calling loudly to attract their attention. "May I ask, whither are you going, my friends?"

"We are servants of his Excellency, Prince Mentzikoff, and are going to his house," replied one of the men.

"Will you row me over with you?" asked Gerald, at the same time holding out a small coin.

"Have you any business with his Excellency?" inquired one.

"My business is with the Czar, but I should be glad to see Prince Mentzikoff first, if I could get admittance to him," Gerald replied.

"What is your business with the Czar?" demanded another.

"I have a favour to ask of him."

"If that's the case, you cannot do better than get his Excellency to introduce you," rejoined the first speaker. "Come, hasten into the boat; we must not tarry, or we shall be put into too hot an oven, and so repent of it."

This speech of the man's had reference to the Prime Minister's origin. Mentzikoff was, when a boy, in the service of a pastry-cook at Moscow, and he first attracted the attention of the Emperor by the humorous manner in which he sang a song extolling his master's pies. Peter offered him a menial office in his household, but afterwards discovering that he had a genius for military affairs, he placed him in his army, where he rose rapidly. This young man was

one of the Czar's companions on his journey to Holland and England.

As the men rowed the boat across the river, one commenced a song, and the others joined in chorus. The Russian people are noted for their love of music, and they generally lighten their labours by singing.

On reaching the island, they conducted our hero at once to the house of the minister.

The house of Prince Mentzikoff was very superior to

the one occupied by his sovereign, for Peter took pride in demeaning himself when he was in the mood to do so; still it was but a rude affair, as our young readers will no doubt think when they hear it described.

It consisted of a number of wooden beams, so prepared as to fit readily into each other. Lattices and shutters for windows were also made to fit in, and these detached pieces could be packed up and carried to any place that the owner chose to reside in. Most of the houses in the towns and cities of Russia were, at that time, so constructed; and ready-made houses were common articles of merchandise in the public markets. The furniture of these dwellings was as rough and portable as the outside; a few shelves and some wooden benches were fixed to the walls, and a few tables were added. The benches served for bedsteads as well as for seats, and when these houses were put up in the country, it was seldom that they afforded the luxury of a bed.

Little ceremony was used at that period, especially in such a retired place, and Gerald was introduced at once into the presence of the Prince. Mentzikoff was seated on one of the benches, having a table before him, on which stood a bottle of spirits and a large horn cup. He had evidently been drinking rather too freely, which bad practice, though sanctioned by the example of the Czar, and the custom of the country, was a new spectacle to our hero, who had always been accustomed to see sobriety in his humble home.

"What is your business with me?" the Prince somewhat roughly demanded as Gerald advanced.

"Will your excellency do me the favour of introducing me to the Czar before he leaves the island in the morning?" Gerald said, at the same time making a low bow.

"For what purpose do you wish to be introduced to his Majesty?" Mentzikoff abruptly asked.

"Please your excellency, I have a favour to request."

"What, boor? Dost thou think to enter the Czar's service? Thou art a dainty lad for thy station, but thou'rt not quite to his mind I fancy."

"I do wish to enter the Czar's service," Gerald replied; "my request is that he will let me labour on the public works."

The minister looked up as if doubting whether he heard aright:—"Art thou in earnest, boy," he demanded, "or art thou jesting with me?"

"I would not take the liberty to jest with your excellency," Gerald replied: "indeed, my errand is not a matter for jest. I am in earnest. I wish to take the place of a man who has been more than a father to me."

"Ha!"

"One Michael Kopt, once a fisherman on the Neva, has been upwards of two years upon the works, but his strength is failing, he can now be but of little use to his Majesty, and I have a strong arm."

"Come hither at the dawn of day," said the Prince.

Gerald again bowed, and was about to leave the room, when Mentzikoff calling after him said, "Bid my servants find thee a lodging and a meal," and added, "come hither at the dawn, I'll take thee to the Czar myself." Here he turned aside to refill the horn cup and quaff off another draught of spirits.

CHAPTER VII.

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE CZAR.

GERALD was true to his appointment, and he found the Prince prepared to receive him. But few words were exchanged; Mentzikoff beckoned him to follow, and they proceeded together to the Czar's hut. It is an odd fancy for an Emperor to live in such a place when he might live in a grand palace, thought our hero, however, he wisely kept his thoughts to himself.

Peter had been put out of temper the night before, by meeting with some trifling opposition to his wishes and plans; and the minister, though a very great favourite with his sovereign, was not quite sure that even he could get a hearing at that time. He had taken a fancy to Gerald, however, and he was determined to do all he could to serve him. Bidding him, therefore, wait without till he called or sent to him, Mentzikoff entered the Czar's hut alone.

Peter was up as usual and busy with his plans for the new city. The Prince did not, therefore, at once state the object of his early visit, but quietly listened to all his sovereign had to say. After a while, however, he ventured to lay the business before him.

The Emperor's brow darkened and became more and more contracted as the Prince proceeded. "What were the boors made for but to serve their country in that way?" he fiercely asked.

"True, Sire," returned the Prince; "but this poor man is, it appears, unable to serve his country by manual labour any longer, and as the youth is so

desirous of taking his place, the exchange will be for your Majesty's benefit."

"Bring him hither," was the Czar's abrupt rejoinder.

Gerald was the next minute ushered into the presence of the Emperor.

"Come here, boy," he cried in a loud stern voice.

Gerald obeyed, but without showing any signs of alarm.

"Thou'rt not Russian?" the Czar added, surveying his person with a scrutinizing glance.

"I know not to what country I belong, Sire," the youth replied; "I was shipwrecked on the coast hard by, and I owe my life and everything else I possess to Michael Kopt."

"And who is Michael Kopt?"

"Sire, Michael Kopt is the man whose place in the public works I wish to fill."

"Thou art of too slight a make for such work, boy," cried the Czar.

"Nay, I have a stronger arm than I may seem to have, Sire; and if anything can nerve it for the work surely gratitude will do so."

"By what name art thou called?" demanded the Emperor.

"My name is Gerald, Sire."

"And how many years ago was it that thou wert shipwrecked on these shores?"

"It was a little more than twelve years ago, Sire, I was then an infant of only a few months old."

"And you have never heard anything of your parents or friends?"

"Never, Sire. The river was at that time beginning to overflow its banks, and I have reason to believe that I was the only person who escaped the wreck."

The Czar mused for a few moments, then snatching up a piece of parchment from the table before him, he wrote a few words upon it, and gave it into the hand of the minister.

"Give the boy that, Mentzikoff," he said; "let him present it to the master of the works, and his request will be promptly attended to."

The Prince handed the parchment to Gerald, who took it with a countenance radiant with delight. He could not speak, but making a low obeisance first to the Czar and then to the minister, he withdrew from the royal presence.

As may be supposed, our hero lost no time in returning to the cottage with the joyful news of his success. But much as they all loved Michael, Margaret and the old people could scarcely rejoice in the thought of his restoration to his home when his liberty was to be purchased at such a cost. To the grateful boy, however, every task seemed light, and even his humiliation appeared honourable. Nor was this a delusive idea, for the most laborious employment derives dignity from a noble motive.

The different circumstances under which Michael and Gerald commenced the same task made a wide difference in their feelings when engaged in it. With the former it was compulsory, with the latter it was voluntary. Michael felt himself to be the unwilling servant of a tyrannical master. Gerald overlooked the fact of working for the Emperor in the animating idea that he was conferring a benefit on those who had done so much for him. He had moreover the delightful consciousness that his sacrifice of self met with the smile of his Father in heaven. Nor did Gerald repent of the noble sacrifice he had made, when the first excitement was over, and he came to endure the severe,

and in some instances unexpected, hardships it had brought upon him. He not only commenced his work cheerfully, but continued to pursue it with the same happy spirit. His joy and thankfulness were unbounded when he received intelligence that Michael was gradually recovering his health under Margaret's careful nursing. At length the good woman herself came to visit him, bringing the news that her husband was now so nearly restored that he hoped to be able to walk as far himself ere long. Gerald thought, however, that it would not be wise for him to come, lest it being known that he was again capable of labour, he should be pressed a second time into the service: and his fears were not without foundation; for where there is a despotic government, the humbler classes of the people are looked upon as little better than machines, made for the sole purpose of executing the plans of those in power.

CHAPTER VIII.

A GREAT AND UNEXPECTED CHANGE—OUR HERO IN MOSCOW.

When Gerald had been about six months at his new employment, to his great surprise he was one morning told by an inspector of the works, that an order had just come from the Emperor signifying that he was to be sent immediately to Moscow.

This intelligence created a little alarm in the breast of the youth, for he could only suppose that he was suspected of having committed some offence. Conscious, however, of having discharged his appointed duties with faithfulness, he asked the officer whether he were sure that he was the person mentioned in the royal letter.

"The person signified is called by the name of Gerald Kopt. His person is described, and the description answers exactly to you."

"I am called by the name of Gerald Kopt," the youth replied, "and if the Czar commands me to go of course I must obey. Indeed, I have no objection to going. But should my mother come here and miss me, who will let her know whither I have gone?"

"I will engage that your mother shall be told all that we know concerning you," replied the officer.

"Many thanks for that kindness," cried Gerald, looking gratefully in the man's face; "I am now ready to attend the Czar's orders."

Could Gerald have divested himself of the idea that he might be going as a culprit to be tried for an

unknown offence, he would have been delighted with the journey, for he had long had a strong desire to see more of the world.

The distance from St. Petersburg to Moscow, which is upwards of four hundred miles, was a formidable journey in a country where the roads were bad, and there were very few inns. At a subsequent period the Emperor Peter had good roads made between the large towns, and inns and posting-houses were built upon them. Canals were also dug to connect the great rivers, and there were many improvements of a similar kind; but these things were the work of considerable time. Some of them were only just commenced at the period of which we are now speaking.

On their way to Moscow the party passed through the town of Novogorod, the seat of the earliest government, and afterwards so noted as a republic. Gerald was greatly pleased that he had an opportunity of visiting this place, for Michael and his father-in-law had told him something of its ancient history. How about the middle of the ninth century, Rusic, a Norman pirate chief, when cruising about the Baltic with his followers, had sailed down rivers and through lakes till they came to this city, which was then a mere cluster of wooden huts inhabited by barbarians, and how the Norman had made himself master of the place, assumed the title of Grand Duke, and laid the foundation of the present powerful and extensive empire of Russia.* Many legendary tales were told of the adventures of these wild Normans, and most of these adventures were associated with the city.

* Igov, the son of Rusic, afterwards made Kirow the capital of the country; but Novogorod was for a considerable time a place of importance, and the chief city of a Republican state.

On reaching Moscow our hero was so interested in the place as to forget the painful circumstances under which he was visiting it. The city was at that period enclosed with three walls; one built of brick, surrounded that portion called the Kremlin, where the Czar's palace and the residences of the chief of the nobility stood; another built of stone, took in a larger extent of the city; and a third, formed of wood, enclosed the suburbs. On the banks of the river Moskwa, which runs through the city, were a number of wooden huts, the public baths. These baths were constantly frequented by the inhabitants, as bathing was at that time a religious ceremony amongst the Russian people. The poorest classes never failed to attend the baths at least once in the week.

It was Palm Sunday when Gerald and his companions arrived, the place was consequently in a state of universal excitement. The bells, too, were ringing merrily. Moscow was famous for the size and number of its bells. To present a large bell to a church was considered by some a very pious act, therefore almost every new sovereign had a bell cast larger than that which had been given to the city by his predecessor.* Palm Sunday was a day on which a very grand festival was always held. The religion generally professed in Russia is according to the Greek Church, which is very similar to the Roman Catholic religion. At that time the church was governed by persons called Patriarchs, who were something like the Popes. The Patriarch lived in Moscow, in a palace adjoining that of the Emperor, where he kept a court, and lived in as much state as the Czar himself.

* The Empress Anne, the daughter of Ivan, who reigned soon after Peter's death, presented a bell to the city of Moscow which weighs 432,000 pounds, and is the largest bell in the world.

On the festival of Palm Sunday the Emperor always walked to church, gorgeously arrayed in a dress made of cloth of gold, two princes holding up his train. He was followed by a grand foot procession consisting of the whole court splendidly attired. Behind the nobles were a number of the chief citizens and lawyers, each having a branch of willow, to represent palm, in his hand, and beyond these were the guards of the palace. In this procession the Patriarch always rode beside the Emperor, who held the bridle of his horse, and he was the only person mounted, excepting the guards.

Our hero and his companions met the procession as it was just leaving the palace, and they stood for a while to watch it pass. Gerald's associates were delighted at having arrived in time to witness it, and Gerald was himself pleased with the sight, for he had never seen anything of the kind before. But looking on it as a religious festival, he could not help feeling pained. These men he knew were about to fall before images and offer up prayers to saints and angels, and they would afterwards spend the sacred hours of the Sabbath in feasting and drinking; for no religious festivals were at that time held in Russia without feasting and drinking to excess. Happily for our young hero he had been taught a purer faith. The Bible, Michael's best inheritance from his father, had not been made such poor use of, as to allow Gerald to imbibe the superstitions, and practise the foolish ceremonies of the Russians.

CHAPTER IX.

OUR HERO AT THE COURT OF PETER THE GREAT.

On entering the palace Gerald was at once taken to a comfortable apartment, and supplied with refreshment. "Surely," thought he, "the Czar has some kind intentions respecting me, or he would not give orders that I should be treated in this manner;" and he was much relieved by this thought. Having finished his meal, he was conducted by a domestic or slave (for all the domestics in Russia were slaves) to one of the baths prepared for the household, and then to a wardrobe, from whence a handsome robe was given him to put on in the place of his sheepskin garments. He was further told that he would most likely be summoned to attend on the Emperor in the evening.

The robe in which Gerald was arrayed was of dark green cloth, trimmed with fur. It was loose and flowing, only confined round the waist by a leathern girdle, in the manner of the dresses of the East. This kind of dress was in fashion in Russia at that time, though Peter afterwards, with some difficulty, induced the Russian nobles and citizens to give it up, and adopt the costumes of England and France.

The change was certainly a great improvement to our hero's appearance; and he began to wonder what all this would lead to.

With evening the expected summons came, and Gerald was conducted by a superior officer of the household to the royal presence. The Emperor was not now, as when our hero first saw him, seated on a

rude bench, but on a throne of state. He did not wear the gorgeous robe in which he had attended the church in the morning, for that was held sacred to the occasion, but he was dressed in one equally splendid.

GERALD AT COURT.

A number of nobles and ladies, elegantly attired, stood on either side of the throne, and the blaze of light which was thrown upon the company by means of the

brilliant chandeliers, gave the whole scene a dazzling aspect.

The Czar and his suite were greatly amused at observing the wonder and admiration which marked the expressive countenance of the youth, as he entered the grand saloon. Gerald's thoughts were not, however, long so occupied; he was too much interested in ascertaining the object of his summons there.

"Ha! my lad," exclaimed the Czar, in a familiar tone, as Gerald bowed low before the throne, "I've not forgotten you, you see. Well, how did you get on at your new work?"

"I hope, Sire," Gerald replied with modest dignity, "I hope, Sire, I did my duty, and to the satisfaction of your Majesty's officers."

"I've heard nothing to the contrary, at all events," said the Czar; "but what say you to leaving off that sort of work, and taking to something else? Have you become so fond of it that you desire to end your days at it?"

Gerald could not help smiling at this question. "Nay, Sire," he replied, "I did my work cheerfully, because I felt it to be my duty to do so, and I had, moreover, an animating motive, but I should rejoice to be engaged in some employment better suited to my taste."

"What employment would be suited to your taste?" the Emperor asked. "Would you like to be a soldier?"

"A soldier's profession would not be quite suited to my taste, Sire," Gerald replied.

"Why? it is thought to be the most honourable calling by many of my subjects. I am a soldier, myself, but I wish not to put a restraint on your inclination—nay, should you prefer following some

useful art, I would give you all encouragement. My nobles here know that I patronize the useful arts, and have set them an example by working at some of them myself."

"My inclination, Sire, has always been to pursue a studious life," Gerald ventured to say.

"Ha!" exclaimed the Czar, "I am now founding a university in Moscow, would you like to enter it?"

"That is what I desire above all things, Sire," Gerald replied with great earnestness.

"Your desire shall be gratified then," cried the Emperor, "I wish to serve you, but I had another object in bringing you here. I took notice of the account you gave me at our former meeting of your singular deliverance from shipwreck, and I think I have some clue to the discovery of your family."

Gerald looked up more earnestly than ever. "To enable me to discover my kindred, would indeed, Sire, be conferring on me a favour beyond any other," he exclaimed with great energy.

"Can you write?"

"Yes, Sire, I can write, though but indifferently. My good father, Michael Kopt, taught me to write to the best of his ability."

"Good—make out a clear statement then of all you know concerning your earlier history, in writing—be very particular as to dates, and send the document to me. You may withdraw now. My servants will attend to your comfort and provide you with anything you ask for."

"Oh! Sire," exclaimed the youth, bursting into a flood of tears, "I can find no words to express my gratitude. But my heart thanks you a thousandfold."

Peter was naturally a stern man, and not easily

moved, but he could not witness the youth's emotions without feeling something like a response.

Gerald still lingered at the foot of the throne. "Will your Majesty pardon me if I ask the addition of one favour more?" he at length said; "it is that I may be permitted to send a messenger to my friends to let them know that I am here safe under your Majesty's gracious protection."

"Ay, if that will afford you pleasure," returned the Emperor, smiling, and he waved his hand in token of an adieu.

CHAPTER X.

A HAPPY DISCOVERY.

THE slave who waited on Gerald told him that he had orders from the Czar to take him to any part of the palace and grounds he might wish to see. He was told, also, that if he would like to see the city, and the public buildings, he should have an escort from the Emperor's own guards.

Our hero gladly availed himself of these offers, and thus spent several days very pleasantly. He previously, however, complied with the Czar's request regarding the particulars of his early life.

It was but little that he knew of the matter; but that little he stated with great clearness, both as respected time and place. Nor did he fail to avail himself of the licence given him by the Czar to send to his friends. He wrote a brief account of all that had passed since his removal, and cheered them with hopes of ere long seeing them again under happier circumstances than when they parted last.

Gerald had been at the palace about a week, when he received a message from the Emperor, bidding him prepare himself for an interview with a lady who, he said, had taken a great interest in his story. The officer who delivered the message further informed him that the lady, whose name was Madame Koski, was the widow of a Polish noble who had been personally attached to the Czar; and that, having lost her property in Poland, she was now living on a pension which was allowed her by the Emperor.

Our hero listened to these particulars with great

eagerness; for he could not help thinking that this lady was in some way connected with his family, and that her interest for him was owing to that circumstance.

"It is possible," he said to himself, "that I am of Polish origin:" his cheek grew flush and his eye kindled at the thought. He had occasionally heard portions of the history of that brave and interesting people; and from some cause, which he could not quite account for himself, he felt deeply concerned in all that related to them. The Emperor of Russia and the renowned King of Sweden, Charles XII., had long been contending for power over the Poles; and the principal question relating to that unhappy country seemed to be, which of the two should be their master.

At one time the Czar gained the ascendency, for the King of Poland, Frederick Augustus, who was also Elector of Saxony, was his friend and ally. Again Charles XII. became the superior in power, and Frederick Augustus was then obliged to abdicate the throne of Poland and retire to Saxony, and Stanislaus Leczinski was chosen in his room—a measure which gave no satisfaction to the declining nation.

Gerald awaited the arrival of Madame Koski with intense anxiety. At length the door of the apartment was slowly opened, and a lady dressed in the Polish fashion appeared, leaning on the arm of a female domestic. She glanced hurriedly at Gerald, who immediately rose and bowed. She then motioned with her hand for the attendant to withdraw, and entered the room alone.

Madame Koski was still in the meridian of life; but ill-health and deep grief had whitened her hair and left such marks upon her countenance that she had the appearance of being rather advanced in years.

She entered the room with a trembling step, and sunk into the seat which Gerald politely offered her.

"Your name?" she said, with great effort, looking very earnestly in his face.

"My name, Madame, is Gerald," he replied; "but I am called Gerald Kopt, from one Michael Kopt, who has been to me as a father."

As the youth spoke, the lady became still more agitated. "It must be so—I cannot be deceived," she murmured: "that brow—those eyes—the voice—so like my own, own Gerald; you are—you must be—

THE HAPPY DISCOVERY.

my child!" Here she threw her arms round the boy's neck, and burst into a flood of tears.

"Did I hear right? Did you say you are my mother?" exclaimed Gerald, disengaging himself a little from her embrace, that he might look up in her countenance to read her answer even before her tongue could speak it.

"I am," she answered in a calmer tone; "I lost an infant on the coast of Russia at the very time stated

in your document; and my heart tells me you must be he."

"This is happiness beyond anything I could have expected," cried Gerald, warmly returning her embrace. "I never hoped to find a mother living."

"And I never hoped to find my long-lost child," replied the lady; "but God is good and his ways are wonderful."

"God has, indeed, been good to me, my mother," Gerald responded, now twining his arm fondly round her neck; "He provided me with friends who have been as parents to me, and He has, by a wonderful providence, brought me here. But tell me, dear lady—dear mother," he added, his countenance lighting up with great animation—"tell me, is it true that I am by birth a Pole?"

"You are," Madame Koski replied; "your father was a Pole of noble birth."

"I have learned to call those great and noble who perform great and noble actions, dear lady," cried Gerald. "But I do rejoice in hearing that I belong to that brave and patriotic land."

"Ours is a fallen country," said the lady, despondingly. "As for myself," she added, "I am obliged to live on the bounty of the man who is desirous of holding my country in a state of thraldom; but the circumstances which led to it are these:—Your father and the Czar met in early youth; and your father had then an opportunity of rendering the Emperor an essential service, which was repaid by an act of equal generosity. Thus they were bound together by ties of gratitude."

"Ah! and the ties of gratitude are strong," Gerald warmly interposed.

"They are, my son," said the lady. "Many years

after, when Peter of Russia and Charles of Sweden first contended for mastery over our fallen country, your father and the Czar met once more. Your father was then a prisoner in Peter's camp, and I and my three children were without a home. Under these circumstances, the Czar contrived to get our children on board one of his ships, which was then about to sail up the Baltic. I purposed joining them, but an accident preventing, the ship set sail without me; and the children were only under the care of a female slave who was their nurse. The next tidings I heard was that the vessel had been wrecked, and that every one on board had perished."

Madame Koski wept as she related these particulars; nor could Gerald listen to them without shedding tears also. "Then what became of my father?" he asked, with breathless interest.

"The Czar generously gave him his liberty. Your father," she continued, "was one of those patriots who did not take part with either the Swedes or the Russians, but who nobly stood out for Polish independence and the right of electing a king for ourselves. This being the case, he fared ill when Charles of Sweden got the mastery; and he would have done the same when Peter of Russia had the supreme power, but for the private friendship which I told you existed between him and the Czar. He fell at last, however," and as she ceased the lady buried her face in her hands and wept afresh.

"He fell in the defence of his country?" asked Gerald.

"He did, dear boy."

"I have told the Czar that I am desirous of pursuing a studious life, and he has offered to place me in the University he has recently founded in this city.

But your tale, dear mother," added Gerald, "has stirred feelings within me which I scarcely knew that I possessed. Surely it would be ignoble for me to live at ease in an enemy's land, when my own requires my services."

"I should have thought as you do, at one time, my son," replied the lady; "but now I view the matter otherwise. Though there are many gallant spirits still in Poland, the power of our conquerors is too great for us. Nothing can be done for our unhappy country now, her freedom is entirely lost."

CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUSION.

MADAME KOSKI now proceeded to question Gerald regarding his humble friends, the fisherman and his wife, and nothing loth was he to talk of them, and of their kindness to him. She listened with great interest to his account of Michael's being carried off to the public works, and of his interview with the Czar, to plead for the exchange. She had heard nothing of these particulars—she had only been told that a youth who had been shipwrecked when an infant, near the mouth of the Neva, was then at the Emperor's palace, and on her arrival, the paper which Gerald had written out had been put into her hand. Peter, on first seeing him, had himself been struck with the resemblance he bore to his early friend, and when Gerald proceeded to give the account of the wreck, he immediately surmised that the son of the Polish noble stood before him.

Though Peter was a man of fierce passions, and

had little feeling, he was known to attach himself firmly to a few individuals. Madame Koski and her son, therefore, felt some confidence in the continuance of his friendship and protection.

Gerald at last came to a determination to enter the University, though his own inclination would now have led him to go to his native land, and make a stand with the few brave men who would have joined him in another struggle for independence. Indeed, he did

not wholly relinquish the idea, though he resolved at present on making the most of the advantages offered him for education.

Previous to his entering, however, he and his mother took a journey to the village in which Michael and his wife were residing. Madame Koski was anxious to see the worthy couple who had acted so kindly to her son, that she might have an opportunity of expressing her deep gratitude, and she and

Gerald were both desirous of ascertaining whether they could do anything to make the family more comfortable.

The meeting was affecting, and it gave mutual pleasure. Madame Koski was much pleased with the fisherman's family, especially with Margaret, towards whom she thought she could never show sufficient kindness in return for the motherly part she had acted towards her friendless infant. The good woman brought forward the clothes in which Gerald was dressed when he was first cast upon their protecting care. And if any further proof of his identity had been needful, the sight of them would have quite satisfied Madame Koski that he was indeed her child. The view of the clothes, however, called forth many painful recollections; for though Gerald was restored to her, her two other children, who had been equally dear, were lost. She was affected, too, when told of the careful manner in which the babe's little ark had been enclosed, in order to shelter him from the waters. "Poor Jaqueline," she said, with tears in her eyes, "you were faithful to your charge to the very last. Oh!" she added, turning to her son, "what a wonderful Providence has followed thee, my child; from the moment I parted from thee, thou hast never wanted a mother's tender care."

Madame Koski was a Christian woman. She had been taught in the rough school of adversity, and she had learned, not only to submit with patience to the ills of life, but to see God's gracious and merciful hand in all.

Madame Koski's income was not very large, still she insisted on sharing it with Michael and his wife, who really stood in need of aid, though they were unwilling to receive it from her. The good couple

had done all without any hope or prospect of reward; but they both repeatedly declared that Gerald had already more than repaid them for the services they had rendered him by the generous sacrifice he had made, which had, they said, been the means of saving Michael's life.

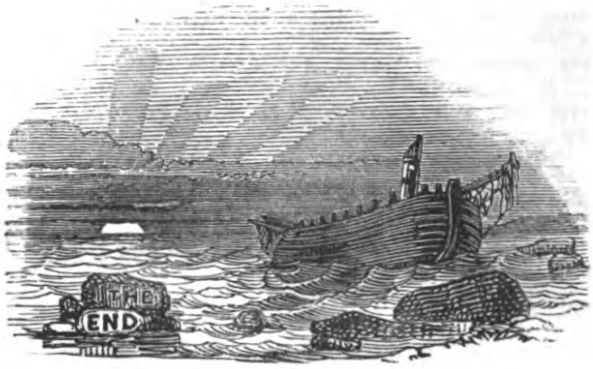
Gerald returned with his mother to Moscow, and then commenced his studies with a cheerful spirit. He lived to be a comfort to his widowed parent, and an ornament to society; but he never had an opportunity of serving his country beyond what he could do as a private individual.

Within two or three years of the time when the above-related events took place, Peter the Great once more gained ascendency over the Poles by a victory he won over his rival, Charles XII. In consequence of this victory, Stanislaus was deposed and Frederick Augustus was restored to the throne.

Most of our young readers are no doubt aware that Poland is no longer a kingdom, but a Russian province. Subsequently to the period of which we have been speaking, the fall of the Polish nation was rapid, and their final overthrow took place under the Russian Emperor Nicholas.

It now remains for us, young readers, to inquire what moral may be learned from the little history before us. Every book we read should do something more than amuse the fancy and interest the feelings. It should inform our minds and teach us some valuable lesson for practice. We have seen that our hero's generous action was made in the providence of God to lead to its own reward. Had he not sought an interview with the Czar, he would not have discovered his mother. Again, we may observe, that circumstances do not affect the conduct of individuals so as to

prevent the possibility of their performing noble deeds. The fisherman and his wife practised generosity and kindness of the highest order, lowly and poor though they were; and the seemingly disadvantageous situation of the boy who was cast upon their bounty did not prevent his achieving a truly heroic action. Think not, therefore, that your circumstances, whatever they may be, shut you out from the exercise of exalted virtues; for there are no circumstances, however unfavourable, which exclude the performance of generous and self-denying deeds.



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