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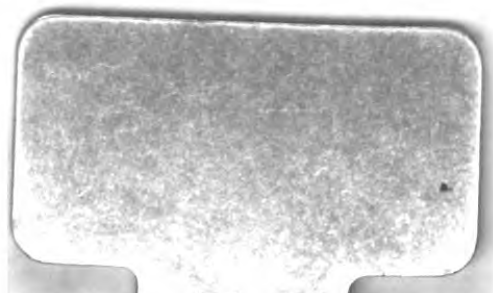
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THE COLD SHOULDER.



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THE COLD SHOULDER;

OR,

A HALF-YEAR AT CRAIGLEA.

BY ROBERT RICHARDSON, B.A.,

AUTHOR OF 'THE BOYS OF SPRINGDALE,' ETC.



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A HALF-YEAR AT CRAIGLEA.

CHAPTER I.

THE PERSONS OF THE STORY.

THE summer holidays were just over, and it was the second day of the new term at Craiglea. Three boys were strolling side by side in the garden in front of the house. They reached an old willow-tree at the foot of the garden, and lay down on the grass beneath its shade. The three boys were, as you might have judged from their appearance, of about an equal age; each had reached his fifteenth year. They were all active-looking boys, somewhat sparer and less squarely built than English lads generally are, and with little of the colour in their cheeks that is bred of northern winters. An Australian sun had tanned their faces a fixed brown.

‘When did you come, Fred?’ The speaker was George Barret.

‘Yesterday morning,’ answered Fred Hewitt. ‘I was the first here of our form. Allan came next.’

‘And we are all here now except Frank Laidley,’ said Allan Kell, the third of the boys. ‘Our new captain is the last to make his appearance.’

‘Quite right, too, if he can manage it,’ said Fred Hewitt. ‘Why should a fellow hurry himself to get back to school any sooner than is necessary? It wasn’t with my wish that I was here before the rest of you, you may be certain.’

‘I was rather astonished at your punctuality, Fred,’ said Allan Kell; ‘but I am sure it wasn’t your fault.’

‘No; I did my best to avoid it, but things were against me. The *pater* was visiting in this direction yesterday morning, and so I had to come in the trap with him. Well, what is the use of being here the first three days when there’s nothing done? Not that it would matter much to me if there were, I must say, but that’s a convenient way of putting it to them at home.’

‘How is it Frank didn’t come with you, George? I suppose you were nearly always together in the holidays,’ said Allan Kell.

‘Yes,’ replied George, ‘we saw a good deal of each other; but Frank has been visiting an uncle at Singleton for the last week, and he wasn’t back yesterday.’



PHILIP'S FIRST EVENING AT CRAIGLEA.

—*Half-Year at Craiglea*, page 6.



I expected he would have been here this afternoon, and I think he'll be here yet before night.'

As George Barret spoke, the boys heard footsteps coming along the middle walk from the house. All turned at the sound.

'Why, here he is!' said Fred Hewitt. 'Speak of somebody, and you'll see his something or other.'

'Well, Frank, old man, how goes it?' said Fred and Allan, as they shook hands with the new-comer, and he seated himself beside them.

'I waited for you till the afternoon yesterday,' said George; 'but your father told me he thought you must be staying another day at your uncle's.'

'Yes; we had a picnic up the river yesterday, and my aunt wanted me to stop for it.'

'I daresay you didn't need a great deal of pressing?' said Fred Hewitt.

'Well, not a great deal, perhaps, Fred. But what's the news? I've seen nobody but Mr. Jeffray. Any new fellows for our form this half?'

'George and I only came to-day,' said Allan Kell. 'Fred's been here since yesterday, much against his will; he can tell us if there's anything fresh.'

'Well, we've got a new housekeeper, and as far as I can see yet, I don't think she's going to be much improvement. Old Dame Glennie was dreadfully careless; but she was, at any rate, good-natured. This one I reckon's a bit of a nipper; has a voice like

her face, as sharp as you please. My word, there'll be no soft-sawdering her.'

'Well, perhaps she'll at least keep things more decent in the bedrooms than they sometimes were with Glennie,' said George Barret. 'Anything more, Fred?'

'There's a new fellow for our form, three in the third, and some youngsters in the lower school. You'll see our new friend at tea, and can judge of him for yourself. He's the queerest figure I've seen at Craiglea for some time. He looks as if he'd just come out of a national school, which perhaps he has; wears Blucher boots; clothes that, I'll be bound, were either bought ready made or done at home; and the most splendid, broad, turned-down collars that fellows used to wear years ago.'

'What's his name? and who is he?' asked George.

'His name's Freeling,—Christian, Philip. As to who he is, I haven't tried to find out. I believe he comes somewhere from the country, and he looks it.'

'He may be none the worse for that,' said Allan Kell rather quickly.

'Oh, I beg your pardon, old chap,' answered Fred, 'I forgot you were born in the bush; but you've lived so much in Sydney, you know, that one couldn't tell.'

'I daresay you think that's a compliment, but I won't say it is. However, don't be so sharp in judging about this new fellow until you know more of him.'



‘Well, you’ll see him for yourself in a little. Perhaps you’ll like his look; there’s no accounting for tastes.’

‘To change the subject, let’s wish our new captain luck,’ said George.

‘By all means,’ said Fred; ‘luck especially in getting us as many half-holidays as possible. As to school-work, you’re safe there, Frank. Allan here will be first in mathematics now, but there’s no one to push you in classics. You’ll have it all your own way.’

‘Unless Freeling turns out a don,’ said George.

‘Unless he does. About holidays, Frank, if you’re just as sharp as Jack Collier, you’ll do. I hope you’re up to as many moves. Do you remember that awfully hot day near the end of last half, when nobody was fit for anything, and the excuse old Collier got for asking Jeff. to let us off afternoon work? He overhauled the almanac, and found that it was the day of the defeat of the Spanish Armada, and quietly asked a half-holiday on that. Jeff. couldn’t help showing he was tickled with the notion, though he was glad of any excuse to dismiss the school, for he could hardly keep awake himself any more than us that day. But to see the cool, quiet way Jack asked it; by George, it was splendid!’

‘You ought to recollect the date of the Spanish Armada’s defeat, Fred, if you never remember another,’ said Allan.

‘Well, I can’t promise to be so ingenious as Collier,

said Frank; 'but I hope I'll keep my eyes open for every fair chance of a holiday. That seems to be the first duty of a captain in your opinion, Fred.'

'Well, yes, I think so,' said Fred. 'There's the tea-bell. By the bye, Mrs. Buckley's begun by being mighty punctual with the meals; no chance of getting much if you're three minutes late.'

Most of the boys were already in their places. They filled two long tables stretching down each side of the room. The upper school occupied the one, at the head of which Mr. Jeffray sat, while Mr. Tennant, the assistant master, presided over the lower school table. Mr. Jeffray was a spare, tall man, of about fifty years of age, with dark hair and beard tinged with grey, and a handsome face.

Frank Laidley's place at table, as captain of the school, was at Mr. Jeffray's right hand. On the master's left sat the new boy Freeling, whom Frank had therefore every opportunity of observing. It was Mr. Jeffray's custom to have the new-comers in the upper school close beside him at table during the first day or two, so that they might feel all the sooner at home in the ways of the school, Mr. Tennant doing the same for the new arrivals at his table.

The short conversation which had occurred in the garden on the subject of Philip Freeling caused both Frank Laidley and George Barret to scrutinize him more closely than they might otherwise have done

on this evening, when they had a good many other things of mutual interest to take up their thoughts and conversation. Philip Freeling was not a decidedly handsome boy; neither could he be called a plain or commonplace-looking one. His features were somewhat irregular, his complexion rather sallow; but he had fine, grey, expressive eyes, a clear, broad, candid brow, and a good mouth. It was a trustworthy and pleasant face.

Philip Freeling's mother was a widow. His father had died six months before this story opens. He had been the manager of a branch bank, in a small country town about thirty miles distant from Sydney. His salary, though it had been gradually increasing, and was sufficient to maintain his family in comfort, did not allow of his earning more than would pay the premium on his life assurance. Being still a man in the prime of life when he died, he had hoped to save enough money during his life to leave his wife and two children at least in independence. The sum which Mrs. Freeling received from the insurance company at her husband's death might perhaps prove sufficient for this as it was, but no more. It would raise her and her children above want with good management, but left little over for their education. Fortunately, Philip had received careful supervision in his school studies from his father, and knew well what he did know. Mrs. Freeling had taught her daughter almost

entirely herself, and was still competent to carrying on her education farther. There was no likelihood now of Kate Freeling's attaining to a much higher degree of education than her mother, but she thought she would be satisfied if she could reach that. But Mrs. Freeling was very anxious that Philip should if possible have one year at a good city school. He was even now almost fit to enter a mercantile office, but she wished to give him at least the groundwork of a classical education, which he would have at the end of another year's schooling. But she doubted the possibility of this. The expenses incidental to her husband's death, and to removing from Riverton to Sydney, which she had done shortly after that event, had heavily taxed her stock of ready money, and she foresaw that the strictest economy would be necessary for some years to come. She hoped that by and bye Philip would be able to add enough to her income to make her position a little easier. While she was hesitating as to whether she was justified in giving out the sum necessary to place her son for a year at school in Sydney, a timely offer of assistance relieved her of her difficulty. A brother offered to pay Philip's school fees for a year. He was himself a man with a large family and many demands upon his means, and he could not spare a great deal. But this much he could spare, and he made the proposal to his sister freely and ungrudgingly. Mrs. Freeling had never said anything to lead her brother to think that she expected

any assistance from him in this way, and she therefore felt that she could accept his offer as freely as it had been made. But she knew, too, that her brother's circumstances made the act a generous one, and she felt sincerely grateful to him for it. After a little inquiry on Mr. Abbot's part, Philip was placed at Craiglea School.

Fred Hewitt was right. Philip Freeling's dress presented some contrast to that of the other boys of his own age at Craiglea. His boots were of the kind called Blucher, fastened with leather ties, and pretty thick-soled. His clothes had been bought ready-made, and were neither so perfectly fitting nor of so fine a texture as those of the boys among whom he now found himself. Even an eye not quick to notice such things could have detected a considerable difference between the outward appearance of Philip Freeling and Frank Laidley. Philip was naturally neat in his dress, and so was Frank, but the contrast between them was nevertheless quite marked. Frank was inclined to be particular in his person and attire. He was a handsome boy, with dark brown eyes and hair, and a warm tinge of dark red in his complexion. His graceful young figure showed to advantage the well-fitting jacket, of the latest cut, and made of the finest Tweed. His collars and neck-scarf, fastened with a small gold pin, were always faultlessly clean, except when occasionally disarranged in the heat of out-door sport. Frank was

not a boy-dandy, but, added to his natural disposition towards orderliness, he had the feeling that his position in the school required that he should in some measure set an example of neatness and propriety in his dress and general appearance.

As Frank Laidley and George Barret examined Philip Freeling, it seemed to them that there was much in his outward appearance that agreed with Fred Hewitt's description. When they looked at his face, however, they found nothing that was unattractive, at any rate, there.





CHAPTER II.

CLASS-ROOM AND PLAY-GROUND.



RAIGLEA HOUSE was situated in a suburb of Sydney skirting the shores of the harbour, and was distant from the city about three miles. It stood in one of the numerous small bays with which both the northern and southern shores of Port Jackson are broken. Its situation and aspect were both very pleasant. The view from its front windows, which faced the water, commanded the best part of the beautiful harbour. The eye was carried over a broad expanse of deep-blue water, broken here and there by a rocky, wooded little island, past half-a-dozen projecting promontories, on to the harbour-mouth, where you just saw the summit of the South Head, one of the two bluff, steep headlands that form the entrance or gateway of Port Jackson. You could see the English ships almost directly after they made

the Southern Head, and watch them bearing up the harbour, stooping beneath their weight of snowy canvas, the white spray breaking before their bows,—a gallant and beautiful sight. The view from Craiglea was, in fine weather, one of life and interest, varied as it was by the coming and going of the homeward and outward-bound ships, the coasting steamers, and the yachts and pleasure-boats that tacked hither and thither, up and down the harbour. The house itself was a plain square white building of two stories, with a broad verandah running round three sides. The rooms inside were large and airy, and from the windows of all, except those immediately at the back, the water could be seen. There was a garden in front of the house, laid out in broad grass plots and a few flower-beds. It would have been difficult to maintain much flower cultivation in the midst of a school full of boys. But what was a great boon to the boys were the several fine willow and mulberry trees which the garden contained, whose broad shadow made it a pleasant retreat in hot summer noons. The garden sloped gradually down to the shores of the bay, and a couple of minutes' walk from its foot brought you to the beach and the water's edge. A little to one side of the bay was a bathing-place, which Mr. Jeffray had had constructed for the use of his pupils. It had been made simply by enclosing a sufficiently large space of water with a rough but strong palisade of

rocks and wooden piles. It was not necessary that the bathing-place should be fitted up with any elegancies; all that was needed was, that there should be a sufficient protection against sharks and other large fish. The natural advantages of the situation were great: the water was of the clearest and purest, and the ground shelved gradually, making a firm, clean bottom of white sand.

On the day following that of our first chapter, the third of the new term, the several classes at Craiglea began to get into working order. As the only new boy in the fourth or head form, Philip Freeling took his place at the foot. But he did not stay long there. The class was up with Mr. Jeffray for Latin construing. The book on which it was to be chiefly engaged during the present half-year was the sixth of Virgil. As is usually the case during the first day or two of a fresh term, the class was not very well prepared in their work this morning. It so happened, however, that Philip had done a little of this sixth of the *Æneid* with his father. It was the very book they had been reading together when Mr. Freeling became ill, and they had got as far as the end of the first hundred lines. Though it was more than six months since Philip had looked at his Latin, or at lessons of any kind, having had his time since his father's death fully occupied in assisting his mother in various ways, he still remembered the book he had been last engaged

on pretty well. For the first few days he felt that his Latin work would be easy. On this morning, the first on which the class had taken marks, he had certainly the advantage of the most of his class-mates. Allan Kell stood next to Frank Laidley in the school, and after him came George Barret. These three knew something of the lesson, but by no means perfectly, owing to their having had so much to say to each other on the previous evening, and to their not being accustomed, any more than others, to begin work in earnest on the very first day of coming back to school. The rest of the class were very indifferently prepared. Mr. Jeffray, in truth, did not expect anything else. He knew that it was almost too much to hope that boys would settle down to work all at once, and he was never hard on them during the first few days of a new half-year. But all this did not prevent any boy who did know his work profiting by it; and this was Philip's case. When the marks were called over at the end of the lesson, he had gained an equal number with Frank, Allan, and George, and would therefore take his place as fourth in the class on the following day.

‘Have you done any of this book before, Freeling?’ Mr. Jeffray asked.

‘Yes, sir, about a hundred lines,’ Philip replied.

‘So I thought. Well, it's a good thing for a fresh comer when he knows a little of his work beforehand.

There's generally enough that comes strange to him in a new school, and keeps him back a little at first.'

Philip's sudden rise surprised his class-mates not a little. There was not usually much change in the order of the class during the first days of a term, far less was it a common thing for a new boy to make so quick a rise. Philip's having been previously acquainted with the portion of work done that morning explained matters to a great extent, but it didn't reconcile his companions to his suddenly-revealed superiority. It was not to be supposed that they should regard it with entire equanimity. A class never likes to find itself so suddenly bettered by a new-comer. Even the boys at the foot of the class, who are accustomed to lose their places to every new arrival among them of average ability and application, and who very soon grow indifferent to it, are inclined to resent it at first.

Frank Laidley stood easily first in classics at Craiglea now that the former captain, Collier, had left the school. He expected to keep his position without difficulty for the one year more which he was to spend at Craiglea. Allan Kell was the best mathematical scholar in the school, but the captainship went, as is usual, by proficiency in classics. Frank witnessed Philip Freeling's success this morning with feelings not altogether of pleasure. He saw in Philip a possible rival. If he had done so well at the very

start, what might he not do by and bye? After all he might have a fight to maintain his position of captain, and just when he was looking forward to having the matter very much in his own hands! The thought was a disturbing one, for it had never entered into Frank's calculations that his place in the school might be disputed by a new-comer. During the previous year he had had a close struggle with Collier for the captainship; and now that he was gone, the course had seemed clear and smooth before him. It didn't seem quite so much so now. There was no knowing how this new fellow might turn out. Thus Frank reflected during the few minutes that Mr. Jeffray was engaged in marking down the boys' places, and thoughts of somewhat the same kind were passing through the minds of Allan Kell and George Barret. Each saw a possible rival in Philip, though neither had quite so much to lose as Frank Laidley. Some of my readers may have had experiences similar to those just described. Were not these something like the thoughts they had at the time?

There was a good cricket-ground attached to Craiglea, a fine level field at the back of the house, skirted by a few trees. It was now the height of the cricket season, which lasts through more than half the year in Australia, and among the boys at Craiglea hardly any other game was being played. It was a pleasant and cheerful sight to see the whole school out in the

cricket-field in the fine, still, summer afternoons, after four o'clock, the best time for cricket in Australia; and it was a very cheerful though not decidedly melodious noise, the shouting of the lusty young voices, that filled the evening air. When Mr. Jeffray strolled out into the cricket-field through his open study window, as he often did, he seldom failed to enjoy the sight. Retaining still a lively recollection of his own cricketing days, he could feel in thorough sympathy with the ardour of his boys in their sport.

'You play cricket, I suppose, Freeling?' said Allan Kell, as the fourth form boys were gathering for a game, and two were settling the wickets. The upper school played in one part of the field, the lower school by themselves in another. Philip replied in the affirmative.

'As great a don as you are at Virgil, Freeling?' said Fred Hewitt in a careless tone. 'Well, at any rate, you can't "know it beforehand," as Jeff. says, any more than the rest of us.'

Philip did not answer. 'Jeff.' was the familiar name by which Mr. Jeffray went among his scholars, or, when they were inclined for more freedom of reference still, 'Old Jeff.' There was no disrespect intended by either of these terms in the case of most of those who used them. With few exceptions, Mr. Jeffray was generally liked among his scholars, and by the oldest of them trusted.

The game began, and the boys took their innings and bowling in turn. Philip's innings came last. Like most boys in Australia, he had played cricket almost ever since he could hold a bat. But he had lived nearly all his life in a country town, and as a rule, boys in a country town do not play with the same style as those living in a city. They have as good opportunities of practising, but there is not among them the same competition, nor have they as many opportunities of seeing good play in others. Their style is thus, generally speaking, less graceful and easy. This was the case with Philip as compared with the majority of his new companions. On this, his first appearance in the cricket-field, he made a good enough stand at the wickets, but an onlooker, with a knowledge of the game, would have seen that his play was somewhat different from that of the rest. Philip himself was not much conscious of this. His innings lasted as long as most of the others; and he was rather thinking that he had made a pretty good first appearance. But he was very soon to be undeceived. Schoolboys are quick to mark any peculiarity, or what seems to them a peculiarity, in the way a new companion bears himself in their school sports, and there are always some who are not slow to express their opinion thereon. That Philip played in a rather awkward, jerky, and ungraceful way was apparent to all, and struck most of them in a highly

amusing light. Remarks of a sarcastic kind passed from one to the other, but Philip, intent upon his batting, did not at first notice them. Fred Hewitt was among the foremost in his criticism upon Philip's play, and, encouraged by the laugh which followed some of his witticisms, grew freer in his remarks. At length Philip became aware that something in his play was raising the mirth of his companions, and was made unpleasantly certain of it by Fred Hewitt's saying in a tone of exaggerated gravity:

'Are you sure you've got hold of the right end of the bat, Freeling?'

This was said loud enough for all to hear, and the joke appeared far too good a one, to most of the boys, for them to try to conceal their laughter. Philip now saw clearly that it was Fred's intention to bring him into ridicule. The discovery was not an agreeable one, the more so as it was unexpected. Philip had wished, as most boys would in the same circumstances, to make a good first appearance at cricket among his new companions, and was congratulating himself that he had fairly succeeded in doing so. That idea was quite banished from his mind now. The feeling that he was an object of mirth to the rest, rather than anything else, made him no longer desirous of trying to play well, and it was a relief to him when he was bowled out by George Barret. By staying longer at the wickets, he felt that

he would only be exposing himself to other remarks from Fred Hewitt, similar to the one just recorded; and he had no desire for this, as you may suppose.

‘Something got wrong with your timbers,’ said Fred as Philip’s wicket fell. ‘Is that the way you play shooters? We always try to cut them to long leg here.’

Again a burst of laughter followed Fred’s words, but as it subsided, Allan Kell, who had not joined in the mirth, said in a slightly disgusted tone :

‘Hold your row, Fred. Leave the fellow alone.’

Philip was determined to do his best to appear as if he took no notice of Fred’s sarcasms, and took his place in the field. A little while after the game came to an end.





CHAPTER III.

HOW FRED HEWITT EMPLOYED HIS TALENTS.

PHILIP'S first experience of his new school had not on the whole been a pleasant one. With Mr. Jeffray he already felt at home, for that gentleman had a frank way with boys that quickly put them at their ease. But he began to doubt how he was going to get on with his new companions. The little he had seen of them to-day in the cricket-field, did not reassure him. They were a more finely dressed, and he supposed a cleverer set of boys than many of his old companions in Riverton, but they did not seem nicer or friendlier fellows. Philip was of a candid, trustful, and unsuspecting disposition. A little encouragement and he gave you his confidence. But his nature was a sensitive one too. Easily attracted, and easily pleased, he was almost as easily repelled. He had a warm heart and quick sympathies,

which inclined him to be frank and sociable; but when either of these were wounded, he felt it keenly, and became, for the time, shy and reserved. The conduct of two or three of his new school-mates, at cricket this afternoon, surprised as well as pained him, for he could at first see no reason for it. But as he thought over it as he went to bed that night, he concluded that it was perhaps only because he was a new boy, and that new boys had probably always something of the same kind to go through. He made up his mind that this must be the case, and resolved to take things as quietly as possible, and matters would go more smoothly in a little.

Let me try to give you an idea of Fred Hewitt's character. By some of his school-mates he was liked in a certain, not very deep, way, by some tolerated, but not greatly respected by any. Those who liked him as a companion did so chiefly because of a kind of drollery in him that was sometimes amusing. He was not one to make a chum or bosom friend of, for you could not trust him enough for that. In his likes and dislikes he was uncertain and unreasoning, and in his friendships often inconstant. He would be the best of friends with you for one month, and then indifferent for the next, without any apparent cause, which was the same as saying without any real cause; for to give him all credit, Fred never cared or troubled to appear what he was not. Almost entirely without am-

bition in his studies, and fond of pastime, he was, in a way, good-natured, though a good deal of what was counted good-nature in him was little more than carelessness. When he took up a dislike to any one his good-nature disappeared, and there was something of malice in his dislike. He could really make himself most agreeable sometimes, and you thought him the best of fellows until you found that it didn't last. He was not burdened with a very sensitive conscience, which may have been partly his misfortune and partly his fault; and if ever it happened, as it not unfrequently did, during school-hours, that some trick or little piece of inventive mischief, done for the purpose of causing fun or raising a laugh, brought blame on an innocent person, it never struck Fred that he might explain matters and bear the consequence. That was all in the day's fun, he considered, and among the chances of war. Neither clever nor diligent in any of his studies, Fred was quick with his tongue, and had one gift which commends itself to all boys, because it may often be a source of much amusement. He had some talent for sketching—could draw droll little pictures, generally caricatures, which had sometimes a good deal of fun in them. His powers in this way were not very great, but a talent for original drawing is so rare among boys or men, that Fred's productions were an object of admiration to his companions. In a school of, say, a hundred boys, you will seldom find

two who can draw a horse or a dog sufficiently like to require no label. Fred's sketches were no doubt rude and faulty enough, but you seldom could mistake what it was the artist's intention to represent, and the fun of them consisted in their touch of comic exaggeration.

It was Sunday morning, the Sunday after the events related in the previous chapter. Breakfast and prayers were over, and most of the boys were loitering about the garden or engaged in some way in their bedrooms, until it should be time to start for church.

As Philip was leaving the room at the conclusion of prayers, Mr. Jeffray had said to him, 'It takes us about half an hour to walk to church, Philip; if you wait in the garden we can go together this morning.'

Mr. Jeffray was usually accompanied to church by several of the fourth form boys, while Mr. Tennant walked with some of the younger ones. Philip's companions this morning included Frank Laidley, George Barret, Fred Hewitt, and two others. The boys walked on each side of Mr. Jeffray, who had Philip next him. Mr. Jeffray had the faculty of being able to talk with his pupils, out of school, in a perfectly free and unconstrained manner, throwing off for the time all that savoured of the master, without becoming undignified. This morning he addressed himself chiefly to Philip, as being a new-comer who needed informa-



tion regarding the neighbourhood and surroundings of their walk, which led along the shore, with the sea on one side, and villas, cottages, and gardens dotting the slopes on the other.

It was a fine bright morning, with a light breeze blowing in from the sea; the party were in good time, and sauntered leisurely along, enjoying the fragrant sea breeze, that came laden with the fresh breath of the Pacific. Gradually two of the boys, Fred Hewitt and another, had dropped away from the rest, and were walking a little behind. Something seemed to be moving their mirth, as they talked together in a low, smothered voice. In a little, a low laugh from the two attracted George Barret's attention, and he too drooped behind and joined Fred and his companion.

'What's the joke, Fred?' he asked.

'Did you ever see anything like the cut of Freeling's coat? If the tailor who made that in Riverton only set up business in Sydney, by George, he'd make his fortune in a year. It's something quite original; and the best of it is, it wouldn't make much difference which way you put it on; it's the same shape all round. That must be a great convenience.'

'Well, it looks rather odd, certainly; I didn't notice it before,' said George, smiling; 'but it's not so bad as you make out, Fred.'

'Then admire the collar,' continued Fred; 'isn't it grand? An inch deeper, and it would make a splendid

collar for the Sambo who plays the tambourine in a Christy Minstrel troupe.'

Fred's two companions had difficulty in repressing the laughter which this sally provoked.

'You'd have thought his friends might have managed to get him a pair of gloves, just for Sunday go-to-meeting,' said Tom Webbe, the third of the trio.

It was true; Philip wore no gloves. Perhaps he was the only boy in the upper school at Craiglea who did not possess his pair of neat kids. Many did not make much use of them, having the common school-boy's dislike to such irksome superfluities of dress; but all possessed them, as the correct thing for boys of a certain age to have, whether they wore them or not.

'I don't know what sort he could get to match the rest of his toggery,' said Fred.

By this time the church was reached, and further talk on the part of the trio ceased. But it was renewed again on their return from church. The theme seemed to Fred to offer opportunities for some rare fun, too good to be missed. At dinner and during the afternoon, he occupied himself in drawing the attention of any of his class-mates he could get to listen to him to the peculiarities in Philip's dress, repeating the small jokes we have already heard him make, with several others that had since suggested themselves to him. Most of those he talked with fell in with the

joke, laughed at Fred's witticisms, and began to regard Philip with eyes of curious criticism.

'Did you see his handkerchief?' said Fred; 'pink spots and stripes all over, like a flag. That's his Sunday one; I daresay his everyday ones have pictures and proverbs round the edge,—something about avoiding bad companionship, and "The proof of the pudding gathers no moss," and all that.'

This was thought Fred's crowning joke, and his new proverb passed from mouth to mouth till it was all over the school. It did not lose its freshness for several days after.

'You're a great donkey, Fred,' said Allan Kell, but he smiled at the same time.

Meanwhile Philip was unconscious of all this criticism of his outward appearance. His dress seemed to him all that it was necessary for it to be. He was not aware of any weak point in it. True, his clothes had been bought ready-made, but hitherto he had always had his things either made at home or by the Riverton tailor, who was not at the top of his craft; and the fact was, that Philip thought his present city-bought suit was a decided improvement on anything of the sort he had had before. He knew that it was not of the very finest material, but it was good of its kind, and the best that his mother's means could give him, and he was satisfied. Such was his simplicity. But it was not very long before he became aware that he was the

subject of frequent mirth to his school-mates. From the looks that were directed to him, and chance words of conversation overheard, he soon found out the cause, and in a little while he got unmistakeable proof of it.

A week had passed, and it was Saturday evening. Wednesday and Saturday afternoons were holidays at Craiglea. After tea, Philip had gone up to his bedroom for a book, when he found lying on his bed a small brown paper parcel, addressed to him. He took it up, wondering a little from whom it could have come. The address was written in a stiff style, that looked like a bad lady's hand, and the paper was fastened in a rather loose and untidy manner. Both the writing and the way in which the parcel was secured convinced him that it could not be from his mother, as he at first thought, yet he knew of no one else from whom it could have come. It was this that made him pause before he opened it. Its contents for a moment still further perplexed him, but only for a moment,—in the next, their meaning was made plain to him. The contents of the parcel consisted of a pair of large yellow cotton gloves, of the commonest sort, and larger than almost any one could wear; an enormous broad necktie, such as are now worn only by old-fashioned gentlemen; and half-a-dozen worsted boot-laces with brass tags. A piece of note-paper was pinned inside the parcel, on which the following was written:—

‘These few articles are respectfully presented to P. F. by a well-wisher, who hopes that they may be found useful and ornamental. *N.B.*—The gloves are intended especially for Sunday wear.’

The hot blood rushed to Philip’s face as he read these words; and he had hardly done so, when a burst of laughter came from the doorway, followed by a hurried scuffling of feet along the passage outside. This last was not necessary to convince Philip who were the senders of his parcel, or what was their intention. They had made that plain enough already.





CHAPTER IV.

MORE OF FRED'S HUMOUR.

FRANK LAIDLEY was the only son of rich parents. He had two sisters, both a few years older than himself. Frank was undoubtedly a clever boy, and had, besides, an attractive and engaging manner. By his sisters he was made a good deal of, as so often happens when there is only one boy in a house, even if he be the youngest of the family. At home, in fact, he had always had pretty much his own way,—not because his parents had any great disposition to spoil him, but because, being the only boy in a small family, with no brothers to cross him in any way, two sisters inclined to pet him, and reared in the midst of every comfort, he had really had very little to contradict his will or thwart his wishes. Good abilities, no disinclination for study, and the popularity which he enjoyed among his companions, made his life at school interesting and pleasant.

He had grown up with a confidence in his own opinion, and a difficulty in understanding how things could be otherwise than as he wished, that he was not himself fully aware of. He was not a forward boy in the expression of his opinions, but he generally acted as though he had no idea of his being ever wrong. He was of a generous disposition, and had a greater amount of sentiment than the majority of boys of his age, though this was for the most part concealed. At the age of fifteen he was an eager reader of heroic poetry, history, and romance, and he felt his sympathies stirred and his enthusiasm kindled by the study. Frank was capable of doing a generous and even self-denying action when it came from his own side, but he was not equally prepared to take in good part anything that crossed his own wishes. In this way he had been seldom tried. He would do a great deal to please people whose good opinion he valued, for it was grateful to him to stand well with his friends. Being amply supplied with pocket-money by his parents, he was free and liberal with it among his companions, and this, no doubt, partly helped to secure him the popularity which was pleasant to him. His impulses were generally towards the good, and he had seldom, during his young life, done a mean or unmanly action.

Frank Laidley and George Barret had been friends

from childhood, and had always been on the closest terms of intimacy with each other. Quarrels they had had, but these had never lasted long, and had become fewer and fewer as both boys grew older. Though the relations which existed between the two were in most respects those of equality, yet George was in reality the subordinate. Frank was slightly the elder, but this did not altogether account for his precedence. It was owing chiefly to the great and genuine admiration which George had for his friend. This was seldom expressed in open flattery; for George was of a bold and independent nature, and not given to smooth speeches; but in acts, and in almost an invariable yielding to Frank's opinions and judgment. Frank was intellectually much the cleverer of the two, and George was clever enough to see and generous enough to admire his friend's superiority in this respect. It would have been difficult to convince him that Frank could be wrong in matters of opinion or action. He quoted his words at home to his brothers and sisters, with as little thought of doubting their infallibility as he did those of Mr. Jeffray. Frank took it very much as a matter of course that George should yield to him in all questions of decision, but the attachment between them was too real to make him desire to assume any airs of superiority on that account. George was a frank, open-hearted, impulsive boy, quick to anger, but easily

assuaged, and not one apt to bear the memory of his anger long. He was generous with whatever he possessed, and with a friend would often share all he had.

Philip Freeling had come to Craiglea to work. He was determined to make the best of the one year's schooling that remained to him, for he knew that the better the use he made of it, the fitter would he be to take a good situation, and the greater his chances of obtaining such. Perhaps none of his class-mates had the same incentive and necessity to study, and Philip felt fully how much depended upon his getting the whole good of his present opportunities. He soon took a foremost place in all his classes. In that of languages he now stood generally third or fourth, contesting the third place with George Barret, sometimes the one ahead, sometimes the other. But it became evident that George would sooner or later have to yield, and that Philip might probably end with being higher still in the class, perhaps captain. This unexpected rivalry on the part of the new-comer was causing Frank Laidley to have to study much harder than he had ever anticipated during this year; indeed, he now clearly saw that he would have to put forth his best energies if he wished to maintain his place. He had not much fear as yet of not being able to do this, but he had sufficient doubts to prevent his position as captain of the school feeling as

secure and pleasant as he had contemplated. Philip's increasing success did not bring him any favour in the eyes of his class-mates, and especially of those with whom he was brought into daily competition. His position was a difficult one. He had come among the rest a perfect stranger, unknown to any one, and he quickly found that he was likely to be an object of jealousy to those of his school-mates with whom he was to be brought into most frequent contact. The more he succeeded in satisfying himself in his studies, the more coldly he would be regarded by his new companions. He had come among them as a disturbing element, to upset their various little arrangements. Well, what could he do? He desired earnestly to be on terms of cordiality with his school-mates, but they gave him no opportunities of becoming so. He had not expected all this in coming to Craiglea, for he had not experienced anything of the same kind in his previous school-life; he felt surprised, chilled, and repulsed. And yet a little sympathy and encouragement from any of his class-mates would have drawn him from his reserve and won his confidence.

'I say, Frank,' said a class-mate one morning, as the fourth form was separating after the Latin lesson, 'you must look sharp after Freeling, or he'll run you hard; he's an awful fag.'

The speaker was one of the lower boys in the form,

and Frank did not much relish his words. He was the more susceptible to the warning contained in them from the fact of Philip's having been rather better up in his Virgil this morning than himself. He turned round upon the speaker and said sharply, 'When I want assistance, I'll come to you, Dunn.'

'My word! isn't he riled a little?' said Dunn to another boy when Frank had passed out of hearing; 'down on a fellow like a load of bricks. Do him good if Freeling does give him a tussle.'

As Frank passed along the upper schoolroom, his attention was attracted by a small group of boys gathered in a corner of the room.

'I say, Frank, come here a minute; we want you for something.'

Frank approached the group, in the midst of which he found Fred Hewitt seated at a desk, and engaged in making some sketch in pencil and water-colours. The rest stood or sat around him, watching the progress of his drawing with much interest and frequent signs of amusement.

'Look here, Frank,' said George Barret; 'it's nearly finished. Isn't it grand?'

Frank looked at the sketch, and laughed.

'Now we want a short inscription, or whatever you call it,' said Fred. 'Suggest something, Frank, as spicy as you can make it.'

'Oh, you'd better do that yourself, Fred,' answered

Frank; 'you know what will suit your own drawing best.'

'Well, what do you say to this?' and Fred wrote some words under his sketch.

'First-rate!' cried several of the boys, and the laughter began again.

'Where do you mean to stick it?' said Webbe. 'Over the mantelpiece in the bedroom would do.'

'For you and the rest, perhaps, Will, but not for me. No fear! Tennant would be sure to spot it there, and he'd not be long guessing who did it. Once bit, twice shy. I got into a row once before by being too risky in a thing of this kind.'

'Then I'd leave it alone altogether now, if I were you, Fred,' said a voice from behind. The speaker was Allan Kell, who had just joined the group.

'What! are you there, old man?' said Fred without turning his head, and putting a finishing stroke or two to his drawing. 'I didn't know you were in the neighbourhood. Don't be a wet-blanket, now. This is a very mild piece of fun.'

'Well, you've had the fun of it, haven't you?' said Allan. 'Let it stop now.'

'No, only half. We'll not be able to see the end of it, but we can imagine it, you know. Do you think any one would have spent so much pains over a work of art like this, if the original were never to have a view of it? Do you think a painter has no

pride in his work? I'm going to fix this where our friend shall have an early and excellent opportunity of judging of its merits as a likeness. Now you're going to say that what's fun to us may be thingummy to some other fellow; but this ain't a very killing matter.'

'I wasn't going to say anything of the sort,' said Allan. 'But the joke does seem pretty much on one side, if it comes to that, and not a first-rate one anyhow.'

'Of course it isn't,' said Fred. 'But what did old Horace tell us only yesterday about little things suiting little minds? I daresay you can give us the Latin. Well, that's our case at present, old man.'

During this colloquy Frank Laidley stood by and said nothing.

That evening, when Philip Freeling opened his Virgil to begin his preparation of next day's lines, the first thing his eyes fell upon was Fred Hewitt's handiwork of the morning. The paper was slightly gummed in upon the title-page of the book, and the sketch upon it was that of a schoolboy trudging to school, with a slate under his arm and a large green bag of books over his shoulder. He was dressed like the queer little pictures of village schoolboys that one used to see in the frontispieces of the old spelling-books, with a big peaked cloth cap, deep wide collar, fastened with a large bow, a broad belt

round the waist, and trousers reaching not much below the knees, exposing the boots to full view,—in this case very heavy thick-soled ones, studded with nails, like a ploughman's. The draughtsman had caught some likeness of Philip's face, but had twisted and exaggerated the features to the furthest limits of caricature, which of course had been the artist's object, who had succeeded in his aim in producing a highly absurd and ludicrous figure.

At the foot of the paper these words were written :

‘HE WOULD BE A SCHOLAR.’

‘Portrait of an Australian schoolboy of the nineteenth century.

‘*A sketch from nature.*’

In the sketch and the mocking title to it, it was possible to recognise only one thing,—another attempt to place Philip in a slighting and ridiculous light.

‘Well, that may be very clever, but it isn't very manly,’ he said to himself as he quietly removed the paper from his book, tore it into pieces, rose, and threw them out of the window. With a brow somewhat knitted, and a set mouth, he re-seated himself and began the preparation of his lines. In a little while he had succeeded in fixing his thoughts upon his work, the brow gradually smoothed again, and the mouth relaxed.



CHAPTER V.

MR. TENNANT.

MY reader will have gathered before this that Philip Freeling's life at Craiglea, as far as it had to do with his school-fellows, was not turning out a particularly pleasant or happy one. In regard to his studies and his masters, matters were quite different; he was liking both thoroughly. But though this was no doubt a consolation to him, it was not enough. There are few boys at school but would feel keenly the position in which Philip stood towards his class-mates, and which it did not seem likely that he could do anything to alter. True, if he had chosen to be less diligent in his class-work, and so never come into competition with certain of the boys, he might have found more favour with them. But this was impossible; he had more necessity to study than any of his class-mates, and if his determination to work hard during the short opportunity that was

now left him brought upon him their jealousy, well, it was his misfortune, but could not be helped. That was how he tried to console himself; but for all that he heartily wished that things were otherwise than they were. He was resolved to meet whatever difficulties his year at Craiglea was to bring him, and they were already more than he had expected, with as bold a front as he could maintain, but you mustn't imagine that he was indifferent to his school-mates' conduct. Some few boys might have been so, but not many, and Philip was certainly not by nature one of these. He would have welcomed with alacrity the first signal of friendly advances on the part of any of his equals in age, had such been held out to him. But it was not; and he himself, from the very position his school-fellows had taken up towards him, was prevented from taking the initiative. He found himself lonely, companionless, without sympathy or any communion of thoughts and interests with those of his own age, an object of no little jealousy to some of his class-mates, of ridicule which he could hardly understand to others. He had not been many weeks at school when one of the thoughts that gave him greatest satisfaction was, that his sojourn at Craiglea could not possibly last longer than the year. This was a sad falling off from his anticipations. He had looked forward to his last year at school as something to be in many ways enjoyed; it was turning out something to

be endured. The results which it was to produce,—the increased ability in himself to help his mother and sister,—this was all the satisfaction he now looked for from his year at Craiglea, and this thought made him the more disposed to do his best to secure this at least.

The position which Philip occupied in the regard of his masters was very different from that which he held with his school-mates. Apart from the punctuality with which he did his work, his quiet, modest, and unassuming manner was such as could not fail to win the favour of a teacher. Boys, even of his age, who give little or no trouble to their instructors, have not yet become so common, nor are likely to be for some time, I expect, as not to be appreciated when found. Mr. Jeffray soon ranked Philip among those of his pupils, never a very large band, whom it was really some interest and satisfaction to teach, in whom he might feel a reasonable degree of pride without fear of disappointment ; and though it was never his habit to make any marked distinction in his manner towards different boys during school hours, he nevertheless, in private, distinguished the best of his pupils with a greater familiarity of intercourse than he extended to all, and among these was Philip. Of course these little marks of attention on the part of the master towards his pupil could only be of occasional occurrence.

Mr. Tennant necessarily saw much more of the boys out of school than his principal. It was a part of his

duties to mingle with them occasionally in the playground, and to have some knowledge of their doings out of school. Some in his position find pleasure in sharing now and then in the boys' sports, but Mr. Tennant was not one of these. In his own youth he had had very little experience of the pastimes of the youth of the present day, or indeed of pastime of any kind, and now, when he had leisure and opportunity, he was too old to begin to practise them with any likelihood of success. He knew himself to be unfitted for drawing closer the bonds of intimacy between the boys and himself in this way at least.

For his years, somewhat over thirty, Mr. Tennant was a grave man. His life, from his earliest youth, had tended to make him so. His father had died while he was a child, leaving his mother entirely dependent upon her own exertions for the support of herself and her two children. After leaving school he had to trust wholly to himself for his further education. He left his home in the west of England, a lad of sixteen, to attend classes at a Scotch University, as the best means open to him of obtaining the instruction he desired at the cheapest rate.

During the four years of his college course he managed to earn enough money, by working after hours and during recess as a tutor, to keep himself and pay his class fees. It was pretty close shaving to manage it sometimes, but he did it, as dozens around

him did. After he had taken his degree, he had filled a situation in an English school for a time, and had then determined to emigrate to Australia. He could have wished that his mother and sister might have accompanied him, but for this Mrs. Tennant could not make up her mind, and it was the daughter's duty to remain with her.

John Tennant took with him to Sydney good letters of recommendation, and was enabled to obtain soon after his arrival his present situation in Mr. Jeffray's school, which promised to suit him, for some time at least, very well. The salary was as much as he expected for the present, and was such as allowed of his transmitting to his mother, who had many a time stinted herself that her boy might be educated, a yearly sum sufficient to maintain herself and his sister in moderate comfort. Mr. Jeffray was, moreover, a principal whom it was a satisfaction to work under; one who, recognising his assistant's real value, treated him as an equal and a friend. It was, then, the circumstances of Mr. Tennant's early life, the need which he had, while little else than a boy, of forethought, and contrivance, and self-dependence, which had made him something grave beyond his years. But he was not a sombre or austere man by any means; and though he was unfitted to share in any of the active pastimes of the boys, he was not uninterested in their doings out of school. He was

generally pretty well acquainted with whatever was going on among them, and was given to the study of their various characters in a quietly observant way. He was generally liked, though not in any enthusiastic fashion, for he was somewhat hard to please in school-work, and undemonstrative in his praises. Those among the elder boys who came to be on terms of closest intimacy with him always liked Mr. Tennant the better the more they knew of him. One or more of these sometimes shared his walks along the winding shores of the harbour, or among the low hills in the neighbourhood, and seldom without enjoying them.

Philip had not been long at Craiglea before he became one of those who were most frequently invited by Mr. Tennant to accompany him in his afternoon walks. Mr. Tennant knew something of the circumstances of Philip's history from Mr. Jeffray, and his sympathy and interest were awakened for the boy. Moreover, he came to have a pretty correct idea of the terms on which Philip stood with his school-mates, and he had not much difficulty in arriving at the true explanation of the matter. It was a case, he thought, in which he could take no part with any good results to Philip, but he nevertheless felt for the boy, and desired to do what he could to render his position less lonely than he knew it must be. His attentions to him were offered in a quiet and gradual way, designed to attract as little as possible the notice of others, and

soon Philip felt very appreciative of and grateful for them. The occasional companionship of the master became by and by a considerable set-off against the conduct towards him of his school-fellows, and the one real pleasure of his life at Craiglea.

One afternoon, as the two were returning from a ramble along the shore, Mr. Tennant said :

‘ I am afraid there’s a good deal that’s not very comfortable in your life here at present, Philip. I can pretty well guess how matters stand, and I wish I could do anything to mend them. But you will see that your case is one in which it would be difficult for me to be of any assistance to you. I went through much the same kind of experience at school once as you are doing, and I haven’t forgotten it even now. But my case was, I think, a more difficult one than yours. The best advice I can give you is just to bear it. Don’t let them make you lose your temper, if you can help it, and before you have left Craiglea you may have lived it down. That is certain to be a satisfaction.’

‘ Thank you, sir,’ answered Philip. ‘ That is what I meant, if possible, to do. Of course it isn’t pleasant that the fellows have made this set against me, and for such a small matter. It’s not very cheerful being on hardly speaking terms with the most of one’s classmates ; but things may take a change.’

‘ I suppose one or two are leading on the rest,’ said Mr. Tennant ; ‘ that’s almost always the way, and I

think I could name who is the chief mover in this small persecution of you. I shouldn't have thought Allan Kell took any part in it, does he ?'

'I think not, sir. But I fancy Kell is a difficult fellow to get intimate with at any time. He doesn't talk much ; at least I haven't heard him.'

'No ; it takes a little time to know him, for he is rather reticent. But he is a genuine, honest-hearted fellow, and would be one of the last in the school, I think, to do an unjust or ungenerous thing. But he is a good deal taken up, generally, with private pursuits and hobbies of his own,—shell and insect collecting, and such things,—doesn't mingle so much with the rest, and is certainly a capital hand at minding his own business. If you could take to each other, I think you would get on together.'

'Laidley and Barret would be good fellows, too, under most circumstances, I should say,' Philip answered ; 'but, unluckily, they don't take to me.'

'Yes,' replied Mr. Tennant ; 'I like them both in many ways. Laidley is a good deal the cleverest boy in the school.'


As the two entered the house through the garden, they passed Hewitt and two other boys near the gate.

'How thick Tennant and Freeling are getting,' said Fred. 'There seems to be some wonderful attraction between them.'



CHAPTER VI.

MOTHER AND SON.

‘NE for you, Philip,’ said Mr. Jeffray, as he sorted out the morning’s batch of letters that had just arrived.

Philip’s letter was from his mother. He took it to his room to read it. They had not a great deal to write about generally, but the mother and son nevertheless exchanged letters every few weeks, and Philip sometimes had one from his sister. With the exception of these, his correspondents were very few, for he had no friends in Sydney besides his uncle’s family. His mother’s letter to-day was chiefly interesting for the announcement it contained that Mrs. Freeling proposed coming to see her son on the following afternoon. ‘I will wait for you,’ the letter ran, ‘at the turn of the road that leads to Craiglea, and we can walk a little together. We shall be more private than if I saw you at school.’

On the afternoon of the following day, when the school had separated, Philip proceeded to the spot named in his mother's letter for their meeting, which was not more than ten minutes' walk from the house. As he approached the place, he saw his mother advancing from the direction of the town, and the next moment the two had met. It was the second time only that they had seen each other since Philip had been at Craiglea.

'Are you keeping well, my boy?' the mother said after their first greeting. She held both Philip's hands in her own, and looked earnestly in his face as she spoke. A moment after she added in a slightly anxious voice, 'Surely you are looking a little pale to-day, Philip. Have you been quite well since I last saw you?'

'Yes, mother, I am just as usual,' Philip answered rather hastily. 'You know you have every now and then fancied I was looking pale ever since my illness.'

A year previously to the date of this story, Philip had had an accident. He had been thrown from a horse and hurt his shoulder-blade, which had confined him to the house for several weeks.

'You have never quite got back your colour since,' Mrs. Freeling continued.

'That may easily be, mother; sometimes one may show a slight effect like that of an illness long after one is all right again.'

‘Perhaps I am over anxious, Philip, but I know you are working hard, and you must not overdo it. That would be worse for all of us than if you had never gone to Craiglea.’

‘No fear, mother,’ Philip replied with a slight laugh; ‘I don’t think it’s a common fault with boys to overwork themselves—at least I haven’t known many that did.’

‘Yes, but your circumstances are different, Philip; you know that I know that you are making the best use of your time, and I am glad and proud that you are doing so, for I was anxious enough to get you for a year at such a school as Craiglea. But I don’t want you to overwork yourself by ever so little; it is necessary for all of us that you should be able to enter some situation in a year’s time in good health and strength.’

‘I keep that always in mind, mother,’ Philip answered gravely.

The two had left the high road, and were walking along a narrow path skirting some fields and gardens. They sat down presently on the slope of a hill.

‘And how are you liking Craiglea, Philip?’ Mrs. Freeling went on.

‘Oh, not badly,’ Philip replied. ‘Both Mr. Jeffray and Mr. Tennant are very good, and the French and drawing masters are not bad fellows.’

‘And your school-fellows, are they pleasant?’

Philip hesitated for a reply. He did not wish that his mother should know anything of the darker side of his life at Craiglea. There was no use to trouble her with it, who had had enough matter for thought and anxiety since his father’s death. But a direct answer in the affirmative to his mother’s question he could not give without a falsehood, and the natural truthfulness of Philip’s nature, as well as the influence of his training, made him shrink even from equivocation. He was perplexed, and his mother saw it. He had resolved to bear patiently and in silence the less happy conditions of his school life, persuaded that he could do so for the short space he was to be at Craiglea, but now it seemed that his purpose in this respect must give way. He saw that his mother’s anxiety was already roused, and an attempt at concealment, even if he had been disposed to make it, would only increase it, and cause her to imagine that things were worse than they were.

‘You don’t answer, Philip,’ Mrs. Freeling said. ‘Don’t you get on with your school-mates. You always used to in Riverton.’

‘Yes; but somehow,’ Philip began slowly, ‘the fellows here seem different. I knew them all so well at Riverton, some from the time we were little fellows together. I came quite a stranger to Craiglea, and that must make a difference, you know. By

and by, perhaps, I'll get into their ways, and we may like each other better. But even if I don't, it doesn't much matter, mother. I am only to be a very short time at Craiglea. I am getting on well with my work, and that is the chief thing at present. I haven't told you that Mr. Tennant is giving me some lessons in German out of school. It won't be of much use to me at once, but may some day; besides, it is interesting, and worth the knowing for its own sake. Mr. Tennant is a very good fellow out of school, and likes to help a boy that is anxious himself to get on. He knows a world of things besides what he teaches; something about everything, I think.'

Philip wished, if possible, to turn the conversation from the subject of his relations with his school-fellows, and was now talking quickly, hoping thus to divert his mother's thoughts. She saw his intention, and made no remark. She perceived that the subject was one on which Philip would prefer not to be questioned, and she was wise enough not to wish to press him. From what she had already heard, she concluded that Philip was not altogether happy at Craiglea, and the thought made her a little anxious; but if he did not wish her to know further of the matter, she could trust him that he had right reasons for it. She went on to talk of other things.

‘I hope I shall not be long in getting a situation after I leave Craiglea,’ said Philip.

‘I hope not,’ replied his mother. ‘Your uncle will do his best for you; but if you may possibly have to wait a little time, you must not be impatient.’

‘A bank or a merchant’s office is what I should like,’ continued Philip, ‘and I think a mercantile office would be the better of the two; fellows sometimes get on quicker in them, I have noticed, but it depends, I suppose, a good deal on the office, and on oneself.’

So the two talked on about Philip’s future prospects, which was the subject which was oftenest in the thoughts of the little family just now, until it was time for Mrs. Freeling to be thinking of returning to the town. ‘I have brought you a few handkerchiefs which Kate has just finished for you,’ said she; ‘I had almost forgotten them. You have not too many already, but you will have enough with these, I think.’

As she spoke, Mrs. Freeling drew from the pocket of her dress a small parcel, which she proceeded to open. It contained half-a-dozen cotton handkerchiefs, very neatly worked, but of the plainest description, each with a narrow border of pink or blue colours.

As Philip took them he suddenly reddened a little.

‘Couldn’t you have got me,’ he began in a hesitating way, ‘one or two of a rather finer sort than these mother?’

He was about to add something more, when the sudden pained look that came into his mother's face made him pause, and in the same moment a sharp pang of regret passed through him for the words he had just uttered.

'It was all I could afford, Philip. Cambric handkerchiefs are expensive. But I have one or two of my own, and I will send them to you. These will do quite as well for me; I might have thought of it before; your things are much more seen than mine now,' and Mrs. Freeling began to refold the parcel.

'No, no, mother,' Philip said, holding her hand, 'you must forget what I said just now; I am a thoughtless, selfish fellow. Thank Kate very much for me, and tell her I said that she's a better little sister than I deserve to have,' and Philip took the parcel from his mother's hands and placed it in his pocket. But this little incident had revealed much to Mrs. Freeling.

'I wish you would let me send what I mentioned, though, Philip,' she said; 'I can really do very well without them.'

'Mother, you will vex me very much if you do,' Philip answered.

'Very well, then, dear; we will say no more about it,' replied Mrs. Freeling. The two had now turned in the direction of the town.

'You walked out, mother, are you going to walk back?' Philip said.

‘Yes, I think so, Philip ; I have not a great deal of walking during the week now.’

It was a warm afternoon, and there was little shade along the hot and dusty high road. Philip looked at his mother. He thought her looking worn and tired, and not very fitted, despite her words, for the three miles walk that lay before her. At that moment a ’bus passed them, going towards the city. Philip looked longingly at it, and wished from his heart that he had the small sum necessary to pay his mother’s fare back to town. He did not like to propose to her that she should take the ’bus herself, for he very much doubted if she could spare the money. The plainness of his mother’s dress did not escape Philip’s notice, nor the signs which it bore of having been long worn, and not unfrequently mended. Mrs. Freeling really wore a turned gown, but her son’s perception did not carry him so far. As he noted all this, Philip felt impatient for the time when he should be helping his mother in her narrow circumstances by his own labour.

‘It is very warm, mother,’ he said ; ‘I am afraid you will be very tired by the time you get home.’

‘Oh no, dear,’ answered Mrs. Freeling cheerfully ; ‘I have plenty of time, and shall take it easily. Kate will have a good cup of tea ready for me when I get back.’

‘I can walk a little way with you,’ Philip said. ‘It is nearly half an hour yet till the school tea-time. Take my arm, mother, so far.’

The mother and son walked on together talking. They had not proceeded far along the road when Philip saw two of the Craiglea boys coming from the direction of the town, on the same side of the road as themselves. The two were Fred Hewitt and Webbe. They passed close by Philip and his mother, and as they did so, the former saw Fred Hewitt look at his companion with a peculiar smile, the meaning of which he could easily guess. He felt himself turn hot and red, and he bent his head hastily to the ground lest his mother should see his face. He was certain that Hewitt's look and smile were caused by something in his mother's appearance, and that he was now probably indulging in some jest on the subject. Nothing that had been offered to himself in the shape of attempted ridicule touched him so keenly as this thought. He felt himself burn with a sudden indignation, such as nothing which his school-fellows could have done against himself could have stirred. It was only with a strong effort that he concealed his emotion from his mother.

'Now, Philip, this is far enough. You will be late in getting back to school if you delay longer. Good-bye, my boy. You will be able to come and see us on some half-holiday soon. I want to say just a word to you, Philip. I don't wish to know what little difficulties you may be having at school—that is, if you would rather not speak of them. But I wish to

remind you where you can always go with the certainty of finding help to bear them. I don't speak mere words, Philip, I am sure of the truth of what I say, because I have tested it. You are old enough to understand what I am saying, Philip; whatever perplexities or trials you may have, take them directly and simply to your God, and don't let anything seem too trivial or small to tell Him, for we cannot judge of that. Try to feel that God is near you always in your every-day life, that He is really your Father, and fear nothing but what would pain Him. Your own father tried humbly to act thus all through his life, and I could wish nothing better for you, than that you should become as good a man as he. Good-bye, my boy, I know you won't fall out with any of your school-fellows if you can help it; but if they should try to quarrel with you, don't let them provoke you to fighting. Most of your class-mates are too old for that, I should think, but when boys' spirits get up they sometimes forget themselves, even at your age. But you know you have special reasons for being careful with yourself at present; you must avoid fighting, apart from the wrongness of it. The doctor said that a very little thing might injure your shoulder again; and you must be careful of yourself for Kate's and my sake, as well as your own. There are just three of us now, Philip, and you must be our chief stay before long. There, I've given you a longer little

sermon than I intended, but I only see you now and then.'

'Very well, mother,' Philip replied, and he put as much cheeriness into his voice as he could, 'I'll try and recollect all you have said, and practise it too. As for my getting into any trouble and hurting myself, don't you be getting anxious with thoughts of that sort. The thought of Kate and yourself would alone be enough to keep me safe in that way. I don't know what put that into your head. I suppose mothers think that boys always fall to fighting whenever they have any little differences. Good-bye again. I shall have to hurry back.'

'You must be very tired, mamma,' said Kate Free-ling, as her mother seated herself rather wearily in the little sitting-room on her return. 'Let me take your bonnet and shawl. The tea is quite ready. I think you'll find it strong and good; I put in an extra spoonful.'

'Thank you, dear; I do feel a little tired, but a cup of tea will set me all right.'

'How is Philip?' Kate continued, as she poured out the tea and handed her mother the toast.

'Quite well, he says; though I thought him rather pale.'

'I daresay he is working hard, mamma; but it will only be for a short time. And what sort of a place is he finding Craiglea?'

‘He likes the masters, but I don’t think he is on very happy terms with his school-fellows.’

‘Why, what did he say about them?’

‘Very little; I could only guess, and I did not press him to speak on the matter.’

‘I think you were right there, mamma. I am sorry for Philip, though; it must be very unpleasant for a boy at school when his companions are not agreeable, for I am sure the fault cannot be on Philip’s side.’ And Kate Freeling felt herself getting a little red and hot at the thought of her brother’s suffering any injustice. She was a year and a half younger than Philip, and as long as she could remember had always had implicit faith and confidence in him. ‘Well, never mind, mamma,’ she went on. ‘Whatever it is, it won’t last long. Philip will be able to stand it while he is at Craiglea, if I know him.’

That evening a small knot of boys was collected in the upper schoolroom at Craiglea shortly after tea, to whom Fred Hewitt was recounting his meeting with Philip and his mother, doing his best to give as ludicrous an aspect to the matter as possible, for it had struck Fred in a comic light, or at least he was determined to make it appear so to his companions.

‘Dear mamma must walk all the way from town to see her boy, you know, to bid him mind his book, and bring him some checked handkerchiefs just home from the wash, hemmed by one of his sisters, perhaps.

I'll bet the parcel I saw sticking out of his pocket was something neat in that way.

Who minds and mends her brother's things,
And sews on buttons, straps, and strings,
And home my weekly washing brings?

My Sister.

There! what do you think of that, chaps? Perhaps you didn't know I was a poet before. I made it up at tea-time.'

A loud laugh followed this effort of Fred's in a new line; but it had hardly subsided when Allan Kell's voice broke in. He had joined the group in time to hear the greater part of Fred's talk.

'I say, Fred,' he said, 'I think you should keep your fun to Freeling himself, if you are set on that; and not, at any rate, bring in his friends. I don't think a fellow's mother fair game at all.'

'I'm blest, Allan, if you're not just like the moral they stick at the end of the fables in Kid's spelling-books, always coming in at the last with a bit of good advice. If you're going to be a parson, you're beginning to train for it precious young.'

But Allan's words had had an effect with the rest. A slight feeling of shame spread amongst them; Fred's fun lost its zest, and in a little while the knot of boys dispersed.



CHAPTER VII.

A HOT AFTERNOON AND A TALK ABOUT CHIVALRY.

IT was Wednesday afternoon of an unusually warm day. Masters and boys alike rejoiced that work ended for the day at noon, for all felt most heartily disinclined for any kind of mental exertion. Physical exercise was almost equally undesirable, and active sports had therefore few followers among the boys this afternoon.

‘Let’s go down to the rocks and try to find a cool place somewhere. I don’t suppose you feel up to cricket; I don’t, any way, and don’t mean to try,’ said George Barret to Frank Laidley.

‘Yes, that’ll be about the most comfortable thing to do. Just wait a moment till I get a book; I’m reading *Ivanhoe*, and I want to get it finished. I’ll find Allan, and ask him to come with us. He’s read

nearly all Sir Walter Scott's novels, and I want to have a yarn with him about them.'

George waited in the garden, and in a few moments was rejoined by Frank, accompanied by Allan. The three proceeded down the garden, out of the gate at the foot, along the beach to the right, and so reached the rocks. What a refreshing feeling it was to get under the cool overhanging cliffs, out of the fierce afternoon sun, beating straight down on the hot white beach and the dazzling water! Some might have thought it almost worth while feeling a touch of roasting for a little, to enjoy the contrast and relief afforded by the over-arching cliffs fringed with green moss, and dripping water from their ledges. The three boys did not go into this question, for the good reason that it never occurred to them. All they thought was, that they were very glad that such a cool retreat from the sun was open to them. If they had expressed their feelings, however, they would have admitted that they were 'jolly lucky' in the situation of their school. They seated themselves on a conveniently-shaped, flat rock, so that they could face the harbour and get the benefit of whatever sea-breeze was going. There wasn't very much of a steady kind, but every now and then a slight whiff came across the harbour, faintly ruffling the waters, and breathing in the boys' faces with a cool little puff.

'My word! this is jolly,' said George, stretching himself flat on his back. 'I pity the fellows that are obliged to stick in the town to-day, shut up in banks and offices. I say, Frank, if you were a good fellow you'd read us a bit of *Ivanhoe*; one can't hold a book in this position, and you're reading anyhow.'

'I'm to amuse you while you lie comfortably on your back?' said Frank good-humouredly; 'that's pretty cool.'

'Well, ar'n't we all trying to be as cool as we can to-day? But read a bit, there's a good chap.'

'Well, I don't mind if I do,' answered Frank. 'But Allan's read *Ivanhoe* before.'

'Never mind, it's worth hearing again any day,' said Allan.

Frank began and read on for more than half an hour, interrupted now and then, but not often, by a question or remark from George. Frank read well, and, knowing it, took rather a pride in his reading. He gave the vivid and picturesque narrative with appropriate animation.

'That's grand,' said George Barret when Frank came to a pause. 'I must begin to read Scott, I think.'

'You ought to,' said Frank. 'He's ever so much better than those Indian yarns some of the fellows are always reading; I'm a little sick myself of tales about American Indians, and fellows being ship-

wrecked on desert islands; one reads such a lot of them, I suppose.'

'That's all very well for fellows like you and Allan, who get through such a heap of books, but I don't read so much, so I haven't got tired of those kind of tales so soon. Besides, some of them are written first-rate. Cooper, now, he's thought a great don; and he *can* write and no mistake, nearly as good as what you've been reading.'

'Not quite, I think,' said Frank, 'though some of Cooper's stories are capital, I must say. But there's so many books for boys all about the same thing, that no wonder one tires of them at last.'

'It's just that you've got beyond them, Frank,' said George; 'and I daresay I will too, soon. You didn't talk this way once; you were just as eager after them as other fellows, but you've got through them sooner.'

'That's it, I daresay; but you try Scott, and you'll see how you'll like him. My father advised me to read him last holidays; he said it was time I gave up tales about fights with Redskins and pirates, and impossible adventures.'

'For that matter, is there never anything impossible in Sir Walter Scott's books? I'll be bound there is.'

'Well, I suppose there is now and then, but nothing outrageous; besides, you learn a good deal

from Scott's books about the customs and the people of the different times described.'

'Oh, if you go in for tales that teach you things,' answered George, 'that's another matter. They're something like those kind of games that try to cram you with geography, or natural history, or something,—botanical quartettes and that sort of thing. Instruction and amusement combined, as they call it in the advertisements; I don't believe in 'em, myself, much. It's an underhand way of doing things, I consider.'

'What are you talking about, George?' said Allan. 'You're not going to compare Sir Walter Scott's stories to that? The history in his books is put in a very jolly and interesting kind of way, though it's pretty true, too, generally.'

Allan Kell was a boy who read much and of all kinds,—everything, that is, that a boy of his age generally reads, and a great deal that they are not often found caring for; stories, biographies, history, natural history, all came about alike to him. And he remembered much of what he read, too, though his facts were not all arranged in the most exact order in his head as yet.

'What fine fellows some of Scott's heroes are, too,' said Frank; 'brave, chivalrous fellows, and all thorough gentlemen! I think men used to be more heroic in these old times, did grander sort of things. There's the Crusades. What splendid fellows some of

these old knights were ! And Arthur and his Round Table, too ; I think there's no one like Arthur.'

'You get all that from Tennyson. For my part, I can't make out a deal of what he writes,' said George.

'I don't say that I understand all his poetry,' answered Frank, 'but some of it's plain enough. You can understand the *Morte d'Arthur*, can't you ?'

'Well, yes, because it's been so drilled into some of us by Jeff. till we know it by heart. It's a pet bit of his, and he certainly can give it himself in fine style. But I can't stand much blank verse ; when I do read poetry, I like something with a rhyme in it. I don't think much of the fellow who invented blank verse, whoever he was. Seems to me it's neither one thing nor another. But you don't just believe all that about King Arthur, do you ? I'll bet *you* don't, Allan.'

'No, not by a good deal,' answered Allan in a matter-of-fact tone. 'It's all right enough for Tennyson to crack up Arthur and his knights, and make them all talk and think in such grand style ; but that's poetry, it ain't history ; they couldn't have talked in that way any more than Cooper's Indians could have talked as he makes them. Why, these ancient Britons of Arthur's time must have been half savages. It wasn't so long before that they were going about in an armour of wolf skins and blue paint.'

'You're such a matter-of-fact fellow, Allan,' said Frank in rather a disgusted tone.

Frank was of a strongly imaginative nature. Ever since he could read, he had had the run of his father's library, and at an early age had fallen upon and perused with eagerness, sometimes only half understanding what he read, many books of old ballads and romance. Fresh from the perusal of these, it was his delight to imagine himself the heroes described, doing the same deeds and uttering the same speeches. He dressed himself up as nearly as he could according to the pictures of Robin Hood—that was his favourite hero—with cap and feather, belt, bow and quiver, and scampered about the garden, making believe that he was in Sherwood Forest hunting the fallow deer, or rescuing distressed ladies from the power of cruel barons. When he could not get any of his companions to join him in these diversions, he was content to pursue them alone, and would do so with perfect enjoyment through a whole summer morning. Frank did not relish having those times recalled to him now, for he looked back on them as childish, and as something to be as quickly as possible forgotten at his present age. Yet he was still somewhat of a dreamer occasionally, read a good deal of poetry, and looked back on past ages as on a nobler and grander time than the present. He was easily kindled to enthusiasm by stirring and heroic verse, and the narrative of chivalrous deeds; and though he seldom displayed this except to his most

intimate companions, in private he was sometimes accustomed to let his imagination dwell on these past times, to view them in a light of romantic and exaggerated glory, and to think that if he had lived then, he might have done like deeds of chivalrous self-devotion and noble enterprise with those of his favourite heroes.

‘Read on a bit, Frank, if you’ve got your wind again,’ said George.

‘I’ll give you another chapter, and that must do you for one afternoon,’ and Frank continued his reading.

‘We must have the rest of that some day soon,’ said George, when the chapter was ended.

‘Supposing you finish the book for yourself,’ said Frank.

‘Well, perhaps I shall; but it’s much better fun hearing another fellow read, I always think, and you’re a crack reader, you know.’

‘That’s all very well for soft-sawder, Master George, and a nice excuse for your laziness. How the afternoon’s gone, though! It’s time we were moving,’ said Frank, looking at his watch.

The three boys rose from their seats and began moving leisurely towards the house. To Frank’s reading and the conversation thereon, there had been a hidden and unintentional listener. The rock on which the boys sat was backed, as it were, by another much larger one behind, on which a person might sit

or lie, completely concealed from those in front, as was the case this afternoon, for on the other side of the boulder Mr. Tennant had sat during the whole of the boys' talk. Seeking, like them, shade and coolness, he had, directly after dinner, brought his book down to the shore, and had not been long seated when the three boys arrived on the spot. As they rose to go back to the house, Mr. Tennant rose too, walked forward and joined them, to their no small surprise.

'Well, boys,' he began, with a smile, 'I've been playing the eaves-dropper, you'll think, but it was quite unintentional on my part. I could hardly have helped it if I had wanted to, and when I heard what you were reading and talking about, I thought there was no harm even if I did listen. If you had been discussing any private matter, I should have found some means of letting you know of my whereabouts; I think you will believe me when I say that; and I got interested in your reading and talk. It's some time since I read *Ivanhoe*, and I enjoyed it again thoroughly.'

'It's all right, sir,' said George frankly; 'we know you wouldn't have gone on listening if we had been talking about anything we didn't care for a third person hearing.'

'You think chivalry has all died out of the world, I fancy from one or two things you said, Frank?' Mr. Tennant continued.

‘ Well, you don’t hear much about such things now, at any rate, sir,’ answered Frank, rather slowly.

‘ Perhaps not, at least in the same kind of way. There are different sorts of chivalry, and different people have very various ideas of the meaning of the word. In these old times of which you are thinking, chivalry was never thought of except in connection with war and the tournament. There were many really noble fellows among these old knights and crusaders, but a deal of what was called chivalry, if it was done now-a-days, would get some very different name. One of the most truly chivalrous characters in English history was Sir Philip Sidney. You know something about him—at least you know the story told of his death; how, when he lay mortally wounded at the battle of Zutphen, he told his attendants to pass the cup of water from which he was about to drink to a dying soldier who looked at it with parched lips and longing eyes. That was no doubt chivalry of the best kind. A story is related of Dr. Johnson which you have most likely not heard. It is of quite a different character from that told of Sir Philip Sidney, but it shows chivalry of even a higher sort, in my opinion. Dr. Johnson was a rough-spoken, sometimes bearish old fellow, but he had a large, tender, and noble heart, and his deeds were almost always better than his words. One cold, wet, winter night, while returning to his lodgings, he found a poor,

wretched, half-clad, half-dying young woman lying on a door-step, or on the side-walk, I forget which. When he discovered her miserable condition, the doctor stooped down, lifted the woman gently upon his broad back, and carried her to his home. There he tended her for days, gradually brought her back to health and strength, till at last she became, through his means, a respectable and happy woman. There was little glory or fame to be gained by such an act, there was nothing dashing or brilliant about it, but that only makes it the greater.

‘But I think that perhaps the finest instance of chivalry is found in the story of Jonathan and David. I don’t know where to look in history for such unselfish affection and chivalrous devotion as that which Jonathan bore for his friend,—the youth who, he knew, was to succeed to the power, and wealth, and honours which, in the usual course of things, would have fallen to him. He was at once brave and gentle, generous and single-hearted, possessing every quality that goes to make up a perfectly chivalrous nature.

‘The other afternoon when I was in town, it came on to rain hard. I was walking along George Street, and had reached the King Street corner, where, you know, there is always such a crush and crowding of carriages, ’buses, and foot-passengers, and it is always worst in wet weather. While I was standing under a shop-awning waiting for a ’bus, I saw an old woman, poorly

but neatly dressed, standing on the pavement, on the opposite side of the street, watching anxiously for a chance of crossing the street in safety. She looked scared and perplexed, made one or two hesitating starts to get across, but always returned again to her place. No one seemed to notice her; all were hurrying to get into 'buses or to get out of the rain as quickly as possible. At last a young man who came out of a bank saw the old woman, went up to her, and taking her by the arm, piloted her across the street, and placed her safely in a Redfern 'bus, which I suppose she had told him she wanted. Now, I don't know what you think, but I call that an act of real chivalry, of a very humble and commonplace sort, you may consider, but the real thing, nevertheless. Do you see, then, how there are very different kinds of chivalry; and that though the times of adventurous journeys to fight with Saracens in the Holy Land, such as the Crusaders made, and of rescuing distressed ladies and doing brilliant feats in the tournament, like Arthur and his knights, are gone for ever, it is still possible to practise true chivalry even in the nineteenth century? There is a chivalry apart altogether from war and battle. Many a soldier, who might have done his part bravely enough on a battlefield, would never have thought, or if he had thought of it, would perhaps have felt ashamed, to help a poor old woman across a street. Some, who are prepared

to do dazzling things when they are done before the world and followed by applause and fame, would smile at such an act as this, but theirs is not the highest idea of chivalry. The most chivalrous deeds often make the least noise. We should never have had that story of Dr. Johnson if it had depended on his own telling. Self-denial, a quick sympathy, and consideration for others, whatever their rank or position, these are a few of the things which, besides physical courage, go to make up chivalry as the word is best understood now. If any new companion should come among you, and you found out that he was less well-off and had less pocket-money at his command than the rest of you, and had perhaps few popular gifts, though there might be nothing else that you could find fault with about him, it would be practising not a bad kind of chivalry if any of you treated your companion, not with indifference, or perhaps coldness, but with frank heartiness that would put him at once at his ease.'

Mr. Tennant had now come to the point towards which he had gradually been working up through all his talk. Of course he had Philip Freeling in his mind, and his last sentences were intended as a home-thrust. As he ceased speaking, he watched closely, but without letting his companions see it, the faces of the three boys. Each of them looked thoughtful, but he could not be sure whether his last words had

had the exact effect he intended. The party were now entering the school grounds.

‘You will think I have given you a long preaching, boys, and on a holiday, too,’ said Mr. Tennant. ‘I can’t remember myself when I have talked so long to any of you, but your talk this afternoon interested me, and I hope I haven’t bored you.’

‘Oh no, sir,’ answered Frank; ‘no fear of that.’

‘My word,’ said George, when the three boys were again alone, ‘it’s not often Tennant talks on at that rate; but what did he mean by what he said last?’

‘Don’t know, I’m sure; nothing more than what he meant by the rest of what he said, I suppose,’ answered Allan. ‘It was all meant to be a mild sort of sermon, I guess; but it wasn’t so bad.’

It was evident that Mr. Tennant’s closing words had had no point as far as Allan was concerned. That they were intended in any way as a hint or suggestion to him was not in his thoughts, and indeed, they applied less to him than to any other of Philip’s class-mates. He had taken no active part for or against Philip; what he had said or done had been, as we have seen, in his favour, but that had been only in a chance way, and he was really little interested in the position of affairs between Philip and his class-mates one way or other. But Mr. Tennant’s words had touched Frank Laidley more closely.



CHAPTER VIII.

THE WHITE FEATHER BEYOND A DOUBT.

‘**L**SAY, Frank!’ It was George Barret who spoke, as he came up to Frank Laidley, sitting at work at his Homer.

‘Well, what do you say?’ said Frank.

‘Look up, old chap, I want to speak to you a moment.’

‘Well, ain’t I looking up as hard as I can?’ answered Frank, as he turned over the leaves of his lexicon. ‘I’ve been doing nothing else for the last half-hour, and not finding it very amusing, either.’

‘Seems to put you in a punning humour, anyhow; that wasn’t such a bad one, specially to come out of so dry a thing as a lexicon. But that’s just what I’ve come to speak to you about. The fellows are all saying that not one of them can make head or tail of the lines for to-morrow, and they want to know if you’ll

agree not to learn them, and to tell Mr. Jeffray that none of us could manage them. Of course it won't do for one or two to learn them and the rest not; but if none of us know them, Jeff. will see that we must have found them unusually stiff, and can't say anything more about the matter, especially as most of us can say that we have tried to do them.'

'What does Allan say?'

'He's quite willing; he can't manage them any more than the rest.'

'All right, then, I'm agreeable,' answered Frank. 'They are uncommonly contrairy lines, as an Irishman would say, though I won't say that I couldn't have made them out if I'd stuck a bit longer at them.'

'I'll bet you could, old chap,' replied George, with perfect good faith in what he said. 'But it wouldn't do, you know, for you to polish them off when you were put on, and the rest of us to know nothing about them. Jeff. will do them himself for us when he finds they're so stiff.'

This little scheme of the fourth form to escape learning a rather more difficult lesson than usual is one which, if employed only now and then, is generally successful. But one person had been left out of the boys' calculations in this instance. No mention was made to Philip Freeling of what had been agreed on among the rest. There was so little intercourse between Philip and his class-mates, that

most of them never remembered him at all in the matter, while of the rest, each thought that his neighbour would tell him of it. If he had been consulted at all, I believe he would have fallen in without objection with the wishes of the majority. As it was, he simply worked out his lines to the best result he could, as usual giving additional time to them in proportion to their difficulty.

Next day he was the only boy in the class who knew anything about the lesson, and took his place with ease at the head. Mr. Jeffray did not take the class's ignorance of the morning's work so easily as he had done on one or two previous occasions of a similar kind, and received the boys' explanations and excuses with more coldness than they had looked for. The fact that one of their number did know his work pretty well had no doubt something to do with this. It showed that some of the others, at least, might have been better prepared had they chosen, and threw a doubt on the genuineness of the explanations offered.

Mr. Jeffray was not very much vexed at the class not knowing anything of their Homer for one day, but he was a little by the thought which the circumstance suggested, that the boys were not playing quite fair with him ; and being only able to guess at the facts of the matter, he very likely suspected more than was actually the case. He did not question the boys much ;

that was not his way of dealing with cases like this, with his older pupils, for he did not want them to see too plainly his suspicions. Nevertheless the boys saw that they had made a mistake. When Philip had construed a portion of the morning's lines, and Mr. Jeffray had given him a few words of commendation, he proceeded to go over the lines himself without making any further remark, other than such as the explanation of the lesson called for. When the hour came to an end he dismissed the class with hardly another word, except to hope that the lesson would come up to him in a different shape next day.

Though Mr. Jeffray had uttered few words of actual censure, the affair had, you will perceive, turned out somewhat contrary to expectation. The boys were a good deal put out at the unexpected result of their plans, and the blame of the matter fell upon the single innocent one of their number. Of course, if Philip had shown as little knowledge of his Homer as the rest, everything would have gone right, and as had been intended. One knowing the lesson had been enough to upset the whole arrangement. That was clear, and in their warmth most of the boys quite forgot that, even if Philip was partly the cause of their plans not having the result anticipated, he was an entirely innocent one. As he had not been included in the confidence of the rest, it was impossible that he could have done otherwise than he did. To have feigned ignorance of the

lesson, when he saw that the others must have agreed among themselves not to learn it, was an amount of pretence which neither Philip, nor, be it said, the majority of his class-mates was capable of.

But Philip had really felt no satisfaction, far less triumph, in the prominent position he had taken in the class this morning. He would have been very glad if Mr. Jeffray had allowed him to keep his place ; and if it had been possible that he could have entirely forgotten the morning's work, so that he might appear in the same case as the rest, he would willingly have done so. He at once saw that there had been some arrangement among his class-mates into which he had not been admitted, and he saw, too, that the morning's proceedings would, to a certainty, widen the breach between himself and them. In this he was likely to be entirely right. The boys fastened on the main fact, of which they felt quite persuaded, that if Philip had not been there, or if he had acted somehow differently from the way he did, everything would have gone straight and smooth. They would have had some difficulty in explaining in what other way they thought Philip might have acted, but they didn't stop to inquire into that. Perhaps one or two of them did see that Philip was really nothing to blame in the matter, but most of them persuaded themselves that they had just cause for resentment.

Frank Laidley and George Barret had the additional

chagrin that they had lost places to Philip. To Frank, as captain, this was of course of special importance, and his anger, moreover, was in some measure stirred against George, who, he thought, when he had asked him not to prepare his Homer, should have seen that none of the rest learned it. This Frank did not hesitate to tell George, saying that it was not fair that he should have lost his place when he might have avoided it. He had not bargained for that at all. Frank's annoyance increased George's, who was vexed that he had incurred his friend's blame. He was annoyed that he had lost his own place in class, but he was doubly annoyed that Frank had lost his. And thus it was that George, most of all, felt resentful against Philip. He could not deceive himself into believing that he had any just ground for such a feeling, but he did not try to rid himself of it, nevertheless.

There was a decided feeling of estrangement between Frank and George during the rest of that day, and they kept carefully apart from each other.

Afternoon work was over, and George was seated at a desk in the upper schoolroom engaged in finishing a map. He was the first map-drawer in the school, and a map turned out in his best style was a thing that gratified the eye by its neatness and taste. George's water-colours lay beside him, and he was working in a range of mountains with Indian ink. The desk at which he was seated stood

close to an open book-case, in which the fourth-form boys kept some of their books during school hours. It stood against the wall, and any one using the desk at which George was seated almost touched with his back the books in it. As George sat engrossed in his work, Philip Freeling entered the schoolroom. He wanted his Latin dictionary from the book-case, and approached to get it. George sat almost immediately in the way, and it was not very easy for Philip to reach the book unless he moved a little to one side. But George took no notice of Philip's presence; he neither raised his eyes from his work nor stirred from his seat.

'Will you move for a moment, please?' Philip said.

George made no answer, but kept his eyes steadily on his map. Philip saw that it would be useless his speaking further. But it was necessary that he should have his dictionary, and he therefore stretched forward behind George to reach it from the shelf on which it stood. In doing so, he slightly lost his balance; his arm struck against that of George, which, being jerked suddenly forward, pushed over the ink-bottle and poured its contents upon the map. In a moment the careful work of many hours was disfigured and defaced beyond remedy. George sprang to his feet with kindling eyes and a face of scarlet.

'You clumsy beggar! do you see what you've done?'

'I beg your pardon, Barret; I am very sorry, but I couldn't help it; my foot slipped,' Philip said.

‘Sorry!’ cried George passionately; ‘will that mend my map? But you shall pay for this in some way.’

The loud tones in which George spoke, and the words he uttered, attracted the attention of several boys at the other end of the room, who were engaged in re-stringing an old bat. From his last words the boys scented a row,—a schoolboy’s scent for such is generally a keen one,—and they came quickly forward, one still holding the bat in his hand.

‘What’s up?’ said one.

‘Why, this fellow’s done for my map by his clumsiness, that’s all,’ answered George; ‘but he shall answer for it in one way or other. Look here!’ continued George fiercely, and as he spoke he went close up to Philip, ‘will you fight?’

At the mention of the word fight, one of the boys slipped instantly out of the room to spread the intelligence that there was a prospect of a row, and in an incredibly short space of time half-a-dozen boys came hurrying into the schoolroom. Among them were Frank, Allan, and Fred. George stood facing Philip, his eyes flashing, his face still heated.

‘Will you fight?’ he repeated, speaking the words almost in Philip’s teeth.

Philip was very pale, and his answer came in a low tone, ‘No, I cannot.’

‘Can’t!’ repeated George disdainfully; ‘do you mean that you don’t know how, or that you’re afraid?’

'I am not afraid,' answered Philip quietly, but with a voice that shook a little; 'but I will not fight.'

'Then you are afraid. Speak the truth, at any rate,' replied George hotly.

'Perhaps he has *private objections* to fighting,' said Fred, with a drawling emphasis on the words. "'Always respect private opinions,"—quotation from copy-book.'

'Shut up, Fred, will you?' said George, who was too angry and too intent on the matter in hand to be in a mood for Fred's witticisms. 'Why won't you stand up like a man and have it out?' he went on again, turning to Philip.

'Try a round or two with him, Freeling, and have done with it,' said Allan; 'we can manage it quietly down by the rocks, and no one need know anything about it. If you're quick, we can get it over before the whole school gets wind of it, or else we'll have a crowd of kids about us. A round or two can't hurt you, and it will satisfy George. Come on, I'll be your second.'

Allan wanted to see the matter over, and he saw that nothing would satisfy George, or let out his ill blood, but a little rough exercise. He had no great interest in Philip, but he wished to see fair play, and he was quite ready to stand his friend for the time.

'I have made all the amends I can, Kell,' Philip answered; 'it was quite an accident, and I have told Barret I am very sorry for it. I can do no more; and I have said I will not fight.'

'Oh, very well,' replied Allan coldly. He had gone out of his way somewhat, for one of his rather reticent nature, in proffering Philip his advice and encouragement, and he was a little offended at its rejection.

'It's no use, George,' said Frank Laidley; 'you'll not get him up to the mark. You can't put pluck into a fellow, I expect.'

'I'll try once more, anyhow,' replied George; and again going close up to Philip, he struck him on the cheek with his open hand. I have seen boys in similar circumstances who would have taken the advantage of their opponents not being on their guard to hit hard and fierce, as if they wanted, in the event of a pitched fight ensuing, to lead off with at least one telling blow to their side. But George Barret was quite above such meanness, even when hot with anger. He merely wished to give Philip the fullest provocation to fight of which he knew.

His blow did not hurt Philip, but it was smart enough to bring the blood flushing red to his face. The next moment he turned paler than ever. We know the one chief reason why Philip would not fight. He did think that a fight was an unneces-

sary way for boys of his age to settle their disputes, but this alone would not have prevented him on the present occasion from accepting George's challenge, after the provocation he had just received. Only the remembrance of what a struggle might involve, not only for himself but for those dearest to him, held him back. A very little thing, he well knew,—for it had been impressed on him too often and too recently by his mother for him easily to forget it,—might again displace his shoulder-blade, and again confine him to weeks of inaction, to be followed by, perhaps, more serious results. But with his mother's anxious words of caution, which we heard her utter during their last interview, still fresh in his memory, acting upon him as the strongest possible check, it was with difficulty that he restrained himself under George's final insult.

The painfulness of his position was increased by the true reason of his being unable to fight with George being one on which he could not enter into explanations there and then, before so many, even if he had wished, and he did not wish. He had to leave his conduct before his school-fellows entirely unexplained. He stood facing them with an agitated face and compressed lips; turning now red and now white, doing his utmost to control himself, and to show his emotion as little as possible, and in the effort clenching his hands and biting his lips almost

until the blood came. But his frame shook slightly, and his voice quivered as he said,

‘I don’t think this is very brave, Barret. If you’—

He got no further. There was a sudden, half-smothered exclamation among the boys, a quick turning of heads, and immediately after a hurried slinking away of several. Mr. Tennant stood in their midst. In passing down the hall on his way to the garden, he had heard the voices of the boys in the schoolroom raised to a higher pitch in the excitement of the moment than they themselves were aware of, and judging that something of an unusual kind was going on, had stepped into the room to see what it was. In a glance he took in the scene, and the conclusion he arrived at as to its meaning was a pretty correct one. But he made very few remarks to any one. All he said was, in a quiet voice of authority, ‘I think there are too many of you together here; some of you had better go to your rooms.’

Silently and rapidly the group dispersed, and Mr. Tennant turned again to the door. But in passing George and Frank he said in a low, significant, and somewhat cold voice, ‘Is this a case of schoolboy chivalry?’

The two boys turned red, looked a moment at each other, and then suddenly upon the ground.



CHAPTER IX.

FAIRLY IN COVENTRY.

THE breach between Philip and his school-mates had now widened, to all appearance, beyond remedy. He had been openly proved in their opinion a thorough coward,—one who was content to stand anything rather than run the risk of a little rough handling, a smart knock or two, or at most a black eye. Could anything have lowered him more in the eyes of a boy of the least courage, than the utterly tame and more than girlish spirit he had shown under the provocations which George Barret had given him? It was almost past belief. He was fully George's match in size and apparent strength; no extraordinary display of bravery was called for, but Philip fell short of the average amount by many degrees.

Philip's life was now an almost entirely friendless,

lonely, and cheerless one. He found some solace, certainly, in his work, and in the occasional companionship of Mr. Tennant. Save for this, there was no brightness in his days, no cheerful and happy variety such as every boy should get out of his school life.

In this dreary and trying time, Philip did not entirely forget his mother's counsel and his whole early training. In few, though not vague words, humbly and from his heart, he asked his God and Father to enable him to bear with patience and courage his present trials; for, adult readers, they were trials to a boy. I will not say that Philip was thus enabled to regard the difficult circumstances of his life at Craiglea with cheerfulness—that was hardly to be expected; but I think that he did get new patience and courage from the simple expression and confiding of his case to Him who desires to be a faithful friend as well as a compassionate Father to every child who will trust Him.

Still it was very natural that Philip should feel that he would be heartily glad when his term at Craiglea came to an end, though he could see it out, he thought, without complaint and without showing any sign, either to his masters or to those at home, of how little of anything like pleasure his school life was yielding him.

And so the half-year was drawing to a close, slowly enough for Philip, he sometimes thought. His work

fully occupied his thoughts and prevented him from feeling dull during school hours, but his play-time was often long and cheerless, for he did not always feel inclined for reading after being over his books all day. He knew, also, that he must not give too much time, after school hours, to sedentary occupations. This had been impressed on him by his mother, but it was hardly necessary; for Philip kept always steadily in sight the fact that on him depended, in a great measure, the future support of the little household, and that therefore he must do nothing that would tend to injure his health at the outset of his business life. Philip's position as the son of a widowed and poor lady, and the experiences of the year that had elapsed since his father's death, had combined, with a somewhat grave disposition for a boy, to make him thoughtful beyond his years. Long walks were his means of exercise,—a solitary kind for a boy, but Philip got used to them, and now and then, when he was asked to accompany Mr. Tennant, they were far from dull.

The mid-winter term, in Australian schools, ends somewhere in the beginning of June, exactly reversing things as they are in England; but an English schoolboy, probably, would not consider that any season in Australia could be called winter. It was now the beginning of May, and the boys at Craiglea were already looking forward to the vacation.

George Barret and Allan Kell were standing talking together one evening in the verandah just after tea, in the dusk of the gathering night, when they were joined by Frank, who came out from the house.

‘What are you fellows doing here in the dark?’ he said. ‘I’ve got something to say that concerns both of you, and you only, besides myself, at least.’

‘That sounds mysterious and interesting,’ said Allan.

‘You know that to-morrow fortnight is Queen’s Birthday. As it falls on a Friday, a lot of the fellows who live near, nearly all the fourth, are going home on the Thursday afternoon to stay till Monday morning. George and I are not going home, and you live too far away, Allan. Well, Mr. Jeffray has just asked me if we couldn’t make up a little party and go for a day’s fishing and picnic on Saturday. He wanted to know who would be able to go, and I at once named you two. And so it’s all arranged. We’re to have Tom Reynolds’ boat, and start before breakfast.’

‘My word! that’s prime; Jeff’s an out-and-out brick, I’ll always stick to that,’ exclaimed George with emphatic warmth. ‘But we’ll want another to make up a crew. Mr. Jeffray can do most of the steering, if he likes, but it won’t be very comfortable unless we have four rowing. Tom’s boat is meant for four oars, you know.’

‘Yes, we should have another fellow,’ said Frank. ‘Whom can we get?’

‘Is Fred going home?’

‘Yes, and I’m not sorry on this occasion; we should have had to ask him, I expect, and Fred’s rather a nuisance in a boat. He shirks rowing, and larks about when there’s any work to be done. But I’m puzzled to know how we can make up a fourth, unless we ask a third-form fellow; all the fourth seem to be going home.’

‘Freeling can’t be,’ said Allan.

‘I never thought of him, of course; he’s out of the question.’

‘You’ll see Jeff. will ask him to go, however, or I’m mistaken,’ continued Allan.

‘Do you think so?’ replied Frank.

‘Of course, if he’s the only fellow of the fourth left besides us, it’ll be the natural thing for Jeff. to ask him.’

‘I never reckoned on this. It’ll be very awkward having a fellow with us that you are not speaking to. Bother it, it’ll spoil fun, I’m afraid.’

‘It needn’t at all,’ put in George; ‘we’re not going to let a chap like that spoil our sport. If we manage it properly, we can have very little to do with Freeling without Mr. Jeffray exactly seeing that we don’t speak to him. Of course there’s no need for that. I hope Mrs. Buckley gets something tidy together for us in the way of prog, though.’

‘That’ll be all right,’ replied Frank; ‘Mr. Jeffray asked me to arrange with Mrs. Buckley about what

we shall take with us, and she and I are pretty good friends.'

'Good again,' said George. 'I think we can leave that business in your hands, then, Frank, but perhaps I'll give you a wrinkle or two between this and next Friday. Fred would have been the fellow for this part of the business, though. He understands how to pack a picnic basket, at any rate.'

'Yes, and how to help to empty one too; he's always to the fore there, I'll say that for him. But we must try to do the best we can without him in this line; I daresay we'll manage it between us somehow.'

'Do you mean the filling or the emptying of the basket?' said Allan laughing.

'Why, both, if you like,' answered Frank. 'But I did mean the first.'

Allan was right. Mr. Jeffray asked Philip to make the fourth of the party, and Philip could do nothing else but accept the invitation. He would have willingly escaped it, for the excursion could have little prospect of pleasure for him. But to decline Mr. Jeffray's invitation was impossible, for Philip had no excuse whatever to offer for so doing.



CHAPTER X.

A FEATHER OF A DIFFERENT COLOUR.

THE morning of the boating excursion broke bright and beautiful. Though the season was fairly winter, the English reader must recollect that it was Australian winter, and that there are many days in an Australian winter on which the weather is perfectly suitable for such open-air pleasures as a picnic. On this May morning, at seven o'clock, there was a bright blue and nearly cloudless sky, no wind, and a delicious fresh crispness in the air approaching to frostiness, but which in an hour or two, as the sun strengthened, would be nothing more than a balmy coolness. Tom Reynolds had his boat all ready and in waiting for the party, a good supply of fresh, clean bait in the stern, together with a small stock of fishing-tackle, though the boys had each their own lines.

The harbour lay extended like a burnished crystal mirror, quiet, still, and bright. The eye could hardly detect a ripple on its placid bosom, shining a pale silvery blue beneath the sun, reflecting the rocks that bordered the water's edge with such vivid distinctness that rock and water seemed to merge into each other, and it was difficult to tell where one ended and the other began.

The sun, at this hour, stood just a little way above the distant hills near the harbour mouth, and a soft golden light lay along their summits. The boys had all put on the oldest things in their possession, such as could take no hurt from salt water, rock climbing, and general rough usage; and Mr. Jeffray himself was attired in a fashion very different from that of most sober and learned dominies when engaged in their ordinary occupations. He had on an old broad-brimmed, low-crowned, and much battered felt hat, a loose Tweed coat that had seen much service, and a pair of most unfashionably cut trousers, that had long since lost all trace of whatever distinctive colour the cloth had received at the dyers' hands, and had faded away into a nondescript neutral tint, to which it would have baffled you to affix a name.

There was nothing which Mr. Jeffray liked better than an occasional outing with two or three of his boys of the kind planned for to-day. He was fond of fishing, and he relished a day's sport in pro-

portion as he could enjoy it the more freely and unconventionally, throwing aside for the time the decorous attire of daily life, and getting into the oldest, least professional-looking clothes he was possessed of.

The baskets were stored snugly in the locker of the boat, the boys took their seats at the oars, Mr. Jeffray at the tiller, and the boat pushed off from the landing-place. Mr. Jeffray turned the boat's head towards the opposite shore of the harbour, and after about an hour's rowing the party reached the little bay where they proposed trying their luck.

But the first thing to be done was to get breakfast. The boat was drawn up on the beach, dry wood collected, and a fire kindled. Over this the 'billy,' or tin pot for boiling water, was suspended, and the boys presently had ready a fine kettle of tea. Tea, cold corned meat, and bread and butter made up the breakfast, to which all applied themselves with the singleness and unanimity of purpose which characterises hungry people, whether boys or men, when occupied in satisfying their appetite.

Breakfast despatched, the boat was again launched, and the business of the day, or what was hoped would be such, was set about. The hopes of the party were not to be disappointed. The spot selected for the day's operations was a well-known one, but well-known fishing-grounds are often fickle and uncertain

To-day, however, the bay our fishermen had fixed upon was as good as its reputation, and the sport began quickly, and continued brisk throughout the morning. At mid-day they desisted from their fishing, landed again, and made preparations for dinner. More tea was made, a portion of the morning's take cleaned and properly prepared, and a fine dish of fish was soon ready for the consideration of the party.

This part of the culinary operations Mr. Jeffray took under his own immediate supervision. The boys prepared the fish, but he himself presided at the frying-pan; and very dexterously he handled it, I assure you. The boys stood by and watched, and though each could have done it in a fashion, all acknowledged to themselves that they would require considerable practice yet before they reached Mr. Jeffray's degree of proficiency. The latter did not consider it beneath the dignity of a Cambridge Master of Arts to know how to cook his own dinner, and he was glad to be able to show his boys the way to do it properly. It was since he had left Cambridge, however, that he had acquired this part of his education.

Mr. Jeffray entered with zest into all the day's occupations and pleasures. He had the knack, without becoming undignified or over-familiar, of bringing himself for the time into complete sympathy of thought and feeling with the boys, laughed at and encouraged their little jokes, and made his own in

turn in a quietly comic way, which the boys understood and relished highly.

A cold plum-pudding, which proved to be a prime sample of Mrs. Buckley's skill in this direction, formed the second course of the dinner, which concluded with a plentiful dessert of fruit, tea washing down the whole.

The master had quite failed to notice anything particular in the bearing of Frank, Allan, and George towards Philip during the morning. Of course, he was not looking out for anything of the kind, and it was not sufficiently marked to attract his attention. In the general talk, he did not observe that none of the three addressed himself directly to Philip. As for Philip, he had enjoyed the morning better than he had expected. He had had as good sport as the rest, and had become interested and absorbed in it, while the attention and notice which Mr. Jeffray paid him was exactly that which he gave to the others.

After dinner the fishing was resumed. It continued good for a little, but not for long; the biting grew gradually slacker, and then ceased altogether. The fishers lifted their kellick and rowed to the other side of the bay, but without the desired result. But Mr. Jeffray and the boys were, on the whole, well satisfied with their day's take, though it was nothing out of the way. They had six dozen and odd red bream, a few whiting, and one or two rock-cod, over and above

what they had cooked for dinner. They now landed from the boat to spend the rest of the afternoon on shore, until it should be time for returning home.

‘I’ll leave you boys to yourselves for a while,’ Mr. Jeffray said; ‘I’m just going to stroll round the corner of the bay yonder, and see if I can’t pick up a specimen or two for my drawers. It will be low water very soon, and I’m in hopes of finding a sample of a shell that is only to be got when the tide is out. A friend told me that he has seen the shell in this neighbourhood; but it is a rare one in the harbour. By the time I get back, it will be about tea-hour, so that you can have the kettle boiling; we mustn’t be much after five in starting.’

The three boys, Frank, George, and Allan, amused themselves in wandering about the beach and rocks until it was time to prepare for tea; and Philip sat down on the grass, and engaged himself in watching the sea-gulls wheeling down the wind, skimming along the surface of the water, or poising with level wings on the white crests of the waves.

It was towards five o’clock, when Frank, George, and Allan began to build their fire and make the tea. They did not ask Philip’s assistance. When everything was in readiness, they sat down round the fire to wait for Mr. Jeffray—Frank and Allan on a low rock, George on an old log that lay close by. It was growing rather chill, and Philip, drawing near

the fire too, seated himself a little apart from the rest. The three chatted and laughed together, and Philip sat in silence.

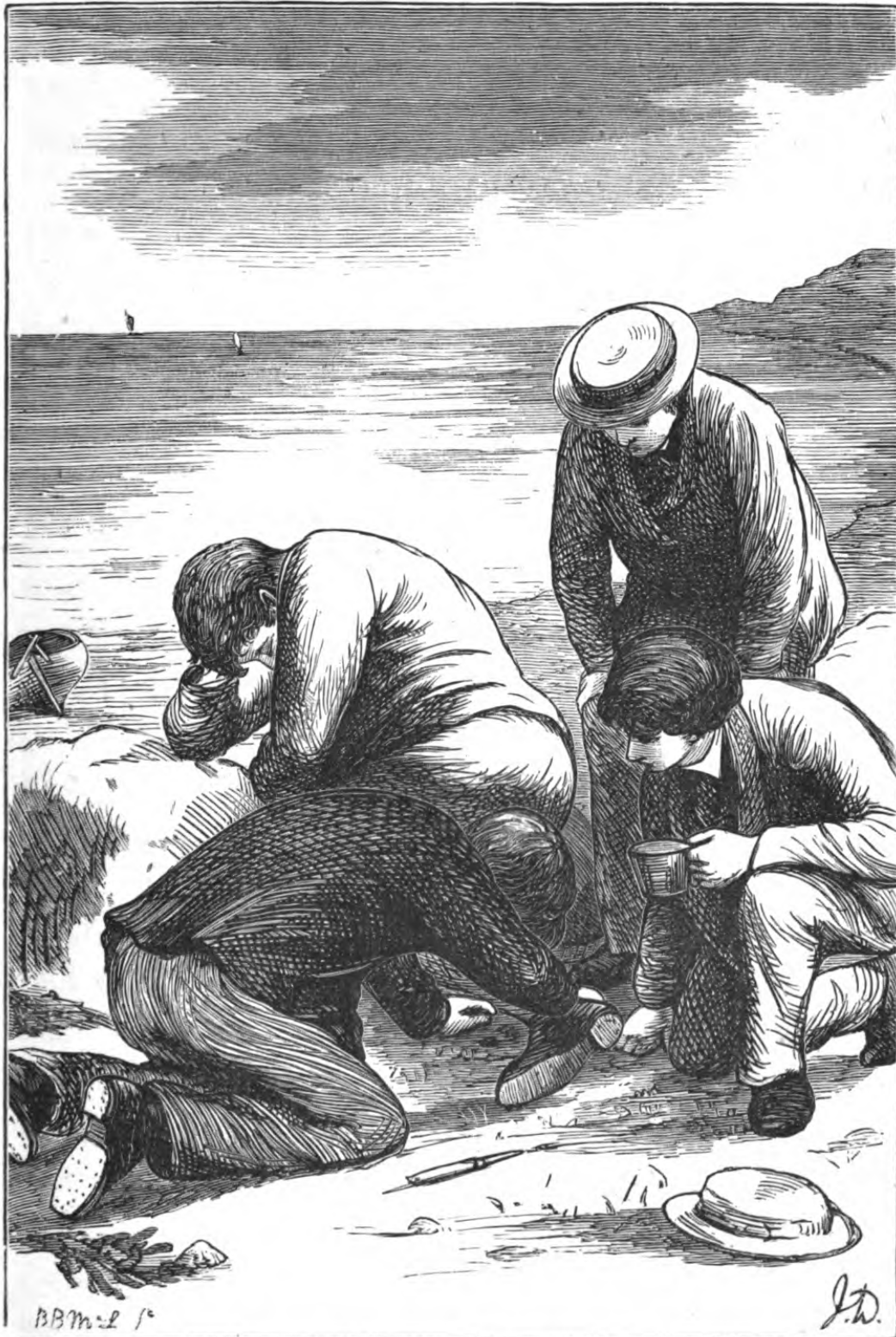
‘It’s time Mr. Jeffray was back,’ said George; ‘it’ll be rather a joke his talking about our not being too late in getting home, if he’s the one that delays us.’

George had scarcely finished speaking, when he leaped from his seat with so quick and startled a cry, that it brought each of his companions to his feet also. His face had turned suddenly very white, and wore a look of vague terror. Frank and Allan were immediately at his side, and the former had grasped his arm, for he seemed dazed and staggered.

‘Whatever’s the matter, George?’ said Frank; ‘are you ill?’

‘I think I’ve been bitten by a snake,’ George replied in a voice that trembled.

The eyes of both Frank and Allan turned for one moment from George to the log on which he had been seated, and to the ground round about, and were just in time to catch a glimpse of a black snake gliding into the brushwood hard by. In the next instant it had disappeared. They knew well that the black snake was one of the most venomous of its species. Frank and Allan were struck with a great and overmastering dread. They seemed incapable of any prompt and definite action, and stood for a moment or two gazing helplessly at each other and



PHILIP SUCKS THE POISON FROM GEORGE'S LEG.
- *Half-Year at Craiglea*, page 102.



at George, who was now half sitting half lying on the ground, pale and trembling.

‘Oh, George, what shall we do?’ cried Frank; ‘where have you been bitten?’

‘One of you go for Mr. Jeffray,’ answered George faintly, ‘and one stay here.’

What I have described had occupied but a few seconds, and as George spoke, Philip came quickly forward, and in another moment was kneeling by his side.

‘Where have you been bitten, George?’ he said quickly, but quietly. ‘Try and tell me.’

‘Here, I think,’ answered George, and he placed his hand on the calf of his left leg.

Philip rolled up the leg of George’s trousers, and, closely examining his calf, discovered a small puncture in the flesh. The next moment he had his pen-knife from his pocket, and had made a slight cut in the flesh on each side of the spot where the snake’s fang had entered. The blood trickled up in a thin stream, and to the wound thus made Philip applied his lips, keeping them there for a few seconds, until he thought he must have sucked all the poison from the wound. Then he spat the mingled blood and poison from his mouth.

‘Bring me a little water, please, and some salt,’ he said to one of the boys; and Allan brought him a tin cup with water, and a second, from one of the baskets, about half-full of salt. Philip rinsed his

mouth with the water, took the salt from Allan's hand, and again turned to George. Laying a portion of the salt on the palm of his hand, he rubbed it into the wounded part of George's leg, continuing the action for several minutes. Then he drew his handkerchief from his pocket, tore it into several strips, and bound it tightly round the wound. Meanwhile, George lay very still and quiet, submitting himself without a question into Philip's hands, while Frank and Allan stood by and looked on in silence. But the calm promptitude and decision of Philip's manner and action were not lost upon them.

'There,' said the latter, as he rose from his kneeling position at George's side, 'I don't think there is much fear now, but I wish Mr. Jeffray would come;' and he looked in the direction whence that gentleman was expected. Frank and Allan turned their gaze anxiously towards the same quarter, and at that moment the three boys saw the figure of Mr. Jeffray appearing round the corner of the bay.

'I'll go and meet him,' said Frank, and he started at a run towards the distant figure of the master. He reached Mr. Jeffray somewhat out of breath.

'What is it?' asked the latter lightly, but rather surprised at the boy's haste. 'I know I am a little later than I expected to be, but I didn't think you'd be so anxious about my return. I've found the shell I wanted.'

‘Oh, sir,’ Frank interrupted, ‘George has been bitten by a snake.’

‘Bitten by a snake!’ repeated Mr. Jeffray, his whole tone and manner changed suddenly to one of keenest alarm. ‘How?—where?’

‘Yes, sir,’ replied Frank; ‘but I think he’s all right; Philip Freeling has cured the wound.’

But while Frank was speaking, Mr. Jeffray, waiting to hear no more, had quickened his pace to a run, and in a few minutes had reached the three boys, Frank close at his side. George was now sitting up by the fire, and Philip and Allan were standing beside him.

In answer to Mr. Jeffray’s question, Philip as briefly as he could stated what had happened. The master listened to him to the end without interruption, and then said in a deep, earnest voice, and with a tone as of intense relief, ‘Thank God, Freeling, you were here.’

He said no more then, but turned his attention at once to George. Bending over him and laying his hand on the boy’s shoulder, he said, ‘How do you feel, George? Not drowsy at all?’

‘No, sir, I think not,’ George replied. ‘I felt a good bit frightened just now, but it’s going off.’

‘If you do feel at all sleepy, don’t give in to it. Here, drink this; it will steady you.’ Mr. Jeffray had taken from his pocket a spirit-flask, and was mixing a little brandy and water in a pannikin, which he gave to George to drink.

‘And now we must get home as soon as possible,’ he continued, turning to the others. ‘Let’s have tea, boys, and get the things together as quickly as you can.’

There was no lingering over the tea, you may be sure. Each of the party emptied a pannikinful, swallowed a piece of bread, and then set about re-packing the basket and launching the boat again. Frank and Allan had not yet altogether recovered from their fright, and all were anxious to get George home, that a doctor might be sent for, and all other possible precautions taken necessary to the case.

In a very few minutes the party were once more seated in the boat, and her head set for home. Mr. Jeffray now took the stroke oar himself, and gave George the tiller. He thought it advisable to keep him employed to some extent, as a preventive against the drowsiness that sometimes succeeds a snake-bite, the danger of which Mr. Jeffray knew.

When the party reached home, Mr. Jeffray took George into his own study to await the arrival of the doctor, who was immediately sent for. When the doctor arrived, Mr. Jeffray told him in detail the circumstances of the case; and at the request of the former, Philip was summoned to submit to a question or two which the doctor wished, for his own satisfaction, to put to him.

‘My boy, you did splendidly,’ he said, when he had

learned all he wished; and as he spoke he turned to the consideration of George himself. For a few moments he examined carefully the place bitten. Then he took from his pocket a vial containing liquid ammonia, rubbed a little of the fluid into the wound, and re-banded it with a few strips of fresh linen.

‘The boy has saved his companion’s life, there can be no two questions about that,’ said the doctor. ‘Where did you learn how to treat a snake-bite so skilfully, Master Freeling?’

‘From my father, sir,’ Philip answered. ‘I used to go out shooting with him, and we often came upon snakes in the bush, so he taught me a good way to manage a bite, in case I should be ever bitten myself or be with others who were. Once, too, the man who used to do up our garden sometimes, and cut wood for us, was bitten by a whip-snake, and I saw my father doing what he had several times spoken to me about, and what I did to-day.’

‘Well, you certainly remembered your lesson excellently,’ said the doctor. ‘And now, Master Barret, I don’t think I can do much more for you; indeed, you don’t need much more. I’ll write out something for you to take before going to bed, and I think you’d better get there pretty early. You’ve had a rather exciting day, and a good long sleep will steady and set you all right again.’ Before the doctor left, he had a few minutes’ private talk with Mr. Jeffray.

‘The presence of mind that boy has shown in this matter is admirable,’ he said.

‘Indeed it is,’ answered Mr. Jeffray. ‘Startled and somewhat excited as I was at the time, I was at once struck with it.’

‘It was a thing, you see, that was not altogether without danger,’ the doctor went on. ‘True, you may swallow the poison of a snake without hurt, but if there had happened to be any slight cut about Freeling’s lips or mouth, and the poison had entered it, the consequences might have been serious. But in any case, Freeling’s whole conduct in the matter showed a self-possession and a quiet sort of courage of a first-rate kind, remarkable for a lad of his years.’


Before evening ended, Philip was again called into Mr. Jeffray’s study, to see the master alone.

‘Philip,’ he said, ‘let me thank you from my heart for what you did to-day. It is not only George, who in all probability owes his life to you, whose gratitude you have earned; you have placed me under a deep obligation, and saved me from what might have been a sad and painful business. George will, no doubt, understand and feel the debt he owes you; and I hope myself to find some other means of showing my gratitude than by thanks only. You did bravely and nobly, Philip. Good-night now, my boy, and God bless you.’



CHAPTER XI.

MAKING AMENDS.

EORGE BARRET awoke next morning, calm, refreshed, and in his usual condition. A slight stiffness in his leg, from the treatment which the bitten part had received, was all that he was aware of. The story of the previous day was now, of course, all over the school, and this morning little else was talked of. In a day, Philip Freeling's position among his companions had completely altered. From being an object of indifference, avoidance, or contempt, he had become the hero of the hour.

Frank and Allan had not only told the incidents of the previous day exactly as they had happened, but had been warm and unstinted in their praises of Philip; and now George himself was adding his testimony to theirs. George fully understood that,

humanly speaking, it was almost certain that he owed his life to Philip, and his gratitude was as deep and heart-felt as the occasion demanded.

Sudden to resent a fancied wrong, and often hasty and unreasoning in his judgments, George, from his naturally generous disposition, was quick to appreciate a benefit, and prompt in his acknowledgment of it. But with his feeling of gratitude towards Philip there mingled no slight sense of shame; and this was shared to an almost equal degree by Frank Laidley. Of course this was the feeling, more or less, throughout the whole school, at least among the two upper classes; but George and Frank, as being the two most nearly concerned, felt it the most fully.

No doubt Fred Hewitt, who, as we have seen, had taken the principal and most aggressive part in the movement against Philip, should have felt as much shame as any one. But George's remorse was the keener, because upon him directly the benefit had been conferred. And Frank on his part had the feeling, that the obligation under which his best friend and chum had been placed, in a large measure included himself. It was not in Fred Hewitt's nature to be quite so alive to a matter of this kind as were Frank and George, but he was not altogether dull to it; and this he now showed by keeping remarkably quiet and silent, and holding himself a good deal in the background, which, under the circumstances, was about

the most judicious and becoming course he could pursue.

On the evening of the day following the picnic, Saturday, Frank, George, and Allan were alone together at the bottom of the garden. They had sought as retired a spot as possible, for they wished to avoid interruption. Frank and George had at first intended being by themselves, but they had afterwards concluded to admit Allan to their confidences.

'George and I have been thinking,' Frank began, addressing Allan, 'how we can make things up a bit to Freeling, but we haven't hit upon any good plan yet. We've been awfully out about him, and we all owe him amends, more or less.'

'I can't make him amends,' said George, 'but I want to do all I can.'

'We thought him a cur and a milksop,' said Allan, 'but, by George, he's shown us he's neither. Wasn't he cool and quiet yesterday? as steady as a doctor? Of course he knew what to do, and we didn't; but even if we had, one can't say how we would have acted. In a sudden thing like that, most chaps would get flustered and lose their head, and a good many men too, I expect.'

'Yes, he's got pluck enough, and of the right sort; we can see that now,' said Frank. 'And yet it didn't look like it that day with George. I can't make that

out quite. Do you remember, George, that time you couldn't get Freeling to fight, something Mr. Tennant asked us about, whether that was a case of school-boy chivalry? I couldn't quite see what he was driving at, but I think I understand him better now. I knew he meant to be sarcastic. But we've been mistaken about Freeling, and acted shabbily to him in other ways besides this, and the question is now, how we can make him some sort of amends.'

'It seems to me that the best way would be to consult Mr. Jeffray about it,' said Allan. 'Tell him the whole matter straight out, and ask his advice. He knows all about Freeling, I suppose, and we know very little, so that he must be better able to suggest something.'

'Well, I don't know if that wouldn't be the best plan,' said Frank; 'what do you say, George?'

'Yes, I think it would. It didn't occur to me before. You and I will ask to see him to-night, and get him to talk the matter over with us.'

A little more than an hour later, the two boys were alone with Mr. Jeffray in his study. They told him their purpose in asking to see him, as well as all that had happened in the school since the beginning of the half-year that had reference to Philip Freeling and themselves. Frank was the chief spokesman, and though he said what

he intended to say as shortly as possible, he concealed nothing, but put the facts before the master plainly as they had occurred. He did not seek to excuse either himself or his companions where it seemed to him that they had been in the wrong. I do not say that Frank saw the whole of his own and his school-mates' conduct towards Philip in exactly the same light as my reader, a dispassionate spectator of this little drama, and one who is, moreover, to a great extent behind the scenes, may possibly view it; and Frank may have thought that something of what had occurred was partly excusable through want of knowledge. If he had any such thoughts, he was in no respect different from many much older people under similar circumstances. But he and George had a very clear feeling that wrong had been done to their school-fellow, and Frank was now open in the confession of it, and earnest in his desire to be shown a means by which he and George could, as far as lay in their power, atone for their share in the fault.

Mr. Jeffray heard Frank to the end gravely and without interruption. Then he said: 'I knew most of this before, Frank; I learned it from Mr. Tennant this morning. He sees much more of you all, out of school, than I do, and seems to have been pretty well aware of what was going on among you in regard to Philip Freeling. I suspected nothing of it myself

and am very sorry to learn of it now ; but I am glad that you yourselves have told me of it. After what has happened I thought that you would, and from what you have just said, Frank, I see that some of you, at least, now feel how unjust, ungenerous, and unmanly your conduct has been towards Freeling. I might use stronger terms, did I not hope that some of your unkind treatment of your class-mate is due to thoughtlessness. I am willing to believe that it is, for I should be sorry to think that my pupils would be guilty of so much deliberate unkindness as your conduct at first sight implies. What I heard from Mr. Tennant this morning pained me greatly, and the matter has been in my thoughts ever since. For the credit of yourselves and the school, I should not like it to be known abroad among the parents and friends of you all. But you are now doing the best you can to remedy the wrong that has been done ; you have recognised your fault. I don't give you much credit for that, for you could hardly help doing so under the circumstances ; but you have confessed it fully, and George and yourself have expressed your desire to do all that you can to make amends. As you have said, you two are the most concerned, especially, of course, George, who, humanly speaking, I have no hesitation in saying, owes his life to Philip. Well, a plan has occurred to me by which I think you may be able to do what you wish. Neither of you know,

I feel sure, the circumstances of Freeling's life. Had you done so, your conduct towards him would, I hope, have been different; and when you do know his story, I trust you will feel still more keenly how unkind your treatment of him has been. His mother is a widow of very limited means. Philip's object in coming here was to get one more year's schooling, to fit him to take a good situation in some sort of mercantile office. His mother and sister must be, in the future, in a great measure dependent upon him. Now your father's business, Frank, is just such a one as Philip would like to follow. A place in his office would be a most desirable situation for him. I was thinking that you might write to him, stating fully, just as you have done to me, the debt which George and yourself owe to Freeling, and asking him whether he has or could make a vacancy for a clerk in his office. George might write a similar letter to his father, requesting him to see your father, and the two might arrange it between them. Philip would, I think, be ready to enter a situation immediately, for, though he intended staying at school for a year, if a good opening in business was offered him, I have no doubt he would at once accept it. He is now quite fit for a junior clerkship, for he has made rapid progress during the five months he has been here. I shall myself write to your father, Frank, if you think my plan a likely one, and say a word or two in re-

commendation of Philip, and I *can* recommend him very warmly. And now, what do you think of my scheme?’

‘It is capital, sir,’ said Frank heartily, and the words were echoed by George. ‘George and I will write to-morrow; or do you think it would be better to see my father myself?’

‘Well, you see,’ replied Mr. Jeffray, ‘you can’t very well leave school before next Friday evening or Saturday morning, and there is no necessity for delaying a whole week; the sooner you settle the matter the better. If you post your letters to-night, you will probably get an answer somewhere about the middle of the week, on Wednesday or Thursday. And you can manage it just as well by letter, I think.’

‘Very well, sir, that will be the best way, then,’ said Frank, as the two boys rose to go. ‘We are very much obliged to you for telling us of this plan. I think it will be the very thing.’

On the following afternoon, the two boys wrote their letters to their respective fathers. They were pretty lengthy epistles for schoolboys, for the writers entered fully into the particulars of the case. They were anxious that their fathers should clearly understand the matter, and see it in the same light as they did themselves. They expressed the object of their writing in plain schoolboy phrase, but very warmly and earnestly; and if their fathers had been slow in

taking up and seconding their sons' wishes, it would not have been owing to any obscurity or coldness in the statement of them.

But Mr. Laidley and Mr. Barret at once understood the case, and fully appreciated their boys' motives as revealed in their letters. Moreover, the letter which Mr. Barret received from Mr. Jeffray made very clear to him how much he owed to Philip Freeling. His gratitude was more than equalled by that of Mrs. Barret, in whose heart George's letter had raised an emotion of deep thankfulness, mingled with not a little trembling, as the mother thought of the peril from which her son had so narrowly escaped.

The two gentlemen met and talked over the subject of their sons' letters, and the matter was quickly arranged between them. Mr. Barret's professional pursuits were not such as Philip Freeling desired to engage in, or that gentleman would have himself offered him a place in his own office. But Mr. Laidley was happy both to be able to oblige his friend in this respect, and to grant his son's wishes, into whose scheme he entered with quick and appreciative sympathy. The following was the greater part of his answer to Frank's letter:—

‘From your letter, as well as from those of George and Mr. Jeffray, I think I have formed a pretty correct idea of how the matter stands between you and your schoolfellow. You made, indeed, a very grave error in judgment in regard to him, and acted towards

him shamefully—I don't use too strong a word; but I learn from Mr. Jeffray's letter that he has pointed all this out to you, and that he thinks you fully see it. I trust such is the case, and that the lesson will be a serviceable one both to yourself and George, and so I will not say anything further on this point here. I am very glad that you have shown yourself so earnest in making all the reparation you can towards Freeling. I feel that I am partly under an obligation to him too, and am glad that it is in my power to assist him. You will inform him, then, that I shall have a place ready for him in my office in a week's time, and that he will enter at a salary of forty pounds a year. From the high terms in which Mr. Jeffray speaks of young Freeling, I feel sure that I shall be myself a gainer by securing him as a clerk, and I hope the situation will prove advantageous to him in every respect, and that it will be the beginning of a successful business life.'

Mr. Barret's letter to George was very similar to that of Mr. Laidley's, and concluded by desiring George to express to Philip how deeply he and Mrs. Barret felt they were indebted to him.

The boys got their letters on the Thursday morning, and after showing them to Mr. Jeffray they at once sought Philip, to whom Frank unfolded the scheme that had been occupying the thoughts of George and himself for three days back, to the exclusion of

almost every other topic. Philip listened in silent surprise, which quickly changed to great gladness as Frank went rapidly on.

‘And now, Philip,’ he said in concluding, ‘I hope this will suit you. George and I have told you how bad and mean we feel our conduct towards you has been, and we want very much to make it up to you all we can. I hope that we three, at least, shall be fast friends for the future, and we want you to try and forget as quickly as you can all that is past. Will this situation, then, that my father offers, suit you? is the screw enough to begin with?’

‘It is more than I ever thought I should get at first,’ answered Philip joyfully. ‘A situation in an office like your father’s is just the thing I wanted to get after leaving school, and I am quite ready to enter it at once. I shall write a letter to Mr. Laidley this evening, and another to your father, George, accepting the situation and thanking them both. And I thank you both, too, most heartily for what you have done. You have, indeed, more than repaid me. Why, it was very little I did after all. You didn’t think that I could have stood by that day and done nothing, when I knew the right thing to do? Why, anybody would have acted in the same way.’

‘That may be,’ said George, ‘though nobody can say how another fellow would act in a thing like that. But you were there, and you did it, and I know you

had precious little reason to like me up to that time, or to care much what happened to me. But as Frank says, we'll try and forget all that. And I'm jolly glad this offer of Mr. Laidley's suits you so well.'

That evening, when Philip had written his letters to Mr. Laidley and Mr. Barret, he wrote one to his mother, telling her all that had happened within the last few days. It was a glad, bright letter the last, and Philip knew what a little commotion of surprise and pleasure it would raise at home.

There was an added earnestness in Philip Freeling's prayers that night. With a simple sincerity, and out of a grateful and undoubting heart, he thanked his Father in heaven for His guidance of the events of the past week, for the opportunity that had been given him of turning the dislike, contempt, and indifference of his schoolfellows for himself into kind feeling and gratitude.

When Philip had long given up all hope of any change in the feeling of his class-mates towards him, the events of a single day had brought about that which had seemed to him impossible. And the happy results which had ensued fell not only on himself, but on those who were dearest to him—his mother and sister. This thought was not the least part of his happiness, and for this, too, his heart rose in grateful acknowledgment to God.



CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

IT was the Wednesday following the Thursday of the preceding chapter, and Philip Freeling's last day at Craiglea. The fourth form were alone with Mr. Jeffray in the upper school-room. The half-past twelve o'clock bell had just rung, and the rest of the school had been dismissed for the day. But Mr. Jeffray had requested the fourth form to remain with him a few moments, as he had a word or two to say to them.

'I'll just keep you a minute,' he began. 'Our examination, as you know, begins shortly, and we break up among the first days of next month. I have been looking over the marks for the half-year, and I have a pretty good idea how the most of you will stand in your different subjects. The examinations may, no doubt, make some variation in

the order of the classes, as it at present stands, but those who have worked steadily and done their best during the half-year will probably keep the same order through the examinations, and I generally find that the examinations don't make much change in the places of the first boys. I find, then, that in history and English composition, Philip Freeling has made the highest number of marks, and I feel sure that if he had been able to stay through the examinations, he would have still been first in these subjects. There is another subject in which he would have also had a chance for the first place, though I don't think he would have beaten Frank for the captainship of the school, for Frank has as yet a good lead in classics, and Philip does not come even second. But in history and English he has decidedly made the most progress this half, and I don't think that it would be fair, because he is not able, for the reasons you all know, to wait for the examinations, to let him go away from us without the reward which would have fallen to him in the regular way, if he had stayed among us a few days longer. He might have got a couple of prizes; he would almost to a certainty have got this one, and so I think it is nothing more than justice that we should give it to him. He deserves it for his school work, and he deserves it additionally for what happened a few days ago. I think you will all agree with me in that. You know my opinion on

that matter. I am proud that Philip acted as he did, and I am very grateful to him beside. But it was not only in that single act to which I refer that he has done well and bravely. His position among you during the whole time he has been here has been a very trying and painful one for a boy, and his conduct throughout has been an example well worth remembering; all of you, I hope, see that now. I don't hesitate to say this before Philip, for it is not a matter of flattery; it is only due to him and right that I should say it openly to you all. I have, then, to come back to the subject of the history and English prize, very great pleasure in now presenting it to you, Philip.'

The volume which Mr. Jeffray placed in Philip's hands was a very handsome illustrated copy of Scott's poems. It did not escape the notice of the boys that the book was a larger and more valuable one than would have fallen to Philip in the usual course of things, though Mr. Jeffray always gave sufficiently handsome prizes; but I don't think that there was a boy in the class who thought of questioning the justness of Mr. Jeffray's decision and extra liberality on this occasion. Philip had scarcely taken the book into his hand, when Frank Laidley stood up in his place, and turning to the class, said, 'Boys, three cheers for Philip.'

And three hearty cheers echoed through the school-

room, the noise of which caused the sudden appearance of several curious faces at the doorway of boys who were loitering about the garden outside, while Mr. Jeffray stood looking on with a face of quiet approval. Then there was a little pressing about Philip to congratulate him, and to take a glance at his prize, and the class dispersed.

Philip had asked Frank, George, and Allan to accompany him home and spend the evening with him, and Mr. Jeffray had readily granted them permission to do so. The boys started from the school so as to arrive at Mrs. Freeling's house about tea-time. There was a little knot of Philip's class-mates gathered about the school-ground gate to wish him good-bye, and among them stood Mr. Tennant. When Philip had shaken hands with them all, Mr. Tennant walked a little way along the road with the four boys, and then wished Philip good-bye also. The master's hand closed upon the boy's with a strong, warm grasp.

'Good-bye, Philip,' he said, 'and God speed in your new life. I shall miss you in our walks, but I hope we shall still see each other occasionally.'

'I hope so too, sir,' Philip answered heartily.

It was a cold evening,—cold, that is, for Australia,—with a heavy sky, threatening rain. The rain began just as the boys reached Philip's home, and the bright little fire which they found awaiting them was very acceptable.

Mrs. Freeling received her three guests with quiet but warm welcome, that made the boys feel at once at home. In the course of the evening she did not omit to thank George and Frank for what they had done for Philip. She was fully sensible of the value of the service which her son had rendered to George Barret, but that did not make her any the less grateful for the return which George and Frank had made, and for the ready and generous recognition which Mr. Laidley and Mr. Barret had shown of Philip's claims upon them.

It was a very snug and tempting little tea that the party sat down to, comprising several dainties prepared by Mrs. Freeling herself, and the boys did full justice to it, you may be sure. After the tea they played a round game of cards, and then Philip proposed some music. A piano stood in the room. Kate played first, and then Mrs. Freeling, and then the two together. Mrs. Freeling had a fine musical taste, and her real love of music had caused her to keep up her playing during her married life. Kate had inherited all her mother's talent in this direction, and already played with ease and expression. The boys were much pleased; anything they liked to name, Mrs. Freeling or Kate could play, and each had some favourite piece, besides the airs that were generally popular at the time. Then George hinted that Frank sang,

and the hint was at once taken up by Philip, who proposed that Frank should give them a song.

‘Sing something, there’s a good fellow,’ he said. ‘If you know the words, mamma is sure to know the accompaniment.’

‘I say, George,’ answered Frank, ‘that’s not quite fair of you; you know well enough I never sing except at home for fun. But I don’t mind trying something. I’ll try the “Bay of Biscay,” and you’ll join the chorus.’

And Frank sang the ‘Bay of Biscay,’ and afterwards ‘Hearts of Oak,’ and sang them very creditably, in a clear, fresh voice, and with spirited emphasis.

After the music was finished and the piano again closed, the boys drew round the fire and engaged in some general talk, and thus the remainder of the evening slipped rapidly on, until it was time for Frank, Allan, and George to be thinking of returning to Craiglea. Fruit and other light refreshment was placed upon the table, and after partaking of these, the three boys rose to depart.

During the greater part of the evening they had heard the rain falling heavily on the roof and windows, and though the sound had ceased for the last half-hour, the boys had made up their minds for a wet walk back to Craiglea. When they got outside, however, they found, a good deal to their surprise, not only that the rain had ceased, but

that the clouds had disappeared, and that the stars were coming out on all sides from a clear, cold sky.

‘Why, what a glorious night it’s turned out!’ said George; ‘who’d have thought it? I had made up my mind for nothing less than a thorough ducking, but we shall have a fine walk back. My word, it’s pretty cold, though, after your cosy room, Mrs. Freeling.’

The three boys shook hands with Mrs. Freeling, Kate, and Philip, and after expressing to the former what a ‘jolly pleasant’ evening they had had, with a cheery good-night set out on their walk homewards.

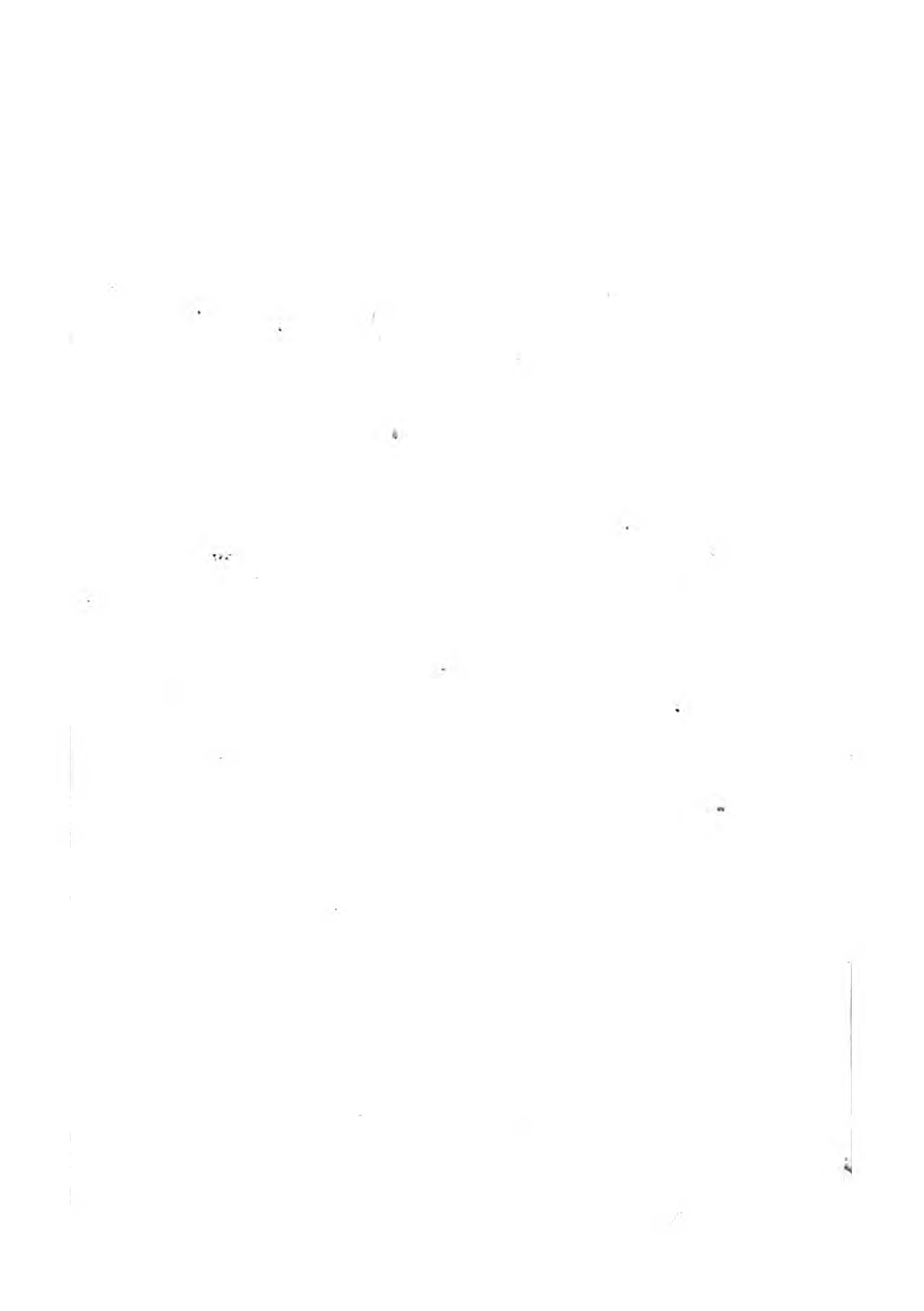
That evening laid the basis of a firm friendship between the Freelings and their three guests. A few days afterwards Philip entered Mr. Laidley’s office and began his new duties. Not long after, he visited George and Frank at their own houses, and, making the acquaintance of their mothers and sisters, increased also his intimacy with Mr. Laidley, who desired that Philip should regard him not only as an employer and master, but as a friend.

At the end of that year, Frank and Allan left Craiglea. Frank studied at home with a private tutor for a year, and then went to England to pass the examination at the London University, and afterwards to study law there. Allan returned to his home in a country town, to assist his father in his business of merchant and general warehouseman. George remained one year longer at Craiglea, and

then entered Mr. Laidley's office, and took his place beside Philip.

When the time came for Frank to leave Sydney for England, the separation between the three friends made a break in a very pleasant companionship; but Philip and George resolved to correspond regularly with Frank while in London, and looked forward to the time of his return, when their intimacy would be renewed.

Philip and George now sit at the same desk, much of their leisure time is spent together, and they frequently visit at each other's houses. They are, in a word, firm chums, and though they have plenty of other acquaintances of their own age and standing, they have not yet admitted a third to a quite equal confidence of friendship, for that awaits Frank on his return. Three, they think, is a good number for an alliance of intimacy, notwithstanding the proverb to the contrary. If Allan Kell lived permanently in Sydney, no doubt they would make it four; but him they only see occasionally, when he comes down on a visit. A third sometimes joins them in their walks, or in boating and fishing excursions on Saturday afternoons, but he is much older than his companions. That is Mr. Tennant, and Philip and George are always glad when they can get his company.



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