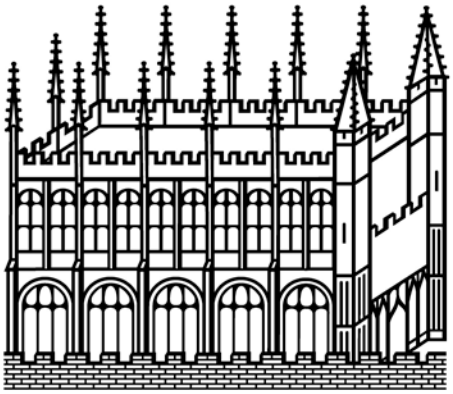

The Young Cragsman

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Boys of Springdale"

THE YOUNG CRAGSMAN

AND

OTHER STORIES.

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THE YOUNG CRAGSMAN.

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THE

YOUNG CRAGSMAN,

And Other Stories.

By ROBERT RICHARDSON, B.A.,
AUTHOR OF 'THE COLD SHOULDER,' 'OUR JUNIOR MATHEMATICAL MASTER,' ETC. ETC.

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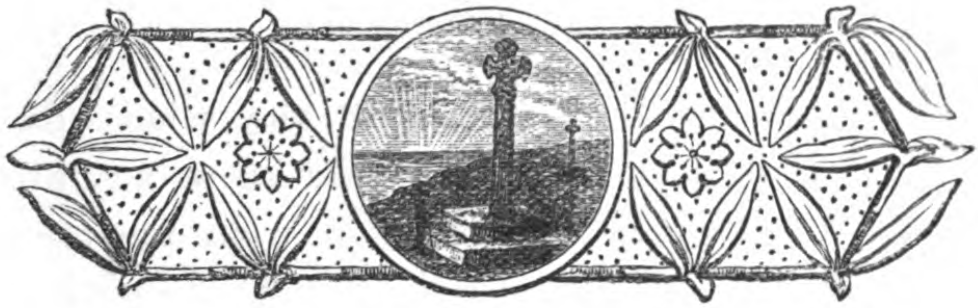

THE YOUNG CRAGSMAN.

CHAPTER I.

SITUATED on the north-west coast of Ireland, the little village of Ballyvohr faces the full blast of the wild north winds as they sweep in from the Atlantic. Very wild and fierce these winds are in winter sometimes, and they buffet and roar round the little hamlet as if they were bent upon utterly annihilating it, urged by some virulent personal spite.

But though the houses of the village are very small and poor-looking, and lift a front to the storm that is almost appealing in its meek unostentation, they must really possess a tolerably sturdy constitution, or they could never have so long withstood such winds. So humble and insignificant is the place, that one might have thought that its very humility would disarm a wind with any shadow of

ruth or clemency in it. But the winds that buffeted Ballyvohr year after year knew no ruth. Winter after winter they swept in from the ocean with unabated fury to renew their attack upon it.

And yet, as I have said, the place lived on through it all; looking more and more weather-stained every year, it is true, but showing few other signs of the difficult conditions of its existence, and even emerging in summer into some show of beauty. The rest it got in summer seemed sufficient to restore its strength and vigour for its winter campaign with the elements.

Some years ago the widow Kavan lived with her two children, Dennis and Nelly, in one of the smallest cottages in Ballyvohr, the interior of which only corresponded with the exterior, both being equally humble. The cabin consisted of a single room. A rude curtain of sacking was suspended from the roof, and thus a separation was made between that end of the cabin where Dennis Kavan slept and the part where his mother and sister slept, which served also as kitchen, sitting-room, dining-room, and everything. But perhaps the word 'everything' is too vague an expression here, for it may be due to truth to state, at the risk of shocking the sensitive among my readers, that this part of the cottage also comprised the pig-sty, or at least served as the night quarters of the pig, who was by

no means an inconsiderable member of the household, seeing that all Mrs. Kavan's pigs hitherto had been important contributors towards 'paying the rint.'

It must be admitted that the interior of Mrs. Kavan's cabin presented no great aspect of comfort or even cleanliness. Still it was not actually the reverse of comfortable and cleanly. Mrs. Kavan was a hard-working woman, and did her best, but the means at her disposal were very poor and meagre. It is a difficult matter keeping a bare earthen floor clean and tidy, more especially, perhaps, when a pig enjoys the freedom of the house, even when it is an exceptionally clean pig, as the Kavans' was.

Nobody that saw Nelly Kavan could deny that she was a pretty child. She had dark brown hair, usually a good deal tangled and matted, and bright, shy, blue eyes that peeped out at a stranger with unconscious coyness from beneath her unkempt locks.

Her form was slight and round and supple, and her foot on the heather as light as a kitten's. For a good part of the year her feet knew nought of shoes; consequently they were generally as brown as a hazel nut, when they were not absolutely black from wading and paddling on the beach at low water. Her hands were not very white as to colour, and not as a rule very clean; nor, if the whole truth must be told, her face either. Nevertheless all these

adverse circumstances could not rob Nelly Kavan of her native grace and prettiness.

Few persons now-a-days are hardy enough to maintain that clothes make little difference to people's looks; and how Nelly Kavan would have looked had she been as nicely and tastefully dressed as most of my girl readers are, it would not be difficult to fancy. It is certain she would have been very much improved.

Dennis Kavan was not so good-looking for a boy as his sister was for a girl. But he had a bright and pleasant face, and a straight, lithe, active figure. Between Dennis and Nelly there was a strong attachment, and they were constant companions. Dennis had several comrades among the youth of Ballyvohr, but Nelly had few.

Somehow the youthful population of Ballyvohr was, comparatively speaking, not at all abundant, a very exceptional circumstance in Irish villages. It may have been that the bitter winds were inimical to the rearing of children, as they undoubtedly were to all the more tender sorts of plants in the vegetable world. People needed to have almost the toughness of brick and mortar, like the houses, to fare through the winter on that rough bit of coast.

This may very possibly have been the reason, I say, that children, and especially girls, were not plentiful at Ballyvohr; but whether it was or not,

the fact existed, and caused it to be that Nelly Kavan had very few playmates of her own age. Consequently she was dependent a good deal upon her brother for companionship; and Dennis, though as much as two years older, did not despise his sister as a play-fellow. Of course he always led, advised, and decided on all occasions; but he did not do this in a dictatorial way, as is sometimes the wont of elder brothers, and, generally speaking, admitted Nelly fully and freely into his plans and counsel.

After her brother, I don't think I should be far from the truth in saying that Nelly's most frequent companion was the pig. I quite expect that this will surprise some of my readers—perhaps shock others; and these I must ask to be patient with me while I give a brief description of the Kavans' pig, Barney.

A pig would not be the most desirable of companions, you think; and I grant that many pigs would not. But there can be no doubt that Barney was an exceptional pig in more ways than one. It has already been indicated that he was a clean pig; in fact, he was remarkably cleanly in his ideas and habits—for a pig.

When he sought his night quarters in his corner of the cottage (as he did every day at sundown), Barney's progress across the floor was accompanied by as little litter as you could suppose compatible with a pig, even should the race generally reach a much higher stage of civilisation than it has yet attained. Barney, more-

over, did all his eating outside the cottage; he seldom or never took a mouthful or two to bed with him, as a youngster takes a piece of bread or cake, and so made no crumbs, which is one point at least in which he may be considered the superior. He lay down in his own accustomed corner in a staid and sober fashion, and went to sleep in a quiet, business-like way, with hardly so much as a grunt.

During the brief summer time, when even the neighbourhood of stormy Ballyvohr was green and bright and pleasant, Nelly was as much out in the open air as possible; and in her rambles over the hills and moors, Barney was generally her one companion. Dennis could only occasionally accompany her, the summer months being the busiest time with him; for he had an occupation, as will be explained presently.

So Nelly and Barney rambled on together, sometimes side by side, more commonly the pig slightly in his mistress' wake, Nelly gathering wild-flowers, or paddling with her little bare feet in a brook, or settling down on a grassy mound to watch a rabbit burrowing, or to listen to the birds, herself sometimes singing the while with a voice hardly less clear and gushing than the blackbird and the thrush.

Sometimes it happened that Nelly would become thoroughly tired out by her long summer rambles, and, lying down on the heather, fall fast asleep.

When this happened, I assure you Barney would remain close by his young mistress the whole time she slept, keeping watch and guard over her as faithfully as though he had been a dog. By and by, if Nelly's slumbers were protracted, her mother would come searching for her, and, knowing the little girl's favourite haunts pretty well, had seldom much difficulty in finding her. Then Nelly and Barney would trot home to dinner together, the pig having some little difficulty in keeping up with his mistress at these times.

On winter nights, as Nelly sat by the fire on her little wooden stool, between her mother and Dennis, she would sometimes feel a cold snout rubbed against her hand. This was Barney's manner of wishing her good-night, and the action was usually accompanied by a short grunt.

But at the time my story begins, Nelly Kavan was past all play or sport of any kind with Barney or anything else. She was lying ill in bed, and had been for weeks. She had somehow caught a fever early in the spring, which had reduced her very much in strength, blanched every atom of colour in her face, and robbed her eyes of all their brightness. It was now May, and she was still only recovering from her illness. All danger was past, but she was still weak and white and languid, quite unable to rise from her bed.

During her sickness Nelly had, of course, required, besides medicines, extra kinds of food of a more delicate description than that which composed the ordinary fare of the family, and the procuring of these had taxed Mrs. Kavan's resources sorely. Indeed, I don't know how she could have managed at all, if it had not been for the help she received from one who was, when his kind offices towards the widow first began, an entire stranger.

CHAPTER II.

MR. DONOVAN was visiting the remote quarter of his native land in which Ballyvohr was situated chiefly for scientific reasons. He was a gentleman of means, who had never been under the necessity of working for his livelihood, but who nevertheless had a strong distaste for being idle. Accordingly he gave much of his time to the study of several of the sciences—notably to that of natural history, in which he may be said to have been an enthusiast.

Mr. Donovan, moreover, was as fond, or nearly so, of studying his fellow-men as he was of watching the ways of birds and insects and fishes; and the same quality of keen observation, perfected by practice, which served him in the latter case, aided him also in the former. Whatever country or district he might happen for a while to be sojourning in, it was his habit to make himself acquainted as much as possible with the people of the place, as well as with its fauna and flora.

This brought him both amusement and increased knowledge; but he had another and a higher object. He was a good and kind-hearted man, and the habit just mentioned afforded him frequent opportunities of doing good in a quiet but sure way, where he could usually watch the results of his methods.

Mr. Donovan had come to Ballyvohr with the advent of the brighter spring weather. He had found enough to interest him in the local natural history to make him extend his stay to a period of some weeks, during which he had also had opportunities of becoming acquainted with a number of the village folk. Among these was the Kavan family, and his interest and pity were soon roused for the sick little girl.

The several ways in which he could be of assistance to Mrs. Kavan need hardly be indicated. Most of the little dainties which had tempted Nelly's faint returning appetite had been provided and frequently suggested by him.

Mr. Donovan's interest in the Kavan family increased, the more he learned of their circumstances and history. Poor Mrs. Kavan was, in truth, but an ignorant woman. She could neither read nor write, and her knowledge extended little beyond ordinary household work, and even that of a limited and somewhat primitive sort.

But Mr. Donovan was not long in discovering that Mrs. Kavan, ignorant as she was, possessed qualities

which none but the most cold-hearted could fail to admire. She had a warm, kind heart, though her speech was often rough and unrefined; she was sympathetic for others in trouble, and ever ready to lend a helping hand to a neighbour who needed it. She was warmly attached to her children, and anxious that they should be good and honest and truthful; for although the widow Kavan's ideas of religion were of the simplest description, she had nevertheless clear enough conceptions in regard to most of the essential points, a thorough understanding of the difference between a foolish and ill-spent life and one that is pure and blameless and of good report, and a desire to live the latter.

Mr. Donovan was a man who, wherever he found worth, was ready to render to it the tribute of his respect and admiration, and that he found it in the person of a peasant made no difference, though he himself, from his social rank, might mingle with the best society in the land. Thus he respected Mrs. Kavan, humble and unlettered as she was.

One afternoon Mr. Donovan sat in the Kavans' cabin by Nelly's bedside. He had been reading to the child some of the Bible stories, told in short and simple language. Nelly could not yet read herself very well, but Dennis could, and it was Mrs. Kavan's custom to have the boy read a chapter in the Bible every evening before the family sought their beds.

Mrs. Kavan was a Protestant, as are many of the people in that part of Ireland.

'Och, an' it's a swate story that same, the poor widdy an' her cake and the thrifle oil. I know it by heart, yer honour, more by token that it's more nor once been my own throuble.'

'But you always found God's mercies sure and tender in the end, did you not, Mrs. Kavan?' said Mr. Donovan.

'Troth an' I have, sir. It's sore pressed I've been sometimes to find mate and dhrink for the childer, but I've never been brought to want entirely. Something has always turned up at the ind; an' God has given me the best av' hilth too, iver since the father died, or I should never hav' been able to hould on at all at all. But this throuble with the child there has been sore upon me, I must say.'

'But you have much to be grateful for to the heavenly Father in this too, Mrs. Kavan. Nelly is getting on nicely now, and will soon be up and about again.'

'If she had been taken, sir, half the daylight would have died out of me life intirely. It would have clean bruk my heart.'

'That's hardly how we should take our trials, though, Mrs. Kavan, is it?' said Mr. Donovan gently; 'our Father in heaven most surely never sends us trouble for the purpose of breaking our hearts, or He cannot

be the wise and kind Father which we know, and in our best moments feel, He is.'

'It's ivery word thrue yer honour's saying, and I feel sure enough of it most times; but days come, shure, whin it's morthal hard work, and a poor woman feels sick wid care and throuble, and can't see a glame av light anywhere at all at all. Whin the rich have throuble, sir, they can take it quiet an' aisy, but the poor have to work wid the tears in their eyes.'

'Rich people are not to be envied for that so much as you think, Mrs. Kavan. And you would wonder if you only knew how many trials rich people often have. And those that don't get them make them for themselves. I can assure you the people who make troubles for themselves are generally the most wretched of all, for there is little hope of remedy for them. Where is Dennis this afternoon?'

'It's spaking he wor of thrying the cliffs, sir.'

'It's a perilous occupation that of your son's, Mrs. Kavan,' said Mr. Donovan after a short pause, and speaking in a reflective tone, as if half to himself.

'Troth it is, yer honour; but what is a poor boy to do in these bitter, barren parts? His father wor a cragsman afore him, and his father afore him again. There's few that's anything else in Ballyvohr, at this season leastways. That and the fishin' is what kapes the place together. But yer honour knows that by this time as well as meself.'

'Yes, I know it; and I understand, too, that the trade of the village is not increasing?'

'It's been decrasing, sir, for a matther of a half-dozen year. The fowl is about as plintyful as iver, but the fishin's fallen away strangely, sorra a one av me knows why.'

'I daresay reasons could be found for the fish being less plentiful on this part of our coast at present, but we'll not talk about that now. Apart from the great risk of fowling, did you never think of trying to put Dennis into some less uncertain employment, something that would bring in a steadier wage? He is, no doubt, a bright, active boy, who might be taught to do most things, and doesn't seem at all inclined to be idle.'

'Dinny's a good boy, sir, though it's his mother says it. But, as I said afore, sir, there's sorra a morthal thing he could do in Ballyvohr but what he does.'

'What I meant was, Mrs. Kavan, did you never think of letting him go to some other part of the country, somewhere farther inland, perhaps, to one of the large cities, where he might get better work and be better paid?'

'Och hone! yer honour's not been putting the boy up to that, have ye? It's morthal kind ye've been to the colleen there, past spaking entirely; but och! yer honour's done us a bad turn if ye've been timpting

the boy to lave his home, an' his ould mother, an' the cabin, an'—an'—an'—the pig.'

And Mrs. Kavan fairly broke down, and gave relief to her feelings in a flood of tears.

This sudden climax took Mr. Donovan quite by surprise. He understood the character of his country men well, in all ranks. He knew that the peasantry of the north differed in many respects from that of the south; that they were less variable and excitable, less readily moved either to tears or laughter, more self-controlled and less demonstrative.

Therefore this sudden exhibition of feeling on Mrs. Kavan's part, which would not have much surprised him in a woman of her condition farther south, near his own home, did surprise him a good deal now, the motive for it appearing to him so slight. But had his acquaintance with the widow been a somewhat longer one, he would have learned that her character had in it a considerable admixture of southern qualities. It should here be remembered, also, that her nervous system had undergone a heavy strain during Nelly's illness, and this she was now beginning to feel, strong woman as she was. It took a less thing to upset her just at present than ordinarily.

There was an added sympathy and kindliness in Mr. Donovan's voice as he replied to the distressed woman.

'Calm yourself, Mrs. Kavan. I did not mean to

distress you. I have not said a word of what you imagine to Dennis. I merely thought that you yourself might wish to see him bettering his prospects some day.'

'An' would ye have the boy lave the colleen and me all alone here be ourselves, sir?'

'That would not necessarily follow. Perhaps you and Nelly might have to remain behind for a little while, but I feel sure that by and by Dennis would be earning sufficient for you all to live together, in whatever part of the country he might be in.'

'Whirra! whirra! but it goes straight to me heart to think of it at all at all. Poor as the place is, it's where I was born, yer honour, and where me father and mother wor born afore me, and where me husband lies buried in the churchyard beyant there, who was good and kind to me while he lived, and sildom or never the worse for the dhrink. An' we've frinds here anyway.'

'I should be glad to befriend you, Mrs. Kavan, if you ever decided to move to my part of the country, and to try to forward your son's prospects.'

'Troth, an' I'm shure ye would do that same, sir. But though the rich may help the poor, they can't be *frinds* wid them; I'm shure yer honour knows that. It's only the poor can be frinds wid the poor.'

'Well, Mrs. Kavan, we'll not say any more upon the subject just now. I am sorry the thought of it

disquiets you so, but I really felt it my duty to tell you that a boy of as quick parts as your son, and with the disposition to do his best in whatever he puts his hand to, would have a far better opportunity of getting on, and of helping you and Nelly too, in many other parts of the country than he can ever have here; but perhaps you will think over it again sometime. I must wish you good afternoon now.'

'Maybe I will think over it, yer honour; but I don't belave I can ever make up me mind to it. Ye get attached to things, sir, poor as they may seem in the eyes of the rich. An' shure, how could I get all me little things moved so far, not to mention the colleen and meself? An' how could I lave Mistress Delaney an' the Widdy Casey; an' it's faithful frinds they've been to me this many a year, barrin' a warrum word now an' thin. It would look ungrateful, shure, to lave thim now, an' others beside, an'—an'—an' the pig.'

Mr. Donovan was too accustomed to hear 'the pig' alluded to in this fashion among the peasantry of his country for it to strike him in its ludicrous aspect, as it might have done a stranger. He was chiefly now concerned that Mrs. Kavan should not have a return of her tearful mood.

'There, there, think no more about the matter, Mrs. Kavan, at present,' he said. 'Good afternoon; I'll look in and see Nelly again soon.'

'Good afthernoon, yer honour, an' God be wid ye.'

CHAPTER III.

AFTER Mr. Donovan had gone, Mrs. Kavan sat on as she had been sitting for the past half hour, her elbows on her knees, and her head leant forward on her hands. Such inactivity was unusual with her; but the poor woman was, in fact, feeling rather low, troubled and exercised in mind about more things than one. She had been perplexed and ill at ease before her conversation with Mr. Donovan, and the concluding portion of what had passed between them had not tended to lessen that feeling, but the reverse; it had suggested to her a new source of heartache and trial. But she had not been sitting long alone before her brooding thoughts were broken in upon by the entrance of Dennis. He entered the cabin with a quick step, and there was a bright light in his eyes. He carried, slung across his back, a wicker basket, which he carefully placed upon the floor.

'See here, mother darlin', what a fine lot av eggs

I've brought ye this evening. It's the purtiest lot I've had for a long while, isn't it, now?'

'Troth! an' they are purty, asthore; and ye're the best of boys, Dinny, an' deserve a less hard life than the one ye have here, shure I know that.'

'It's not the hardness I mind, mother; sorra a thought av that ever bothers me. It's that I can't get enough hard work—shure that's where the wheel creaks. I want stidier work and more av it. How is the money, mother, at prisint? It must be mighty low wid all the ixpinse ye've had wid Nelly's sickness.'

'It is low, avourneen. Even wid Mr. Donovan's help, things has got behind wid me. He was here this afthernoon for a long while, but I was ashamed to ax anything more from him. Whirra! but it's sore work for a poor lone woman to hould up her head above wather at the bist of times, an' whin sickness comes to her cabin it bates her completely. But it's all God's will, shure, an' may He forgive me for murmuring as I am doing this blessid minnit.'

'Don't ye give way, mother honey—don't ye, now. It'll all come right. Thim eggs will fetch a nice little sum meantime, and I mane to bring ye siveral more lots like that.'

'Ye're a jewel, Dennis, and the warmth av me heart. Sorra a one av me knows what I should do

widout yez. But eggs is not enough, aroon. There's things has to be paid for, an' I can't put off the poor sowls any longer. They've been morthal patient wid me, an' thim wantin' their money well-nigh as much as meself. There's only one thing lift fur us to do, Dennis.'

'An' what's that, mother?'

Mrs. Kavan rose from her seat, and stepping softly across the floor to where Nelly slept in her low tressel-bed, glanced at her face. Satisfied that her daughter was sound asleep, Mrs. Kavan then went to the door and cast a glance round about, returning in a few moments to her former position.

'What's the matther wid ye, mother?' asked Dennis, in no small perplexity at his mother's movements.

'Nelly's sound and draming, but I was just looking if Barney was maybe anywhere near. Pigs has mighty sharp ears sometimes, an' the colleen's med the cratur as sinsible as a Christian, an' shure I wouldn't like to hurt his feelings.'

'What is it ye mane at all at all, mother? Shure, what's wrong wid Barney?'

'There's nothing wrong wid him, the cratur; but, Dennis'—and here Mrs. Kavan brought her head close to that of her son, while her voice sank almost to a whisper—'it's selling the baste we'll have to be.'

'Sell Barney, mother! Nelly 'll go wild intirely,' exclaimed Dennis.

'Whisht, whisht! Spake low, Dennis, or ye'll waken the child. It goes straight agin me heart to do it, asthore; but it must be done. We might have kep' the cratur a bit longer afore we killed him ourselves, but he's ripe enough for the butcher. He's fat now, and he stan's a morthal poor chance of gettin' fatter here; for mate 'll not be too plentiful wid us for a while to come. All me poor little savin' is clean exhausted. The pig must go now, or maybe in a month more he'll not be worth the killin'.'

'Mother,' said Dennis seriously, 'if Barney's sold and killed just now, I belave it'll fairly break Nelly's heart. She's wake and nervous still, and it takes a mighty little thing to upset her; and Barney going away wouldn't be a little thing at all at all. I tell ye, mother, it's a dangerous schame ye're plannin', an' it's ungrateful to Barney beside. Shure, iver since Nelly's been sick, to see the way the crathur's behaved is just wondherful. He sames to know she's ill as well as we do, an' he moves about the cabin widout making the laste noise in the world, an' snuffs about Nelly's bed as softly and paceably as a dog, wid a kind of pitying look in his eyes that bates iverything.'

'Whirra! Dennis, will ye whisht! I know the pig's a sensible pig, but ye're making too much av him intirely. He's but a brute baste afther all, an'

it's none av them fine feelings he can have at all at all. Shure, it's as good as a Christian ye'd be making him out.'

'Sorra a word av what I say but I belave, mother. I just think Barney has known all along that Nelly's been ill, and is rale sorry for it; an' shure, that's not much to claim for him, for he would be a mighty ungrateful pig if he wasn't.'

'Well, Dennis, he must go to the butcher, any way; we must have money, and the pig must fetch it.'

Dennis paused a minute before he spoke again.

'Mother, ye'll not be selling Barney just at once?'

'It must be pretty soon, avick.'

'If I fetch ye plinty av eggs, and maybe some feathers as well, ivery day for the next week, would ye have enough money thin to serve for a while?'

'I might; but it's onlikely ye are to get such a fine basket of eggs every day as ye've fetched to-day.'

'Well, we'll see, mother. I think I'm in luck just now wid the eggs.'

'Ye mustn't be too venturesome, Dennis asthore,' said his mother, looking somewhat anxiously into her son's face. 'Don't be getting yourself into any throuble, whatever ye do.'

'I'll be careful, mother. But ye'll promise ye'll think no more about partin' wid Barney, at prisent leastways?'

'Yes; I'll thry to manage wid things as they are fur a while longer.'

'An' ye'll see the purty lots of eggs I'll fetch ye. But, mother, I do wish I could get some betther and more constant kind of work. It's not disliking the fowling I am; but there's so many at it here, an' av coorse I can hardly hould me own against the men yet. I hear there's betther work and betther pay to be got in other parts, mother—I mane farther south, an' in the big towns. Don't ye think I might some day thry me fortune there like others?'

Mrs. Kavan looked narrowly into her son's face. 'Is it talking wid Mr. Donovan ye've been? He tould me he didn't spake a word to ye, an' I thought him a thrue gintleman, och hone!'

'An' so he is. He never once mintioned this matther to me. I don't know what ye mane, mother.'

'Well, don't say anything more about leaving Ballyvohr, Dennis. I couldn't do it, avick. It's me birthplace, and me people's home for ginirations back; an' unless I see the Hiv'nly Father's hand beckoning us powerful strong, I couldn't lave the village to go to one av' thim great roarin' cities, where we've not a morthal frind to turn to, right or left, and ye're swallowed up like a whirlpool. If I see the hand of the good Lord pointing us sthrong that way, thin it'll be me clear duty to go; but don't ax me till then,

Dennis. When I'm quiet in me grave beside your father, then ye may go south, and take Nelly wid ye, and prosper, as ye desarve to do.'

'Don't talk like that, mother darlin'! We'll not spake another sintince about leaving Ballyvohr. I did'nt mane to vex ye, shure.' And Dennis kissed his mother warmly.

CHAPTER IV.

IN her conversation with Mr. Donovan, Mrs. Kavan had included the pig among the sources of sorrow which the thought of leaving Ballyvohr brought her, and shortly after she was proposing to Dennis to sell Barney. But in this there was no duplicity or even inconsistency on the widow's part. She had spoken in Mr. Donovan's presence as she felt at the moment, when she was a little disturbed and shaken from her usual equilibrium of mind; and it was not till he had left the cabin, and she was sitting alone and exercised in thought as to how she was to replenish her almost empty purse,—which purse consisted of an old worsted stocking,—that the idea presented itself to her that it would be necessary to sell Barney.

What Dennis had said of Barney in connection with Nelly was, I honestly believe, little more than the truth. The creature had seemed from the beginning to be aware that something was amiss with his

little mistress. And, indeed, how should he not soon discover this? Could he betake himself daily, alone, upon the walks he was accustomed to follow with Nelly by his side, and never miss her? He may not have fully understood the nature of his young mistress' sickness, and why she was so long detained from her wonted occupations and pastimes; but he certainly did recognise the fact, and, what is more, felt it.

His demeanour in the cottage, his increased quietness and decorum, has already been testified to by Dennis. He walked in and out of the cabin, and took his solitary meals and his solitary rambles, a manifestly sadder and more thoughtful pig.

The village of Ballyvohr is perched upon the top of a line of lofty cliffs, which descend steep and sheer to the sea, and whose ledges are the haunts of various kinds of sea-fowl—kittiwakes, gulls, puffins, guillemots, and others of the same genus. As has been stated, the chief trade of the village at the time of which I am writing was in sea-fowls' eggs and feathers, besides the fishing.

Dennis Kavan had a small cockle-shell of a boat, which had been built by his father; and in this he was accustomed to row along at the foot of the cliffs, in order that he might take notice at what points on the ledges of the rocks the greatest number of eggs had been deposited by the birds.

On the morning following the conversation be-

tween him and his mother, narrated in the last chapter, Dennis put out in his boat and began rowing along beneath the cliffs. He purposed to-day going considerably farther up the coast than he usually did, and making a very thorough examination of the cliffs. As he rowed slowly along, he kept his eyes fixed upon the face of the rocks, examining it with a keen glance. By and by he observed a point which, from its more than usually white appearance, seemed to promise a rich yield of eggs.

'If I can get at thim afore any one else finds thim, troth it'll be worth me throuble,' he said to himself. 'A few lots like that, an' there'll maybe be no need for Barney's going at all. Faix, an' it would niver do fur the cratur to be absint an' gone intirely when Nelly rises fur the first time. Why, it'll be wan av the first things she'd notice, an' what could we tell her whin she axed? I'd give all I possess' (poor boy, it would not have been very much all told) 'rather than that mother should sell Barney at prisint.'

Dennis was not long in putting his intention into practice. That afternoon he procured the assistance of several of his companions, who lowered him by a rope over the cliff at the proper spot, which he had carefully marked in the morning. The ropes used by the fowlers or 'cragsmen' in those parts were made of ordinary hemp covered with strips of tough

cowhide, twisted tightly round the rope, which prevented it from being easily cut by sharp edges of the rock. The rope was fastened round Dennis' waist and under his arms, and the end which his comrades held was secured to a strong stake driven into the ground.

Dennis descended the face of the cliff with a swiftness that would have astonished a stranger watching him, clinging with feet and hands to the rough points and projections of the rocks more like a monkey or a wild mountain goat than a human being.

He was a bold and skilful climber; but the part of the cliff he was now descending was especially steep and difficult, and as Dennis sank lower and lower, he felt that it would require all his skill and dexterity for the successful accomplishment of the task he had set himself.

Shortly after Dennis had started on his bold enterprise, Mr. Donovan had put out in a boat with two men from the village for an afternoon's fishing. While Dennis was descending his steep and perilous ladder, slowly and more slowly as the difficulties increased, Mr. Donovan was quietly rocking in his boat on the gently-heaving tide below, fishing in a leisurely way, and occasionally sweeping the cliffs with his field-glass.

It was a fine summer afternoon, with a soft air and little wind, and Mr. Donovan was in rather an

idle mood, not keenly bent upon his fishing, nor on any scientific thoughts intent, but satisfied in the quiet enjoyment of the hour and the scene—the balmy air, the changing colours upon the sea, and the surrounding landscape.

He was scanning the cliffs through his glass, moving it slowly to and fro, watching the motions of the various sea-fowl, when he came to a sudden pause in his scrutiny. For a few moments his glass remained fixed.

'There's some one out on the cliffs for eggs,' he said. 'And he's seeking them at one of the most dangerous points of the whole cliff, almost too dangerous for any human being to attempt. He seems a mere lad, too, from his size. Take a look through the glass, Blake.'

The man took the glass from Mr. Donovan, and pointed it in the direction indicated by him. After a minute's silence he answered:

'Your honour's right. It is a boy, more be token that I know who it is. It's young Kavan. Troth an' it is a dangerous spot, sir; but the boy's as cliver a climber as any in the place.'

Mr. Donovan's feeling of uneasiness increased on learning who the venturous young fowler really was, notwithstanding the assurances of the boatmen that Dennis was sure to be firmly secured by his rope, and that his task appeared to an unaccustomed eye,

like Mr. Donovan's, more dangerous than it actually was. He could not feel assured in his mind, and every now and then neglected his lines altogether to let his glass rest upon that dark spot moving slowly along the face of the cliff.

Meanwhile Dennis had reached in safety the ledge on which lay the object of his enterprise, the rich store of eggs with which he was to fill the basket slung at his waist. He began picking up the eggs that lay thick around him as fast as possible, and when he had placed the last in his basket, it was nearly full, but not quite. However, he had made a more than usually rich 'find,' for the eggs were nearly all large fellows; and he was satisfied.

The spot where he was now standing was a little hollow, a niche, as it were, in the face of the cliff. On each side rose a buttress of rock, so that Dennis could not see farther to right or left than the small cave in which he was. The thought now occurred to him that, before ascending to the top of the cliff again, he would just look round one of the buttresses. Perhaps there might be a few more eggs on the other side. He would like to fill his basket after all, and it only wanted such a little of being full.

Cautiously he began to climb round the buttress of rock, the rope, of course, still round his body. It was a difficult and risky bit of climbing, but Dennis felt himself to be able for it. He had just got round

the projecting rock, and had caught sight—to his satisfaction—of a nice little nest of puffin's eggs lying snug in a crevice, when he felt the rope round him suddenly loosen, and the next moment he was clinging to the rock without any support save his own hands and feet. He glanced over his shoulder and beheld the rope dangling in mid-air a couple of yards from him.

Dennis at once felt that his position was such as he had never been in before. He had come through more than one daring adventure, young as he was to the fowler's trade, but never had he been placed in such extreme peril as now. Either the rope had been insufficiently secured about him in the first instance, or, what was more likely, it had got loosened by rubbing against the rocks. Could he recover it? It was his only hope of saving himself.

The light wind that was blowing swayed the rope backward and forward, and Dennis hoped that, by watching his opportunity, he might regain it as it swung towards him. Clinging with all his strength to the face of the cliff, grasping its projections with his feet and with one hand, he cautiously stretched out the other to seize the rope. But it was in vain. It was beyond his reach, and seemed only to mock him by swaying almost within his grasp for a moment, and the next swinging back again far out of his reach.

Dennis was fast becoming faint and exhausted. He knew that for not many moments longer could he hold on. Then his sight grew dazed, his head reeled, he felt his foothold giving way, his consciousness fled, and—he fell. Yet even in that last supreme moment of agony and terror, and just before his consciousness had entirely deserted him, he had sufficient remaining presence of mind to hurl himself, with the last remnant of his strength, out from the face of the cliff. Thus he escaped being dashed to pieces against the rocks, and fell with a plunge like lead into the sea.

At the very moment at which Dennis dropped from the cliff, Mr. Donovan's glass was directed towards him, and the whole brief catastrophe was enacted before his eyes.

'My God!' he exclaimed in his terror; 'he has fallen. I have been dreading it every moment. But he has fallen clear of the rocks. Row! men, row! We may yet save him.'

With all their strength the men rowed towards the spot where Dennis had fallen into the sea. They had no difficulty in marking it, for the white foam was seething and eddying above the place like a little whirlpool, with such a heavy plunge had Dennis entered the water.

He had sunk deep, but the instinct of self-preservation had caused him first to keep his arms down close by his side directly he felt the water, and next

to make the necessary paddling and treading motions with his hands and feet which might bring him to the surface again.

But when he reached the surface, he was so spent and faint that he was capable of doing nothing more than keeping himself above water; and had not assistance been immediately at hand, he must have sunk again to rise no more. But he heard the sound of the approaching oars, it imparted to him a momentary vigour, and he just retained sufficient strength and consciousness to keep himself on the surface until the boat reached his side. Mr. Donovan and Blake leaned over the gunwale, grasped the exhausted boy, and lifted him into the boat, and the next moment Dennis swooned away.

But Mr. Donovan was an old and experienced traveller, who had long since learned the advisability of being always provided with restoratives, whatsoever the expedition. He had his little leathern case as usual with him now, and, by the prompt application of the contents of one of the flasks which it held, he succeeded before long in restoring Dennis to consciousness.

Meanwhile the men were making as quickly as possible for the shore. Mrs. Kavan's cottage was not far from the landing-place, and Dennis was able to walk the distance, though he felt anything but like his usual self, faint, dizzy, and trembling in every limb.

Mr. Donovan accompanied him home. As may be

imagined, Mrs. Kavan was much startled and terrified at Dennis' unwonted aspect, so pale, faint, and shaken did he look.

'Oh, whirra, whirra! Is it more throuble that's come upon me?' she cried, as she hurried about getting Dennis to bed. 'Shure, yer honour, an' it's more than a poor woman can hould up agin'. But tell me, sir, it's nothing dangerous is the matther wid the boy, is it? He looks as white as a ghost, an' is shakin' like a rush.'

Mr. Donovan told his story as gently and judiciously as possible, and managed to reassure Mrs. Kavan as to the condition of her son. Before he left the cottage, Dennis had dropped off into a sound sleep.

'That is the best thing that could have happened,' said Mr. Donovan. 'I'll be in again to see how he is in the morning, Mrs. Kavan.'

Dennis slept straight on till morning. When he awoke, his mother was beside him, and his first words, as his eyes fell on her, were:

'Och, mother darlin', but I'm rale vexed I missed them eggs. It's the finest lot they were ye iver set eyes on.'

'Musha, Dennis avourneen! don't talk av the eggs. It's thankful to the kind Father in heaven we should be that your life's spared. It's that we should all be thinking of.'

'So I am thankful, mother.'

'That's right, alannah. An' get sthrong and hale agin now, Dennis avick, as soon as ye can.'

'How's Nelly, mother?'

'She's doing nicely. She'll be up in a while now, the poor child; this fine weather's like life to her intirely.'

Dennis recovered quickly. His young and hardy frame had sustained no serious injury, and he was up and about again before Nelly was able to rise. But she was not long in following him, and when once she was up, her strength began to return more quickly than might have been expected from the length of time she had been in bed.

Barney's satisfaction in his young mistress' convalescence was abundantly made manifest. He became once more a lively and light-hearted pig. He trotted round Nelly with quite another step and gait from that which had marked his movements for the past month and more. He almost skipped as he walked, his ears pricked up once more, joyful little grunts from time to time issued from him, and his tail fairly curled with gladness.

And now Mr. Donovan laid before Mrs. Kavan a project he had had in his mind for a day or two. He proposed that she and her two children should move south to the part of the country in which he lived, and that Dennis should enter his service as one of his under-gardeners.

Mrs. Kavan received Mr. Donovan's proposal in quite a different frame of mind from that in which she had listened to him on a former similar occasion. Since Dennis' perilous adventure on the cliffs, which had so nearly cost him his life, her opinion had very much changed in regard to his occupation as a fowler. She had always, of course, been alive to its dangers, but now they came home to her with a force that they had never had before. She was unable to contemplate the thought of Dennis spending his whole life as a cragsman without fear and trembling, and now probably even exaggerated somewhat the perils and terrors of the cliffs. She was willing and glad that Dennis should enter upon some other occupation, and her former objections to quitting Ballyvohr, though they were by no means forgotten, gave way before what now seemed to her graver and weightier considerations. When Mr. Donovan made known to her his plan, she replied:

'Troth, yer honour, an' it's mighty kind and mindful ye've been from first to last. Yer own deeds 'll be yer bist reward, for we'll niver be able to make ye return for what ye've done at all at all, excipt by our grathitude. An' I haven't a word to say agin' our lavin' the place now, yer honour, and doin' jist as you propose. It goes to me heart still to lave the spot, but shure an' it would be flying strai'ght agin' the Almighty Father, I do believe, to stay on here now, whin He's

shown so plainly what danger the boy may be ixposed to at any momint, not to mintion that it would be ongrateful in meself intirely to oppose yer honour any longer, and selfish to the two childer besides. I'll be ready to start, yer honour, as soon as iver the colleen's fit for so long a journey; an' the Lord's blessin' go wid ye, sir, wherever ye may be, and long life and hilth accordin'.'

And so, when Nelly's strength was sufficiently restored to allow of her taking the journey, the little household quitted Ballyvohr for good and all. It was a bright summer morning when they started, with all their worldly possessions, including Barney, in a cart which had been engaged for the journey from a neighbour, who himself acted as driver.

All Mrs. Kavan's former difficulties as to getting her goods and chattels, and household gods generally, transferred, had been overcome, and she left nothing behind her on which she set much store. In truth, when all told, they made but a humble little pile, and, as has been stated, were all got into a single cart, with Barney to boot.

One or two little things were left as souvenirs to Mistress Delaney, the widow Casey, and several others, and these in their turn gave small tokens of remembrance to Mrs. Kavan and her children. All the neighbours regretted the departure of the Kavans, for the little family had been liked and respected, and

the warm-hearted, simple nature of the people manifested itself in a number of ways.

Quite a little crowd stood to watch the departure of the cart. There were warm shakings of the hands, waving of old hats and bonnets, a plentiful flow of tears on the part of the women, many hearty well-wishes for one and all of the little family, with 'God bless ye, avourneen,' and 'The good Lord be wid ye, aroon;' and then the cart jolted off, the neighbours watching it till a turn of the road hid it from sight, while several accompanied it for a short distance on its journey.

Dennis took kindly to his new calling, and prospered in it. The family were established in a small cottage on Mr. Donovan's estate, in all respects a neater, cleaner, and snugger tenement than the little cabin in Ballyvohr. Dennis was soon earning wages sufficient to maintain the family in decency and comfort, and Mrs. Kavan had all that her heart could desire in beholding her two children growing up respectable and industrious, with good prospects before them.

And there was no necessity now for killing Barney, and Mrs. Kavan never mentioned the subject again. For the Kavans have now two other pigs besides Barney, and I suspect they will both go the way of the great majority of pigs, and be one day put to the purposes for which, doubtless, pigs were designed, before Barney's time comes. In fact, I should not be

surprised if he died in his bed of a good old age. Though Nelly is now a fine, tall colleen, nearly as tall as her mother, and long past making a companion of a pig, she still retains a vivid recollection of the old days in Ballyvohr, and having such, cannot but still have a kindly side towards Barney.

It would cause her a sharp pang even now if anything untoward were to happen to the creature. Then, too, having been suffered to live on so long, Barney's age must be a protection, for there is little doubt that he would be now found just the least thing tough for purposes of *cuisine*. And so, as I have said, there is every prospect of Barney's reaching a green old age, and dying at last tranquilly and peaceably in his bed.

HOW THE FIGHT WAS STOPPED;

OR,

RALPH AND KENNETH'S QUARREL.

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RALPH ANTROBUS and Kenneth Macleay were school-fellows and great friends; out of school they were well-nigh inseparable. Last year, when Ralph's father changed his shooting in the Highlands, renting another larger one, or rather one on which there was a larger lodge, he told Ralph that he might have his schoolmate up for a part of the holidays with him at Glenroy, the name of Mr. Antrobus' new shooting.

When Kenneth Macleay received the invitation at Ralph's hands, he was sufficiently elated, you may be sure; and there was no difficulty in obtaining his parents' consent to the arrangement, Mr. Macleay's family and that of Mr. Antrobus being intimate.

It was settled that the two boys should go up to

Glenroy together, and they left Edinburgh on the day following that on which the school broke up. Mrs. Antrobus and her two daughters had already been at Glenroy for some weeks.

Both Ralph and Kenneth had been in the Highlands before more than once, but when they beheld Glenroy, they declared that they had seen no place among the Scottish hills which pleased them so much. In regard to natural beauty, there are probably at least a score of glens in Scotland as beautiful in every way as Glenroy; but, nevertheless, it is a grand spot, and the boys might well be satisfied with it.

The house itself, which was small, but quite snug and comfortable as a summer residence, stood at the head of the glen, and almost immediately behind rose the hills, tier above tier, their lower slopes belted with larch and pine and mountain ash, while higher up spread leagues of heather-clad moor in long-rolling billows of purple. In front of the house lay a bright little loch, cradled in the cup of the valley, and beyond the loch the glen broadened into a strath sloping slowly westward.

Glenroy was six miles from the nearest railway station, but when you had reached it you might easily think yourself a hundred miles from the haunts of men, so shut out from the world does the valley seem, so remote, secluded, and still. From the windows of the house no other human habitation was visible,

though if you had walked a little way down the glen you would have caught sight of a small thatched cottage, the dwelling of a shepherd. There was also the keeper's cottage, it is true, but that was immediately behind the house, and may be considered as part and parcel of it.

But the remoteness and seclusion of Glenroy did not trouble the Antrobuses. It was pleasant rather than otherwise after the racket and din of the city, and all the members of the family found plenty to occupy and amuse them. Moreover, it was intended that there should generally be some friend, either of Mrs. Antrobus or her daughter, or of both, staying with the family until their return to town.

As for Ralph and Kenneth, there was little likelihood of their being often dull. Ralph had his gun, and there were rabbits in almost any quantity in the glen to afford sport for Kenneth and himself. The loch was full of trout, and they could go out in the boat and trawl for them, or set night lines for them; or they could take their rods, and, following the course of the burn which emptied itself into the loch, try their luck with rod and fly.

Then there were long rambles and exploring expeditions among the surrounding hills and glens, in which they were now and then accompanied by Mrs. Antrobus and the girls, when a little pic-nic would be improvised. There was swimming in the loch

when the weather was warm enough to make that pastime pleasant; and to vary these recreations, which are not more than one-half of the resources of sport at their command, there was an occasional fox-hunt, instigated and led by old Fergus the keeper, which never failed to be productive of great excitement and diversion. The hunt was, of course, on foot, not on horseback; and when the huntsman 'killed,' it was an occasion of vast satisfaction and triumph on the part of the boys. Old Fergus was naturally, from his office, a sworn foe to foxes.

But though Fergus could not find it in his heart to be anything but stern and uncompromising in his dealings with foxes, which, I suppose, he regarded as an evil permitted to exist, but none the less to be resisted and thwarted in all possible ways, he was far from being a naturally hard-hearted or pitiless man. He was the reverse. He was kind and considerate with almost all dumb creatures—that is, whenever kindness and consideration were practicable.

That foxes were not intended to have their own way and flourish, he was quite convinced; how he would have justified grouse-shooting I am not quite sure, but it is likely that he had arguments for it. But to his dogs and ponies he was the most careful of friends and attendants, and this not entirely from selfish and interested motives, but because he believed it his duty.

Fergus was a man who had a strong sense of duty, of duty both to his fellow-creatures and his God, and he had striven all his life to act according to his conscience and his knowledge. He was a good old man, gentle and upright and God-fearing.

The two boys took to Fergus and liked him. They were a good deal with him, and the little bits of advice, and what you may call, if you like, rel'g'ous talk, with which the old man sometimes leavened his conversation with them, they did not take amiss. Fergus, in fact, had a way of doing this sort of thing that none but the most foolish, proud, or self-conceited could have been offended at.

He was never officious or obtrusive; he was never too long or prosy; but he just dropped in a kindly word of advice or comment, such as from his age he was justified in doing with young lads, and always in such a pleasant, happy way, and at the same time so much to the point, that Ralph and Kenneth could seldom fail to see its truth and force. Moreover, Fergus was always so obliging and ready to second the boys in their sports with advice or help, to give them hints and suggestions in their fishing, such as pointing out what parts of the loch or burn it was most advisable to try in different states of the wind and weather; so ready to set right their rods and lines whenever they got out of trim, and to do a dozen other little services of this sort for them, that they

were the more inclined to listen to him with attention and respect whenever he thought the occasion appropriate for a word or two of more serious talk.

Fergus was a small, wiry man, with small, fine features, which wind and weather had not been able to rob of their original regularity and handsomeness, although they had lined and wrinkled the face until it had the appearance of a Brazil nut. Though considerably past threescore, Fergus was still hale and active, with a frame as tough as whalebone; and though he had not such a 'fleet foot in the corrie' as in his younger days, he had still a wonderful degree of endurance in tramping long leagues of moor and hillside with untiring foot and unbroken wind.

The time passed swiftly and pleasantly for Ralph and Kenneth, and the weather was proving to be the pick of the summer, so that they were seldom kept within doors. The Twelfth of August was drawing near, and Mr. Antrobus was to come up from Edinburgh a day or two before, not to return to town again for a month at the least. He was to bring a couple of friends with him for the opening days of the grouse-shooting, and Mrs. Antrobus was busy preparing the house for their reception, marshalling her resources in the way of bedchamber accommodation and the rest.

The Twelfth fell that year on a Wednesday, and on the morning of the Monday, Ralph and Kenneth

started, with their rods over their shoulders, to fish the burn, following its course upward. It was a bright, warm morning, with a few white, fleecy clouds in the sky; and Fergus had recommended them to try the upper course of the stream, where it wound among narrower glens and more overhanging hills. The fishermen would thus be more likely to have some shadow on the water, which was what was wanted on so bright a morning.

The boys were fairly successful in their sport, considering that the conditions of the weather were not the most favourable to fly-fishing, and by mid-day had taken some seven or eight fish.

'It's time we were back to lunch now,' said Ralph. 'Let's put up; I'm awfully peckish getting.'

'I always am here; it's become chronic with me, somehow, since I've been in Glenroy,' said Kenneth.

'You're not much bothered with the other thing even at home, are you, Ken?'

'Perhaps not often; but there are degrees, you know, even in a schoolboy's appetite.'

'He's mostly in the superlative, I reckon; but don't snub your knife and fork while you are here, my boy. Give them a fair field, and favour too, if you like; and if you have any apprehensions about falling off in this respect when you leave the glen, why, the more reason you should make the most of your time and opportunities now. Don't fear about

our resources, you know. We have "cattle," or at any rate sheep, "upon a thousand hills" here, as Fergus would probably put it. Now I'm ready; are you? Let's just have a look at the fish again?'

Kenneth was carrying the creel, of which he had raised the lid.

'Eight, aren't there? and not skinny fellows either, for the burn,' said Ralph. 'Here's quite a Triton, by George; and this one's nearly as big. I caught the boss, I remember.'

'You didn't, though,' said Kenneth. 'I hooked that fellow, and you caught the second largest. I remember mine by a particularly bright spot he has just under the eye. Here it is.'

'Stuff and gammon! There's no mark there brighter than on any other of the fish. How can you make out that in a fish that's spotted all over like a trout?'

'There is, though. It's as plain as a pikestaff, Ralph, if you only like to see it; and I remember my fish by that.'

'It's all my eye, Ken, or rather all your eye, that sees just what it wants to see. I'm sure I caught the biggest. I remember thinking to myself, when I threw him into the creel, that he was the largest, only I didn't say anything at the time.'

'No; I daresay you didn't. But you can't persuade me, Ralph. I'm convinced that I caught that trout, and I mean to stick to that opinion.'

'We'll toss for it, Kenneth; I'm agreeable to that, if you like.'

'I'll do nothing of the sort. That would be as good as admitting I'm wrong, when I'm as certain that I'm right as that I've got eyes in my head.'

'They're not up to much, any way, when they let you see things that don't exist.'

'They're as good as yours, and chance it, that can't see what's as plain as a house.'

The boys were getting hotter every moment, their words gaining rapidly in acerbity and temper.

'There's no use getting into a scot about it, Kenneth,' said Ralph, trying to appear more unruffled than he really was. Ralph was, in some respects, rather an old boy for his years. He had an objection to being put out of temper, and usually tried as much as possible to preserve his self-command in controversy, not so much on moral grounds, I suspect, as for the sake of the advantage in argument gained thereby.

'I'm no more in a scot than you are yourself,' answered Kenneth surlily.

'I've offered to toss to decide the matter. I can say no fairer than that,' said Ralph.

'And I tell you I'll do nothing of the kind. You're so ready to toss because you know you've got the weakest side, and I'm resolved to stick to my point because I'm certain I'm right.'

'It's precious mean of you, Kenneth, to say that. I meant the tossing as the quickest way of settling the thing. I feel as sure on my side as you do on yours. If you think you're going to gain your point by bully like that, I can just tell you at once that you're mightily mistaken. I've made a fair offer to you, and I can do no more; and I think it's desperately mean in you to refuse it. It's just like your obstinate, pig-headed way when you once take up a thing.'

'Who's calling names and bullying now, I want to know? I didn't begin names, any way,' said Kenneth scornfully.

'I've said nothing but the truth,' answered Ralph. 'You're as unyielding as a stone wall, Kenneth, when you once take a thing into your head.'

'Well, you'd better not call any more names, anyhow,' said Kenneth.

'Stone walls isn't calling names,' said Ralph.

'It is.'

'It isn't.'

'Well, I won't be called it, any way, Ralph—there now; so just drop it.'

'Well, Kenneth, I'm not going to argue any more with you; I've had quite enough. If you're not going to make yourself any pleasanter than you're doing now, the sooner you go home again the better for everybody.'

This was a weapon that Ralph should have been

above using, for it was taking an altogether unfair advantage of his companion; but he had lost very much of his self-command by this time, and was ready to say the most cutting thing that came first to hand.

'That's the meanest thing you've said yet, Ralph,' said Kenneth. 'That's like a gentleman to talk that way, isn't it! But, by George, I'll take you at your word. I'll leave to-morrow, and be glad of it. Don't think I'm entirely dependent on you for a place to go to in the holidays. I've half-a-dozen other places. I can go to my uncle's, in England, whenever I like. And now I don't mean to speak to you again!'

'Nor I to you,' said Ralph.

The two boys were now walking back to the house. Hitherto they had been close alongside of each other, but now they separated, and kept as much space between them as their road would allow, and thus in sullen and angry silence continued their way homewards.

They had just caught sight of the house, and were entering the plantation of fir-wood with which the ground in the more immediate vicinity of the house was planted, when they came upon Fergus, who had that morning been engaged in superintending the putting up of a rustic seat on a prominent knoll commanding a good view of the loch and valley.

The old man's shrewd eye at once detected that something was amiss between the two boys. He was

somewhat surprised, for he believed the friendship which existed between Ralph and Kenneth to be really strong and true. He thought that the misunderstanding between them was probably nothing more than a passing cloud; but still it vexed him to see it, and he determined to venture what he could do towards clearing it away.

Fergus quietly took up his position between the two boys, and walked on with them. Presently, glancing from one to the other, he said, 'There's something gane wrang wi' ye, young gentlemen, I doot. Ye're no lookin' as ye were when ye startit twa-three hour syne—quite anither gate. An' if ye'll excuse me, I canna honestly say the day's fishin's made ane or t'ither o' ye ony the bonnier, someway. Mebbe ye're a wee thing het an' tired—I kenna.'

Fergus paused a moment, but neither of the boys spoke.

'No, it's no that, is't?' resumed Fergus. 'No to beat aboot the bush ony longer, young gentlemen, I ken weel eneuch what's wrang atween ye, I'm thinking. Ye're fa'en oot, I doot, and it vexes me to see it. I'm no speerin' what's the cause o' yer quarrel, or wha's maist to blame; dootless ye're baith a wee wrang. But will ye no tak' an auld man's advice, wha's real vexed to think twa sic braw freends as ye hae always been should fa' oot the noo, and mak' it up at ance, will ye no, like guid laddies?'

Again neither of the boys made any immediate reply, and Fergus and they proceeded for a few moments in silence. But presently Ralph said:

'Whichever of us may be wrong, at any rate, I proposed a way by which we might easily have settled our dispute, if Kenneth had been less stiff and obstinate.'

'I don't call it being obstinate sticking to a thing when one feels sure he's right.'

'Aweel, aweel, Maister Kenneth; a body may feel perfectly sure in's ain mind that he's richt, and yet no be richt after a'. It's gey easy to mislead ainsel' in sic things. Each of ye feels sure he's no wrang in this matter; whatever it may be, I'm no wishing to speer. Weel, ye've nae doot said as much as can be said on each side o' the question, mebbe mair than should ha' been said, and I doot ye're lang past convincing ane anither noo; weel then, isna the only thing left just to forget at ance what's happened atween ye the morn, and whatever het words ye may each hae spoken, and be freends again. Ye see there's nae ither way o' mendin' the matter. Ye'll never do it by mair words, I think ye'll baith see that. True freendship atween young folks is a bonny thing to see; scarce a bonnier thing in God's world. Where will ye find a gran'er story than yon o' David and Jonathan? Isna it like a braw poem? And it's no impossible either, but just what's happened mony

a time since, only the Bible tells it in sic a gran' and yet simple and touching fashion as they canna match now-a-days.'

'Well, I'll bet Jonathan was never so obstinate and pig-headed as Kenneth, or matters would have gone differently between David and him,' said Ralph moodily.

'And if they ever went fishing together, I wager Jonathan never was so mean as to claim the biggest trout just out of petty jealousy,' said Kenneth.

'Hoot, laddies, dinna begin again,' said Fergus. 'That's no the effect I would wish by reca'ing David and Jonathan to ye. Ye're baith a wee short o' their level yet, I doot, tho' ye're guid eneuch lads when ye're in yer richt minds, I'll say that. But ye're no in your richt minds the noo, ye ken; yer judgment's thrawn and crookit wi' anger; and so ye hae the mair reason to yield to the advice o' ane wha's judgment's no in the like case, forbye he's auld eneuch to be yer gran'fether. And, Maister Ralph and Kenneth, I would hae ye keep in mind a higher example still than David and Jonathan. Think for a moment what the good Lord and Master's advice would hae been to ye the noo. Ye'll no think, I'm sure, that I'm evening mysel' wi' Him; but wouldna He hae counselled ye some sic gate as I'm trying to do, in His ain kind and matchless way?'

'You're not going to tell me that I must turn my

other cheek to Kenneth, Fergus! People may have done that in these days, though I don't think they often did; but I can tell you, you can't just do that now, you know—at least it isn't often practicable among boys.'

'Aweel, Maister Ralph, we can at least try to come as near to that preenciple as we can. And I'm asking something short o' that from you and Maister Kenneth. I'm jest wantin' ye to forget ye hae quarrelled, and be as ye were when ye quitted the house in the morning.'

'If Ralph acknowledges he's been wrong, I'm willing to shake hands on it,' said Kenneth.

'No! that's too much to ask,' said Ralph quickly. 'That's a likely thing, indeed; why, it's just the whole matter.'

'Well, I'll not make it up on anything short of that,' said Kenneth doggedly.

By this time the three speakers were close to the house. Fergus was now almost convinced that his endeavours to heal the breach between the two boys were to be in vain, for the present at least.

'Will ye no agree, laddies, to meet half way, and hae dune wi' the matter for ance and a'?' he said, making one more effort.

'I've said all I've got to say, Fergus,' said Kenneth.

'And so have I,' said Ralph; and the two boys entered the house.

Fergus stood for a moment before he turned away in the direction of his own quarters. It was a matter of genuine sorrow to the old man that his endeavours had been, to all appearances, entirely without results in the effecting of his object. But he had hope in the reflection:

'Mebbe it's a sma' thing atween them after a'—a cloud like a man's hand. Lads fa' out about a preen's heid whiles. A nicht's sound sleep 'll aiblins clear it a' awa'. I hope sae, ony way.'

It will here, I think, be the proper place to let the reader know what the author of course already does, that it was Ralph who was really wrong in the matter of the trout. Kenneth had caught the largest, but Ralph was certain in his own mind that he had done so.

Careless and indifferent as, in their present frame of mind, each of the boys was about the feelings of the other, they had both the desire that the rest of the inmates of the house should remain ignorant of the fact that they had quarrelled, and they managed to conceal the matter. Neither Mrs. Antrobus, nor Ralph's two sisters, nor the young lady friend who was staying with them at this time, noticed anything different in either Ralph or Kenneth's manner, not having any suspicion of the actual truth.

Shortly after lunch a change took place in the

weather. Clouds that had been gathering among the hills rolled down upon the glen, wrapped the skies in thick gloom, and broke in heavy rain upon the valley. There was clearly no chance of getting out again that day.

Kenneth was in the middle of a book which he had begun a night or two back, and in which he had become thoroughly interested. So he took himself off to his bedroom, with the full purpose of giving up the rest of the afternoon to *Tom Cringle's Log;* that was his book.

Ralph commenced a book too, but got tired of it pretty soon, somehow, although he was fond enough of reading, rather fonder than Kenneth. Perhaps it was not so interesting a volume as Kenneth's which he had made trial of, or perhaps he was not in a reading mood for any sort of literature. At anyrate, he threw aside his book, and sought the apartment which served as drawing-room, sitting-room, and ladies' working-room in one at Glenroy Lodge, where his mother and sisters, together with their guest, were at work or reading.

Ralph was in a thoroughly idle and mischievous mood, a good deal bored and at a loss what to do with himself, and withal not in the sweetest of humours, feeling still a little irritable and ruffled as a residuum of the events of the morning.

He lolled on the sofa and the ottomans. and kicked

about his slippered heels until he had made such a confusion and mess of the antimacassars as would have taken a mischievous and evilly disposed poodle all its time to match or outdo.

Then he overhauled his sisters' music-stand, till he had turned the contents nearly upside down, and, setting a selection of elementary exercises before him, began a doleful performance of 'Rousseau's Dream' with one finger, and a pause of a semibreve's length between each note, the while his auditors underwent a mild martyrdom. Tiring of that pretty soon, he applied himself to teazing the girls in a more direct manner, and getting hold of Ellen, his eldest sister's ball of Berlin wool, which was lying on the ground at her feet as she sat at work in a low arm-chair, began throwing it to his terrier Snap, whom he had brought into the room with him. It was fine fun for Snap, of course, who commenced worrying the ball as heartily as though it had been a rabbit or a rat.

But Master Ralph had now gone too far. His mother and the girls had been marvellously patient and long-suffering with him, having some sympathy with the forlorn, *ennuyé*, and 'left-to-himself' condition in which he seemed to be. But now the patience of the whole four ladies broke down.

Mrs. Antrobus was the first to open out upon Ralph. She gave him a thoroughly good scolding for his bad manners and the evil spirit he was humouring, and

then his sisters followed up their mother with a small lecture each, of less length, but as unmistakeably distinct in terms. Miss Vallack did not join in the general onslaught upon Ralph, as that would hardly, perhaps, have been setting him an example in manners; but I have little doubt that, like the historical parrot, she had her thoughts.

Ralph did not stand this altogether with meekness and contrition. He made an attempt at defence and rebutment, but it was faint and feeble, for his cause was a desperately weak one, and the consciousness of this made his arm powerless.

So he soon took himself out of the room to avoid further rout, leaving his sister Ellen, whose ball of wool was in a nice condition after Snap's frolic with it, wishing him at Jericho. And so the afternoon passed for the inmates of Glenroy Lodge, and shortly before dinner Mr. Antrobus and his two friends arrived in the pony carriage, which had been sent down to meet them at the station at Tullygavan, dripping wet as to their Ulster overcoats from the heavy rain that was still falling.

Next morning it was bright and sunshiny again. Ralph and Kenneth studiously avoided each other the whole morning. At lunch, Mr. Antrobus made an announcement as he was seating himself at the table.

'We've had a slight accident,' he said, addressing the two gentlemen. 'Donald, the gilly, has hurt his

foot chopping wood. It is not a cut, luckily, but he jammed his foot somehow with the back of the axe. It's not very serious, but it will effectually prevent his being on the hills with us to-morrow. Fortunately for us, his place can be filled until his foot is right again. And now, you two boys, I'll tell you what you must do. You'll go over to old Downie's this afternoon, and ask him to send Alec over to-morrow to be our gilly for that and perhaps the next day.'

John Downie was a small crofter, whose farm was situated in an adjoining valley a mile or two from Glenroy Lodge. Ralph and Kenneth had several times paid Mr. Downie a visit, for they had discovered two attractions existent in Homanthoul Farm. First, John Downie was an admirable gossip, with a marvellous repertoire of story, legend, and anecdote bearing upon the traditional history of the district, and other matters less classic and of more current interest; and he was at all times ready to unfold his budget to any good listener.

He was an old man now, and had surrendered the chief management of his farm to his two sons, so that he had abundance of time on his hands for miscellaneous conversation. Ralph and Kenneth enjoyed old Downie's stories, for John really possessed many of the qualities of a good *raconteur*, and usually made capital listeners.

The second attraction at Homanthoul was in con-

nection with Mrs. Downie, and was nothing more exalted than the scones and oatcakes which the old lady baked. Never was a lighter or defter hand with a girdle, whether for scones or oatcakes, than Mrs. Downie; and though she was now long past her physical prime, her skill in this direction had not yet abated a whit.

If you had been at all susceptible to such mundane things, I warrant you would have walked the distance from Glenroy Lodge to Homanthoul twice over any time to have been regaled with Janet Downie's scones and cakes, with the delicious butter thereto which the farm produced. At any rate, Ralph and Kenneth would have done so, and the proposal that they should pay the Downie family a visit on a fine afternoon like the present would at any other time have had for them nothing but agreeable suggestions. But now, in the existing relations between them, the prospect was entirely changed, and they contemplated anything but a lively walk together across the hills to Homanthoul. But there was no possible pretext by which either of them could escape the commission laid upon them by Ralph's father.

They left the house side by side, but as soon as ever they were out of sight of its windows, they separated, and put as wide a space between them as their path along the hillside would permit, which was frequently not great. And so they pursued their

way without once exchanging a word, or so much as deigning to cast a glance at each other, in sullen and moody silence.

They had surmounted the line of hills which divided Glenroy from the valley in which John Downie's farm was situated, were descending on the other side, and had just caught sight of the little house at the bottom of the glen. The road led along sloping ground, for, of course, it wound round the hillside, and the land on the boys' left hand trended rather steeply.

The character of the road at this point necessitated that they should draw closer together. They had walked on side by side, with not more than a couple of feet between them, for a few minutes, when the attention of each was arrested by the same object, namely, a rabbit squatting near a clump of heather a little off the path, not a dozen yards in front of them.

The rabbit was a fine fat fellow, and he was in the most tempting posture for a shot possible. When a boy sees an opportunity like that, having no gun in his hands, what is the most natural impulse with him but to seize a stone and let fly? The temptation is simply irresistible, and neither Ralph nor Kenneth were superior to it.

Each had a stone in his grasp in an instant, and simultaneously they cobbed at Master Bunnie. The

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aim of one or other, or perhaps both of them, was but too true. The rabbit gave a short, quick leap into the air, and stretched its length upon the heather; a brief, convulsive quiver, and it was as dead as Cæsar.

Ralph and Kenneth rushed forward, reached the rabbit side by side, and laid each a hand upon it at the same moment.

'It's mine! I hit it,' exclaimed Kenneth.

'Not if I know it. I cobbed him, I'm certain!'

'I tell you, I did. I saw your stone fly over his head,' answered Kenneth hotly.

'You've a knack of seeing that way; always in favour of yourself,' retorted Ralph.

'You shan't have it, any way,' said Kenneth.

'Won't I? I'll try to, though, and chance it.'

Ralph had his grasp upon the head of the rabbit, Kenneth on the hind quarters. Each of the boys tightened his clutch, and now a hot and desperate struggle began. Each strove to wrest the rabbit from the grasp of the other, and thus pulling and striving, they presently closed in a fierce wrestle.

Backwards and forwards the combatants swayed, and now the rabbit, torn and mangled, dropped to the ground, for the boys required both their arms free for the wrestle. Ralph was slightly the taller of the two, but Kenneth was rather heavier, and more broadly built, so that they were very equally matched, and the chances of the struggle between them about even.

Neither of the boys kept his feet long, however, for the sloping ground and slippery heath made their foothold difficult, and the struggle had lasted but a few moments when the combatants fell heavily to the ground, Kenneth slightly, but very little, uppermost.

Directly they fell to the earth they rolled over, and continued to roll down the sloping hillside, gaining in impetus with every yard. But they had no thought of relaxing their hold upon each other; their blood was now at boiling point, they were almost blind, and utterly reckless with anger and the desire for victory.

First one uppermost and then the other, they rolled fast and faster down the slope for a distance of perhaps twenty feet, when suddenly they ceased to roll; their bodies, still linked and knotted in a fast embrace, gave a leap, as it were, forward into space, and they fell perpendicularly downwards.

With a heavy concussion, which at last shook them violently asunder, the two boys again came to earth. Stunned by the shock, for a few minutes they both remained motionless and unconscious. Then Kenneth came slowly to his senses. He raised himself on one arm and looked around, and his glance fell first upon the form of Ralph lying beside him, rigid and insensible, with closed eyes and a face like death.

A great and terrible dread suddenly beset Kenneth, and made him cast aside, meanwhile, all thoughts of himself. He bent down over Ralph, and narrowly

scanned his face, and the next minute he had hastily torn aside the vest, and placed his hand on the heart of his prostrate companion. To his intense relief it throbbed, strongly enough, though somewhat unevenly. Then he caught up Ralph's hands, and began chafing them, for they felt colder than was natural.

'Ralph, Ralph!' he called, in quick and somewhat frightened accents; 'look up, old fellow; we're all right. Ralph, Ralph!'

In a moment or two Ralph slowly opened his eyes, and looked at Kenneth with a dazed and confused gaze.

'Where are we? What has happened?' he said in a vague and shaken voice.

'Why, we've rolled over a kind of precipice, and fallen on to this ledge. But we're all right so far; no bones broken, I mean—at least I don't think I have, and I hope you've not either.'

'I don't think so,' answered Ralph, still speaking slowly, and with the confused look not quite gone from his face yet.

There was no thought now of silence between the two boys. All that had happened between them during the last two days was as though it had not been.

'Can't you sit up, Ralph?' asked Kenneth.

'I think I can,' replied Ralph, and he raised himself to a sitting position.

'Did you know anything of this precipice being here?' asked Kenneth.

'No, I never noticed it before in going to the Downies'. You see no one could see it unless you went quite close to the edge.'

'No; and we must have rolled a good bit down the hill. This is what has saved us, you see,' and Kenneth, as he spoke, laid his hand on the heather at his side. The ledge on which they were seated was covered with a carpet of heather to the depth of several feet, and unusually thick and soft.

'If that had been a little less deep, we shouldn't have escaped without broken bones, Ralph—not alive, perhaps. I never saw such heather. But how do you feel now, old fellow?'

'Not much wrong, I don't think; but a little shaky and queer.'

The ledge on which the boys had fallen was several feet wide, and, sitting as Ralph and Kenneth now were, with their backs close against the wall of the precipice, their feet were less than a couple of yards from the brink of a chasm that yawned wide and grim beneath them.

'But, Kenneth, we're in an awful fix, don't you think?' said Ralph. 'How ever are we to get out of this? We can't climb up there, can we?' And Ralph looked up at the wall of rock that rose above their heads, as steep, flat, and bare as the side of a house.

'Impossible; there's hardly a bush, or a point of rock jutting out anywhere—scarcely a hold for foot or hand the whole way up. There's only one thing for it, Ralph, as far as I can see, and that is just to wait until they've begun to wonder at the house at our long absence, when they'll, of course, begin to search for us.'

'But will they ever think of looking here, Ken?'

'I hope so. Both Fergus and the Downies must at least know of the existence of this trap of a place.'

'But if they don't find us before it gets dark, Ken, they can't continue the search after that; and supposing we have to pass the night here, it would be dreadful.'

'Well, Ralph, if it does come to that, we'll have to face it with all the pluck we know, that's all.'

'I suppose so,' said Ralph, 'and we'll need all we've got, I reckon.'

After that the boys exchanged very few words. In truth, their position offered little scope for or temptation to conversation. They made a faint attempt every now and then at a renewal of talk, interchanging a few brief sentences; but by and by, by mutual and tacit consent, they gave it up altogether, and silence reigned between them. It was a cheerless and forlorn enough condition of things, to be sure, but neither of the boys felt himself capable of remedying it.

The hours passed slowly and drearily. As they

sat, the boys faced the west, and they could watch the sun descending the heavens, until its lower rim rested on the hill-tops; and then the glowing orb, pausing and throbbing a moment, its disc overflowing with palpitating light, dropped out of sight, and the hills and valleys flushed as though touched by a magician's wand into molten gold.

Directly the sun had set, the air began to grow rapidly chillier, as it is apt to do in the Scottish Highlands, however warm the day may have been. Ralph and Kenneth had nothing to protect them, except the clothes on their backs, and they were wearing suits of summer tweed. Ralph, moreover, had lost his cap; it had dropped off, either during the wrestle or in the fall over the cliff, he could not tell which.

The light lingered long among the hills, but at last died out on the highest peaks, while the shadows gathered dense and dark in the valleys. Ralph and Kenneth could only faintly discern the objects around them in the dusky gloom. The gulph yawning a few feet in front of them gathered an added awe and horror in the gloom.

The oncoming of night did not, it need hardly be said, mitigate the situation of the two boys. The darkness brought with it an increased sense of eeriness and loneliness. It was growing colder and colder, and they were becoming chilled and numbed.

'It's all up with our chance of being found to-night now, Ken, I'm afraid,' said Ralph at last. The boys had not exchanged a word for hours past.

'I'm afraid so,' replied Kenneth rather gloomily.

'How do you feel, Ken?'

'Only middling; cold rather.'

'So do I; but, though I'm so cold, I feel terribly sleepy, somehow; I can hardly keep my eyes open.'

'Just go to sleep, then, for a bit, Ralph; it can't do you any harm, and may refresh you a little. Just let yourself sleep, and I'll watch and see that you don't tumble forward. I'll keep a hand on your coat all the time for safety.'

'Thanks, Ken; I think I will just take a short nap, for I really can't hold up my head much longer unless I get a short sleep.'

'And look here, Ralph; you put on my cap for a bit—your head must be awfully cold—and I'll knot my handkerchief, and make that do me for a cap for a while.'

'All right; I'll let you have it again when I awake. Don't let me sleep longer than half an hour, Ken.' Ralph put on Kenneth's cap, laid his head forward upon his knees, and in a few moments was fast asleep.

Kenneth felt a degree or two more lonely than before with Ralph asleep by his side. But he was determined to let Ralph take a good sleep, and pre-

pared to face his solitary watch with as stout a heart as he could summon to his aid.

But by and by a new danger presented itself to him. He had not felt the least sleepy himself when Ralph mentioned his own feelings in that respect. He had then thought himself able to keep awake for hours to come. But he must have been mistaken, for now he began to be attacked by a feeling of great drowsiness.

He was chilled to the bone; his limbs were stiff and numbed from the constrained position in which he had so long been sitting, and which it was not possible to change. He seemed to himself to be losing all sensation in the limbs, and it may have been this feeling of weariness and deadness that was in some measure the cause of the heaviness that was fast mastering him.

He tried every device possible to him by which he might keep himself awake, pinching his arms till they must have been black and blue, and biting his lips till the blood came. But all was without avail. His head nodded more and more; his eyelids felt as though weighed down with lead. He felt that he would be asleep in five minutes more. There was only one thing for it. He must awake Ralph, and ask him to watch in his turn for a little, while he himself got a short sleep. He would be rousing Ralph sooner than he had at first intended; but Ralph had been

asleep more than half an hour, and might be sufficiently refreshed to give him (Kenneth) a spell.

Kenneth was just on the point of rousing Ralph, and had his hand upon his shoulder, when something suddenly struck against his face, stinging his cheek a little. He was thoroughly awake again in an instant; all sensation of drowsiness seemed to have vanished; all his senses were once more keenly on the alert.

It was quite dark now, and Kenneth could only see for a few yards around him; but he easily made out something dangling in front of him. He stretched out one hand,—still keeping the other, as he had never ceased to do during the whole of his watch, upon Ralph,—caught the object, and drew it towards him. Yes, sure enough, it was what he had thought and hoped for—a rope, and a stout and strong one too.

'Ralph! Ralph! wake up! We are all right—we are safe!' he cried, in a voice which he could not altogether prevent from showing the excitement he was feeling.

'Wake up, old fellow; look here!' he repeated, and shook Ralph by the shoulder as he spoke.

Ralph opened his eyes, and, after a little more rousing on Kenneth's part, was at length fairly awake.

'See! here is a rope, and there's some one on the top of the cliff holding it. They've found us at last. But let us be quick, Ralph; there's no time to be lost. I feel so stiff and dead in every limb that I don't

think I should have been able to move in a little while longer. Now, Ralph, you must be pulled up first. Do you think you can hold on to the rope all right?'

'Oh yes, I think so; the hope of being got out of this horrible place again puts fresh pluck into one. I don't think I could have held out till morning.'

Ralph now grasped the rope firmly in his hands, raised himself to his feet, and, twisting his legs tightly around the rope, allowed himself to hang on.

Presently the rope began slowly to rise, Kenneth watching its ascent from below with an anxious gaze until Ralph's figure was lost to his sight in the enveloping darkness. The minutes which Kenneth now passed alone on the narrow and dizzy ledge, in the cold darkness, were minutes of intense anxiety, such as boys of his age are but seldom called upon to bear. It seemed a long, long time until the rope descended again, but at last Kenneth held it once more firmly grasped in his hands.

He clung to it in the same way that Ralph had done, and was slowly drawn upwards. His head and shoulders were scarcely above the edge of the cliff when he felt himself tightly grasped by strong arms, lifted up, and laid gently on the ground; and the next minute he beheld Fergus, old John Downie, and his two sons, Roy and Alec.

'God be praised, bairns, ye're baith safe and soond,

exclaimed Fergus fervently; and that was all he said just then.

The men had a couple of shepherd's plaids with them, and Fergus now wrapped one of these about each of the boys. Ralph and Kenneth said they thought they could manage to walk home, but this Fergus and the Downies would not hear of. So they were lifted on to the stalwart shoulders of Roy and Alec, and, to say the truth, with no great amount of opposition on their parts. John Downie now turned homewards, and Fergus walked between Roy and Alec. Upon Ralph and Kenneth questioning Fergus upon the method of their discovery and rescue, the old keeper said:

'For a while yer delay in returning frae Homanthoul was no thocht muckle o'. They jest thocht ye had stayed tae tea wi' John, for a crack an' chat, as ye hae dune twa-three times afore. There wasna ony reason for yer bein' hame afore aucht o'clock, as that was the dinner hour the day, I understand. I could ha' telt them it wasna quite sae likely ye wad stay the day, knowing as I did the bit coolness there still was atween ye. But whan aucht o'clock cam', and ye werena hame, they began tae be a wee surprised. They pit aff the dinner a while; but they just concluded ye were relishin' Janet Downie's scones and cakes mair than yer ain dinner, and didna intend tae come hame till't at a', sae they sat doon wi'out ye

But whan it was past nine, and ye were still missin', they began tae be real concerned, and then they consultit wi' me; and I, knowin' what had passed atween ye yesterday, which ye seemed to hae concealed frae the rest, was of course a' the mair put oot and fear'd for ye. I tell't yer feyther, Maister Ralph, that we should set oot to see what had happened till ye at ance, and sae we did. Yer feyther and the twa gentlemen and mysel' started for Homanthoul. Whan we reached John's, and found ye hadna been there at a', ye may imagine our feelings. Though he tried to keep calm and steady, I could see yer feyther, Maister Ralph, was sair racked wi' doot and anxiety. John Downie, and Roy and Alec here, now joined us, and we began oor search for ye, separating intil three divisions. I needna gang intil the particulars o' oor search. It is sufficient to say that we could find no traces o' ye. We had lookit everywhere we could think o', but by midnight had to gie it up. By that time it was quite dark, ye ken, and there was little use searchin' farther for ye then. John, Roy, and Alec went back hame, and yer feyther and the gentlemen and me to the house. I needna tell ye o' the state o' all the people at the house when we cam' back wi'out ye. But I couldna rest at hame; the thocht o' ye on the hills, mebbe half-perishin' wi' cauld, drove me oot again, though I had nae hopes whatever o' findin' ye the nicht. But it was a kind o' relief to think I was

daein' something, ye ken. Sae I just slippit oot again, takin' a lanthorn wi' me, an' startit along the road for Homanthoul. As I walked alang, peerin' aboot me on this side and that, wi' a faint hope o' catchin' sicht o' ye somewhere, the thocht o' the cliff cam' suddenly intil my mind—I dinna the least ken hoo—but like a flash o' licht. I was drawing nigh the spot at the time, and that's the only circumstance I can think o' to mak' me connect the cliff wi' ye. I groped my way doon till the edge o' the cliff, haudin' the lanthorn afore me; an' just whan I had got wi'in a few feet o' the brink I caught sicht o' something on the ground, lyin' behint a bit whin bush. I picked it up, and it was yer ain cap, Maister Ralph, and naething else. An awfu' fear noo took possession o' me. In a moment it cam' upon me that ye had baith fa'en doon the precipice; and rememberin' hoo ye were on unkindly terms ane wi' the ither the noo, the idea cam' till me that ye had been fechtin', and in yer struggle rowed ower the cliff. The thocht was a terrible ane; but I still had hopes that ye micht na be deid, for I knew o' the ledge below, and I thocht ye micht hae fa'en on till that, and be there still. It didna tak' me lang to decide what 'twas best tae dae. I hurried on tae John's, roused him and Roy and Alec, and telt them tae gie me the stoutest rope they had; and wi' it we returned to the cliff. We lowered the rope just at the spot where I found the cap, and which I

had marked, and—ye ken the rest, bairns. And my heart's fair owerflowin' wi' thanks to the kind heavenly Father for giein' ye back to us safe and soond!' And as the old man concluded, his voice sank with the intensity of his feelings.

For a little, both the boys were silent. Then Ralph said:

'You were right, Fergus, in thinking Kenneth and I had been fighting. We rolled over the cliff together, just as you thought.'

'Weel, weel, Maister Ralph, I'm sorry to hear it; but ye'll no think o' keepin' up yer quarrel any longer noo, I'm sure?'

'No, we'll forget all that,' answered Ralph slowly; 'at least I mean to.'

'And so do I,' said Kenneth.

'Weel, then, mebbe there'll gude come oot o' yer misadventure after a'; ye'll jest be the better freends frae this time, and I'm sure ye'll neither o' ye forget who to thank this nicht for yer safe deliverance, for it's been a wonderfu' deliverance in mair ways than ane.'

'We'll try and remember that, Fergus,' said Ralph seriously.

'Fergus, did none of you see anything of a rabbit,—a dead rabbit, in your search?' asked Kenneth.

'A rabbit! Ay, Alec here pickit up a rabbit a' torn and bleeding, puir beast; and we wondered a

little, but we jest thocht some o' John's dogs had wurrit it, and we werena in the mood jest then to gie mony thochts till't.'

'Well, that was what we fought about,' said Kenneth, and then he narrated all the circumstances; and shortly after he had ended, the party reached the house.

The excitement and joy of all at home in the recovery of the boys need not be dwelt on. Poor Mr. and Mrs. Antrobus had not gone to bed, for they had found it impossible to do so; and, assuredly, no sleep could have come to them that night, with the thought of the boys out on the hills ever present with them. Ralph's sisters and Miss Vallack had indeed retired to their rooms, but not to sleep either; and now the whole household roused itself on the arrival of Ralph and Kenneth and their discoverers.

Mrs. Antrobus would listen to no explanations from the boys themselves that night. She had them both to bed immediately. But first, neither Ralph nor Kenneth forgot Fergus' advice, and though the prayer of each was short—for they were both wearied and worn—it was genuinely fervent and heartfelt. Their heads were scarcely on their pillows when they were asleep, overcome by the fatigue, excitement, and the strain upon nerve and brain they had come through.

Then the household heard the whole of the par-

ticulars of the boys' discovery and rescue from Fergus, Mrs. Antrobus and the three girls with beating hearts and tears dimming their eyes.

Ralph and Kenneth slept late into the following morning. When they awoke, they were conscious chiefly of two things,—of being exceedingly stiff in every limb and joint, and of being exceedingly hungry. The last sensation admitted of easy and speedy cure; but the former feeling was not so readily overcome. Both boys felt, as they expressed it, as though they had been 'pummelled for an hour from head to foot with boxing gloves.'

But nothing more serious than this resulted from their misadventure. Had they been compelled to pass the whole night on that dark and dizzy ledge, the effects upon them—if they had even survived till the morning and been rescued then—would in all probability have been of a much graver character.

Ralph and Kenneth were to have gone out with Mr. Antrobus and the two other sportsmen on the hills on the Twelfth; but now, in the present stiff and aching condition of their bodies, this was out of the question. Neither on that nor the two following days could they accompany the gentlemen to the hills. But on the fourth they both felt themselves in proper trim for the necessary exertion, and so Kenneth got, what he had been anxious to have before he left Glenroy, a day with the sportsmen upon the moors.

Though Ralph Antrobus had only as yet a gun licence, and not a shooting one, and Kenneth had not even that, Mr. Antrobus so far infringed the laws of his country as to allow the boys to have a shot or two at the birds with Ralph's gun, and the net result of their shooting was a brace and a half between them, an amount of success which quite satisfied them. Next day Kenneth returned home.

Ralph Antrobus and Kenneth Macleay have never had the slightest misunderstanding from that time to the present. There can be no doubt that the experiences here recorded welded the bond of friendship between the two boys more closely and strongly together; and it is my belief that they will now remain firm and staunch friends for life, and that whatever time of trial and sorrow may await either of them in the days to come, the other will be found standing by his comrade loyal and true through the darkest of the night.

ADAM RANSOME'S NEPHY.

ADAM RANSOME'S NEPHY.

YOU'RE right, sir; the lad's my nephy, son of my only brother. He remembers nothing of his parents; they both died when he was little more'n a baby. Tom was three year younger than me, and we was partners; we bought the boat yonder with our joint earnings. That's jest fifteen year agone come Easter.

Not long after we set up for ourselves, Tom married as well-favoured and good a lass as any in this parish or the next. They were jest as fond o' each other as any lord and lady in the land, but they weren't to be long together in this world, poor hearts! Bessie caught a kind o' low fever as was going round these parts that spring. Tom sat up and nursed her as tender as a woman, but all his care and watching weren't no use. The Almighty Father had willed it otherwise, and poor Bessie died; and the

day arter she were buried, Tom himself were down wi' the fever, and a week arter that he was lying by her side in the little graveyard below the hill there.

It were a heavy blow to me, sir, the death of both of them, for there hadn't an angry word passed 'twixt me and Tom since we were boys, and I had got to love Bessie like a sister; sisters proper Tom and I never had.

Tom knew well as he were dying, and kep' conscious a'most to the end; and on the last day, as I were sitting by him, he took my hand in his, and he says, in a faint voice as I had to bend close down to hear:

'Addy'—Adam's my Christ'n name, sir, and Tom allays called me Addy—'Addy,' he says, 'I leave the boy to you; you'll be a father to him I know, and that makes me feel quite content and easy. Good-bye, old man; it's getting dark with me like, but I see a light glimmering faint away to starboard. Them's the harbour lights, I reckon, Addy. Keep her up to the wind a bit. Good-bye, old man, good-bye.'

Them were Tom's last words a'most to a letter, for I've never let myself forget 'em. Tom died a good man, sir, a Methody, like many o' the folk hereabouts, as you may have noticed since you've been here. I've tried to be a father to Tom and Bessie's boy ever since that day, and he's been as good as a son to me.

Perhaps you're thinking as all this hasn't much to do with what you asked me to tell you about; but I jest thought maybe you'd like to hear something of how the boy and me come to be living alone here together. And it's a sort o' beginning to my story; and a man's allays got to tell a thing his own way, and mine's, maybe, a bit rambling, not being a scholard. But I'm going to get right to wind'ard of my story directly.

About two years ago a stranger gentleman came down here from Lunnon with his family for the summer months. He took a little cottage on the hill. Mr. Freeland were his name; I daresay as you've heard o' him, for I'm told as he's high up among the Lunnon artists, and gets prices for his pictures as I should hardly ha' thought possible.

Mr. Freeland came down here to Quaymouth, mainly for the sake o' his little son. The lad had had some sort o' sickness in the spring, and had not been gettin' back his strength so quick as could be wished. So his parents wanted some quiet sea-side place, where the boy might get plenty o' running about on the beach, and fresh air and sunshine; and the doctor having somehow by chance once been in our village, recommended it to Mr. Freeland as the very place to suit him.

You see they didn't want any o' the fashionable places where the Lunnon folk crowd in the summer

time, and make a kind o' little Lunnon of them for gaiety and fashion and all manner, and don't do themselves half the good they might get from being in the country a bit. They wanted to take their holiday as you're doing, sir, after the racket and din o' the big city, quiet-like and in freedom.

But Mr. Freeland weren't altogether idle here either. Them painters never can be, I reckon; sich is the natur' o' their business. He were allays taking bits o' sketches all around, boats, and rocks, and the neighbours' cottages and the like. And this brings me to how we became acquainted.

One morning I was a-mending o' the nets, sitting on an old bulkhead, smoking, much in the same position as I be now, only wi' the nets spread on my knees afore me, when Mr. Freeland strolled up, with his sketching-book under his arm and the lad by his side.

By this time I knew him quite familiar by sight, and used generally to touch my hat to him, and give him good morning, which he allays returned, bright and courteous, like the gentleman as he was. Well, this morning he stops and says:

'Good morning, Mr. Ransome,'—it seemed he had learned my name from some o' the neighbours,—'I'm going to ask a favour of you,' he says. 'And I hope, as it won't be troubling you too much, I should be much obliged if you would let me get a sketch of you,

just as you sit there mending your nets. I would get it done as quickly as I could.'

'You're very welcome, sir, I'm sure,' I says; 'and take as long as you please, for this job 'll take me a goodish bit o' time yet. I'm only sorry as you've not got a better subject to work upon; but I feel it an honour, sir, anyway.'

'Not at all; contrariwise, you'll be doing me a service. But just sit as you are, Mr. Ransome, and I'll get to work at once.'

And then he sat down opposite me and began, and I worked on at my nets; and presently we were talking together as free and nat'ral as though we had known each other for a matter o' years, such were Mr. Freeland's frank and pleasant ways.

In the course of an hour he had made my picture, coloured, and everything complete, as nat'ral and like as a phortygraph, and much prettier, with the nets and a coil of rope lying hard by, and a upturned boat behind, to make a background, as Mr. Freeland called it; all done to a marvel, so as it seemed to stand out o' the canvas.

Mr. Freeland seemed pleased and satisfied with the pictur' himself, as I could see, though he didn't say much. He asked me if I would care for another copy of it, as of course I said I would. It was the very thing I was wishing to ask myself, for it struck me it would look fine and bright hung up in the

cottage, and would please Will, which, to be sure, it did when he saw it.

Well, arter that, sir, Mr. Freeland and I became great friends, if I may say so of a clever gentleman like him and a plain, uneddicated man like Adam Ransome; and, what's more to the matter of my story, his little lad and my Will—I allays calls the boy my Will, the same as if he were my own son—became friends too, and constant playmates.

Both Mr. Freeland and his good wife, as pretty and pleasant a lady as you shall see in a June day, let the two lads mix as freely together as they liked, and had no sort o' foolish pride about my boy's being only a fisherman's son; for mind you, sir, Will is a clever little fellow, and main smart at his book, and one o' the best scholars in the school here. To hear him read *Pilgrim's Progress* or *Robinson Crusoe*, as he does to me o' stormy nights when it's too wild to be out in the boats, would fairly 'maze 'ee, sir, I do assure 'ee. The way he takes the long words, so easy and confident like, for a lad o' his size, is just a marvel.

Well, sir, the two boys, as I say, became real friends, and played about the beach and rocks as pretty as possible. It was holiday-time at the school, and whenever Will were not helping me in some way with the fishing, or nets, or what-not, him and little Jack Freeland were together.

Master Freeland were a slight-built little fellow, as pretty as a flower, but a deal too soft and delicate-looking, as any one could see; but every week he stayed here he seemed to get heartier-looking, and the pink and white in his face gave way to a fine healthy brown, which mightn't ha' been so pretty, but was a deal more nat'ral for a boy, in my opinion, and more comfortable for his parents to look at.

I could easy see as Mr. Freeland were very glad his son had taken so to Will, and that Will made so fine a playmate for him; for Will seemed to understand from the first that Master Jack were not over sturdy, and he made the gentlest, carefullest playmate to him could be. While he took him all about the rocks and the downs, and showed him every nook and corner and cranny, and taught him how to fish and catch crabs, and such like, whenever there was any more burdensome bit o' work like to be done, Will allays did it all himself. He never let Master Jack do anything as would overtire him. When I saw how mindful and thoughtful the lad could be, and him jest thirteen, it were jest a marvel to me; but then he were jest like his own father in that arter all.

But Master Freeland's main delight were to be out in the boat. Sometimes we all went, Mr. Freeland, Master Jack, Will, and me, when Mr. Freeland was minded for an arternoon's fishing, at which times his

good lady often went with us too; but more often Will and Master Jack were out in the dingy alone.

At first the boy's mother were nat'rally a bit doubtful about trusting him alone wi' a lad of Will's age, but pretty soon, when she found that Will could manage a pair o' oars and a small boat like the dingy 'most as well as I could myself, and was so careful about Master Jack in every way, she had no more fears.

Of course, I bade Will never to put up a sail; I don't think he would ha' done so in any case, as it were a bit risky, though Will can handle a sail as clever as any lad of his age in Devon. So the two boys rowed about in the fine summer mornings and arternoons, and fished and cruised around to their hearts' content; and Master Jack, under Will's teaching, were beginning to handle a light oar not so much amiss himself, and were growing generally stronger and more hearty in every way, when the time drew nigh when the family was to return to Lunnon.

It were jest two days afore they were to leave the place—a Thursday, and they were to start home'ards on the Saturday. The morning had been a day in a hunderd, as you may say—still, and soft, and warm, with the sea like shining glass, and the sky with scarce a cloud—one o' the kind o' days when God's beautiful world seems to ha' dropt to sleep, and the hills and the woods and the sea look dreaming.

About three o'clock Will and Master Jack started for a row in the dingy. It was like to be the last time the two would be out together, for I wanted the dingy myself the two next days. I helped them, as usual, to launch the boat, and Mr. and Mrs. Freeland stood by looking on and smiling. They headed the boat for the North Point out yonder; they were minded to drop a line under the lee, just round t'other side, and we stood watching them till they reached the headland. Then we turned away, and Mr. Freeland and me sat down on the beach for a smoke and chat, as we often did, and Mrs. Freeland walked homewards towards the village.

Without wishing to boast, sir, I may say as I think I know the signs o' the weather in these parts as well as most o' my trade, for I've been used to reading the sky and sea ever since I first began to use my wits at all well-nigh; but the oldest and shrewdest of us may be misled sometimes, and I was that day. I certainly did not foresee that there was to be any change in the weather for the next twelve hours at least, and I thought as the lads were as safe out in the bay as though they had been playing about here on the beach; but I were never more mistaken. We expected the lads would be back about seven o'clock, and it were about six when I first noticed a slight change on the water. Mr. Freeland and I had finished our chat some time; he had gone home, and

I was still strolling about the beach. A light ripple was ruffling the water, a mere 'cat's-paw,' as we call it. I daresay you know the phrase, sir.

From the sea I cast my eye up at the sky, and away to the horizon. There, low down to west'ard, rising up from the sea, was a small dark cloud—like a man's hand, as the Book has it. In half an hour more the whole horizon line were dark and stormy; a wind was rushing in from the sea, up-channel, that was churning the bay—as still as a glass only half an hour back—into white foam, and sending the waves hissing up the sands. I never, to my recollection, saw so sudden a change.

As you may believe, sir, I were not a little put about. I tried to hope that Will had seen the signs o' the coming change in time to get back before worse came, as I could now plainly see was coming; and I stood straining my eyes to catch sight of the boat rounding the Point.

Pretty soon I was joined by Mr. and Mrs. Freeland, who came hurrying down to the shore. The poor lady did not try to hide her distress and excitement; and though Mr. Freeland made a manful effort to suppress his, it were plain enough to be seen too.

By seven o'clock we could see no signs of the boat. The wind was increasing every minute. The sky was now wrapt in black clouds, not a speck of blue anywhere remaining; the bay one sheet of foam; the

boats dancing at their moorings like corks. Though the season were only the end o' summer, and the days still long, it got rapidly dark by reason of the stormy blackness of the sky.

By this time pretty nigh the whole village—men, women, and children—were out on the shore; for it had got about through the place, in that mysterious quick fashion in which such things spread, that the two boys were out in the bay.

I went to one man arter another to see if any was willing to put out wi' me in a boat to look for the lads, —for by myself I could not ha' withstood the high sea and wind for five minutes,—at the same time offering a high reward from Mr. Freeland. But no one would venture. I don't blame the men, sir; I didn't blame them then, and I don't now. They 'most all had wives and little ones, or else mothers and sisters, depending upon them; and a man must think o' his own kin first, though not of his own life.

All this while Mrs. Freeland were standing by her husband's side, clinging to his arm, wi' her eyes fixed upon the raging sea; and which were the whitest—her face or the foam—it would ha' been hard to say. The wind and the rain beat and buffeted about her slight figure, as looked like a willow slip for slightness in the wild night, and streamed her hair about her shoulders, and blew it this way and that, and she not seeming to heed the storm no more than the roughest

and hardiest o' the men. I 'most forgot my own heaviness o' heart when I looked at her.

By this time 'most all the women and all the children had gone back to the village, for the night had become too rough and wild for such to be out o' doors unnecessarily. At last Mr. Freeland, arter much entreaty, prevailed on his wife to go home wi' him. He was getting downright feared for her; and no marvel, for it were nothing short o' a peril for such as she to be so long exposed to such weather.

When he had seen his wife safe home, and stayed wi' her a while to comfort her all he could, Mr. Freeland was back again; and so he kept coming and going between his cottage and the shore all through the night.

For myself, I never left the shore all night—no man in my situation, as was a man, could ha' had a thought o' doing otherwise; and I aren't ashamed to say as I put up a bit prayer every now and then for the two poor lads, wherever they might be, to the Almighty Ruler o' the winds and waves, who holds them in the hollow o' His hand.

Well, sir, sudden and violent as the storm had been, it proved 'most as short as it was sudden and wild. First the sky grew a bit lighter, the clouds drifting inland; then the horizon line began to clear; the wind dropped more and more, and the sea was falling.

A little before the hour o' daybreak the gale was well-nigh spent.

Just at this time a lad—Dan'l Hood by name, as has no boat o' his own yet, but helps different parties, and has often given me a hand in the fishing—came to me, and says:

'I'll put out wi' ye now, Adam! I'd ha' offered afore but for thinking o' the old mother, who's none else to fend for her but me, as ye know.'

I accepted Dan'l's offer at once, for I would as soon ha' had him for a comrade as any in the place, for he's a fine, honest lad, besides main smart and sensible. My only hope for Will and Master Jack now was that they had been driven ashore somewhere, and been able to scramble to land; though I doubted much if Master Freeland could even then ha' faced through the night in the cold and storm. That the dingy had been able to live through the gale I had not the shadow o' a hope.

Mr. Freeland was at first inclined to go wi' us, but I persuaded him from it. He could ha' been no real help to us; for, though he could take an oar not amiss in smooth water, he was quite unaccustomed to rowing in rough water, and his being in the boat would only ha' hampered us. I think he saw this, for he did not press the matter, but went home again to stay by his wife till our return.

Dan'l and me soon had one o' my two boa

launched. The sea, though still rough, had so much fallen that we could make pretty good progress. We made straight for the North Point, keeping a keen look around us lest we should see any sign of a boat. If we had, it would ha' been bottom upmost, I doubt. But we saw nothing.

When we were abreast o' the Point, I informed Dan'l of my purpose—to go ashore and see if, mayhap, the boys had been driven ashore on the rocks.

Just opposite the Point, as you must know, sir, lies a long low island—Seagull Rock we call it, from the heap o' birds allays on it. It's little more'n a reef at high water, wi' nothing growing on it but a few stunted rock ferns and coarse grass. When I told Dan'l my intention, he at once said:

'But, Adam, we should surely first look on Seagull Rock. Don't you mind the wind was blowing more on to the island than towards the Point here — is blowing so still, in fact?'

I was silent a moment, and then said:

'Right, Dan'l, lad; anxiety must ha' put me off my head, I doubt, not to ha' noticed that. We'll just search the rock first.'

In a few minutes we had reached the island. I got out, and left Dan'l in the boat, as was necessary to keep her from grinding and smashing herself against the rocks. It was still little better than half dark—only a dim grey light abroad, for the morning had

not yet fairly pierced through the eastern sky. I had to guess and half grope my way over the rocks and rough, broken ground, sometimes fairly on my hands and knees.

I had thus got slowly round about two-thirds of the island, maybe, my hopes of discovering the objects of my search growing fainter and fainter every minute, when suddenly I stumbled against something lying huddled together under a projecting rock.

I bent down, peering, and feeling wi' my hands, and the next moment my heart gave a great leap into my mouth like. My hands touched something soft and round, but not warm—so cold that I fell suddenly to trembling, like a child beset wi' an awful dread. For a minute I was fair afraid to look closer, and had to pause to recover and steady myself.

It was the two lads, sir, sure enough!—I had not doubted that much—the two poor laddies lying close to each other, but in a rather different position. Master Jack was lying in a barren cleft of rock, just big enough to hold a boy o' his size and no more, and Will was lying huddled together like across the mouth o' the cleft, so as hardly any wind or rain could ha' reached Master Jack. Moreover, Will were just in his guernsey shirt—nothing more on his back! *He had taken off his little pea-jacket, and wrapped it round Master Jack;* and it's my belief, sir,—a belief as was only strengthened by after-consideration o' the

matter,—as it were that alone as enabled little Master Freeland to face through the night. Otherwise I believe the lad, softly and delicately reared as he had been, would ha' perished wi' cold.

Both the boys were fast asleep. Yes, it was sleep, thank God! and not what I had at first dreaded, and the thought o' which had taken from me, for the moment, 'most all power of motion. The first thing I did was to wake the lads gently, and the next to put a spirit-flask I had brought wi' me to their lips, and pour a mouthful o' brandy down their throats. Master Jack woke pretty quickly, but Will more slowly; and when his eyes were fairly open for a few moments, he looked up at me in a strange, dazed way as fairly frightened me again.

The drop o' spirits appeared to revive him a bit, his sense seemed to come slowly back to him like, and he tried to rise. But when he stood on his feet, he trembled like a willow wand, so as I had to grasp him by the arm to keep him from falling backwards.

So I just lifted him on my shoulder, and, taking Master Jack by the hand,—for he, too, was not over steady on his legs,—we made our way as quickly as might be back to the boat. We were close to it when Will, who had not spoken a word till now, said: 'Look, uncle, there's the last o' the poor little "Nancy." We ran ashore there, and we had barely time to scramble out when she was dashed to pieces.' There, sure

enough, strewn about on a flat ledge of rock, lay the shattered spars and planks of the little craft. I had not noticed it before in the half darkness.

The joy of Mrs. Freeland in the recovery of her boy—how she could not speak as she caught him in her arms for her voice being choked in sobs—I shan't try to describe; and I'm sure, sir, as you'll understand wi'out. Master Jack had taken no harm whatsoever. He had been sheltered, and dry and warm enough, comparative, in the cleft o' the rock. But it were not so wi' Will. Soon as ever we reached home I had him to bed—for he was strange like to look at, still cold and shivering—and fetched the doctor, who at once said as he had an attack o' fever and agy.

Hardy and used to all sorts o' weather as the lad was, it would ha' been little short of a miracle if he had faced through such a night, wi'out even the usual protection of his over-jacket, and taken no hurt o' any kind. I was thankful to the Almighty as it were no worse; and that morning, by the lad's bedside, I prayed wi' a heart I may say overflowing wi' gratitude, and as I hardly think I ever gave thanks before; for if the boy had gone, more 'n half the daylight would ha' died out o' my life. But Will got round, sir, arter being a week in bed, and a matter of a fortnight or more arter that getting back his right health and strength.

I told Mr. Freeland what I ha' just told you, sir,

in 'most the same words. He listened to me through wi'out speaking, and when I were done, he just says, wi' a kind o' soft, shiny light in his eyes like, and his voice shaking a little: 'Adam, your nephew has saved my boy's life. I haven't a moment's doubt about that,' he says. 'I shall never be able to repay him or you. God bless you both.'

Mr. and Mrs. Freeland said as they would like to ha' stayed to see Will further on to recovery, and I'm sure as they meant it. But Mr. Freeland had engagements in London on the day fixed for his return which he could not put off. But they made me promise to let them know regularly how Will fared, which I did.

Mr. Freeland did not forget Dan'l Hood, you may be sure. He put in the bank here to the lad's credit a sum as made a nice beginning towards buying the boat which it has allays been Dan'l's ambition to possess, as is nought but nat'ral. He's been gradually adding to that sum ever since, and it won't be very long now 'fore Dan'l has a trim little craft o' his own.

On the day of the family's leaving, as he were bidding me good-bye, Mr. Freeland slips a small packet into my hand, and says:

'This is for the doctor's bill, Adam, and for little luxuries and things for the lad; sick people require many extra things. It's a small matter, but gold can't repay the debt I owe him and you.'

But what he had put in my hand went far and beyond all ever Will needed, as the giver well knew it would. But that were Mr. Freeland's fashion o' doing things, and a main pleasant way it allays was.

It were a day or two arter Will were out o' his bed, and able to move about a bit, that there came a small packet from Lunnon addressed to him. Inside there was a fine little leather case, moroccy or summat like that, and inside that the handsomest little gold watch, and on the case, when you opened it, Will's name and Master Jack's were written, one under the other, wi' the date o' the month and the year on which the two lads were out all night on Seagull Rock together.

I'm keeping the watch against the time Will is old enough to wear it, which will be pretty soon now, and we're both main proud of it, I need not say, me almost more 'n the lad; and if you care to see it, sir, we'll just step into the cottage on our way back, and I'll be happy to show it to 'ee.

AN IRISH GIRL.

A STORY FOUNDED ON FACT.

AN IRISH GIRL.

A STORY FOUNDED ON FACT.

'I'M not going to do a line more of this Molière to-day for anybody. You can finish it if you please, Norah; I shall go for a ride.'

So spoke Mabel Farrel, and rose from her seat at the table.

'I think mamma would like you to finish the page, Mab, so that we may read it with her to-night,' said Norah, Mabel's elder sister, from her place at the other side of the table.

'Well, you may do it, but I can't. I've done more than half of it, and my head is beginning to spin. I know mamma would not wish that as a result of puzzling over *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme;* so I'll go and tell her that I'm off for a ride.'

Mrs. Farrel consented to her daughter's wish, as she usually did when Mabel exerted the whole strength of her powers of persuasion, with the determination to win her point.

'Which direction do you intend to ride, Mabel?' asked Mrs. Farrel.

'Along the cliff road, I think, and then I'll get a breath of the sea to blow the French cobwebs from my brain.'

'Then Donelly must go with you.'

'Very well.'

Mrs. Farrel and Norah stood on the steps in front of the house, and watched Mabel ride away, followed by Donelly the groom; and a little in the background stood old Bridget the nurse, who had been in the service of the family during the whole of her mistress' married life.

'I could almost wish, sometimes, that Mabel were a little less high-spirited,' said Mrs. Farrel, as she gazed after Mabel, who sat her beautiful little mare with an ease and grace that could hardly have been excelled. 'If she would only give a little more thought and time to her studies! She is almost a woman now, and I'm afraid that in education and knowledge she is hardly even average.'

'Mabel is just what she is, mamma, and you will never change her,' said Norah. 'You will never make her a book-lover. I don't think it any credit for me

to know more French and German and the rest than Mab, because reading gives me pleasure, while much of it only tires her. But about many things she is really not ignorant, you know yourself; she has plenty of practical knowledge, and I'm sure a kinder-hearted, better girl you'll not find in Ireland than Mabel, and that's best of all.'

'Thrue for ye, avourneen,' said old Bridget from behind. 'It's every word thrue she's saying, ma'am. The colleen's as honest as the sun, an' as swate as a nut all through. An' shure, what matthers her not being a great scholard? Hasn't Miss Norah enough learning—French, an' music, an' drawing, an' all—for a whole family? Bless her sweet heart, Miss Mabel will do wid what she has, never fear.'

'And though Mabel is high-spirited, and, perhaps, a little impetuous and hasty at times, mamma, she can be quite grave and serious sometimes too—and at the right times. Perhaps you don't fully know what a good Sunday-school teacher she makes; you would hardly think it. She is so gentle and patient, and can make the lessons so interesting besides. Why, she manages her class of little boys in quite a wonderful way. They are all as fond of her as though she had been their sister, and would follow her advice in anything. I am sure that is a great deal to have reached for a girl of Mab's age.'

Thus spoke Norah Farrel, in generous advocacy of

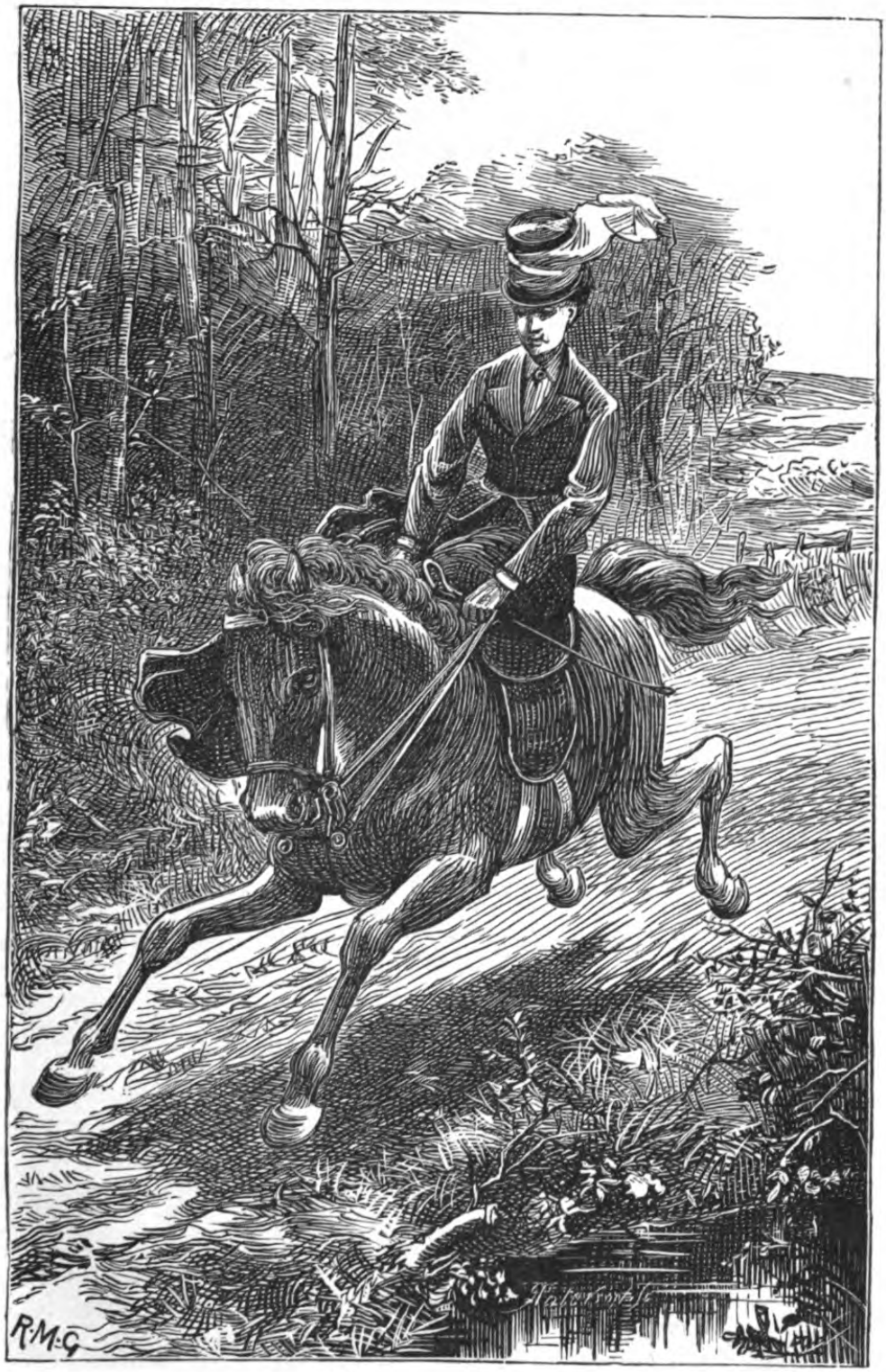
her younger sister, and Mrs. Farrel might well feel proud of both her daughters at that moment.

'I am not dissatisfied with Mabel, my love; you mustn't think that,' she said.

Mabel Farrel rode along a path that skirted a line of lofty cliffs, the road winding through a gently undulating country. It was a day in the end of March. The sun was bright and strong, but a rather keen wind was blowing; it drove the sea into furrows, and tipped every wave with a snowy foam-crest.

Mabel was enjoying her ride most thoroughly; riding was her favourite pastime. Aileen, her horse, cantered on with a smooth and easy stride, seeming to enjoy the exercise almost as much as his young mistress. The brisk wind blew in from the sea upon Mabel's face, bringing with it the fresh smell of the ocean, deepening the pink in the girl's cheeks, and streaming back from her brow her dark hair. She looked the picture of a fresh, pretty, healthy Irish girl.

The Irish coast-line near which the Farrels' house was situated was indented with numerous small bays, in most of which townships or villages were situated. More than one of these inlets was passed by Mabel in the course of her ride, and she could look down on them from her elevation on the cliffs.



AN IRISH GIRL.

Page 118.

Mabel had been riding for the best part of an hour, and had reached the summit of a little bay known as Stronacher Beach, when her gaze, which had been turned from time to time towards the sea, was suddenly arrested and fixed there. The sight which she beheld made her immediately tighten rein and bring Aileen to a dead stop. In a few moments Donelly was at her side.

'Look, Donelly, look! there's a schooner going ashore on Stronacher Reef,' she exclaimed in a quick, excited voice. 'I'm sure she will be on the rocks in another minute. Nothing can save her.'

Donelly, looking in the direction in which his mistress was pointing with her hand, beheld a small schooner running straight upon Stronacher Reef —a low, treacherous line of rocks lying across the entrance of the bay, immersed at high water, but now, at low tide, lifting a rugged, saw-like edge above the sea.

'There can be no doubt but ye're right, miss! God help the poor souls, for no one else can,' said Donelly, in a hardly less excited tone than his mistress.

'But we must do something to try and save them. There's a path down the cliff to the beach. Come on, Donelly; follow me,' said Mabel.

'It's not for the likes of you, Miss Mabel. It's too rough and rugged entirely. You'll break Aileen's neck, miss, and maybe your own too.'

'No, no, come along,' repeated Mabel, and she led the way down the rough, rocky path which wound from the top of the cliffs down to the shore, Donelly following as best he could. Their horses stumbled, plunged, and more than once all but fell, but at length reached the bottom of the cliff in safety.

'What will ye do, Miss Mabel, alannah? We can do nothing at all at all,' said Donelly.

'Yes, I can, or I'll try, at least. See! she's struck.'

As Mabel spoke, the schooner struck stern foremost upon the rocks, which were near enough for the two watchers on the shore to hear the grinding and crashing of the planks and spars, as the little vessel broke up and shattered to pieces.

'They're scrambling on shore, and there are women and children among them!' cried Mabel. 'We may save them yet; but we must be quick. The tide will soon be on the turn, and at high water the sea covers the reef deep enough to drown them. See, though, they have saved one of the boats. But they can never land here on the beach, the surf is far too great; the boat would be broken to pieces. But we can help them, I am sure.'

It was true that the shipwrecked people had managed to save one of the schooner's boats, and in it the captain was now placing the women and children, and a part of his crew as rowers.

The boat came on towards the land, but as she neared it, the rowers perceived the danger ahead, and its extent. There was no chance of landing in the midst of such a surf. If the attempt were made, though the men might escape to the shore by swimming, certain death awaited the women and children, from the breaking up of the boat and the strong indraught of the sea.

Moreover, there were others left on the reef who looked to the boat as their only hope of safety. The men paused in their rowing, deliberating as to what course to pursue, and dreading to approach any nearer to the shore.

Mabel paused for a moment, rapidly reflecting. Then she bent her head slightly forward. The action itself was almost involuntary, the effect of custom, but the thought in her heart, of which the gesture was the outward expression, had a deeper root. In every difficulty, strait, and perplexity — and Mabel was old enough to have experienced all these—she had been taught to seek, and had herself willingly sought, guidance and help from the heavenly Father.

'O God!' she murmured, 'give me strength to save these poor people. Support me through my task to the end — for Christ's sake.' Mabel had decided upon her plan of action, and did not hesitate a moment longer in putting it in execution. She

faced Aileen for the boat, and dashed into the surf, urging on her pony with whip and voice. But Aileen needed the whip but little, for she answered bravely to her mistress' call, breasting the white surf with gallant determination and spirit. Long before the boat was reached, the horse was in deep water and swimming.

'I'll take the children first,' exclaimed Mabel when close to the boat. 'I can take two at a time.'

The men reached over the gunwale and placed two of the children on the horse beside Mabel, and, with her burden clinging to her in terror-stricken silence, she rode back to the shore. Donelly came out part of the way into the water to meet her, and took the children from her on to his own horse.

'That's right; do the same each time I return,' said Mabel hurriedly. 'Don't come farther out yourself. I can manage the rest.'

Donelly was an old man, getting stiff and slow in all his motions, and though he did not want courage or spirit, was, by reason of his years, quite unfit for the task his young mistress was engaged in. He was doing as much as he could, and was glad to be able to help his mistress thus far, for his pity and interest were keenly excited for the shipwrecked people.

Again Mabel struggled through the tumbling breakers, gained the boat, and carried away two more

of the children; then an old and feeble woman, and then a young girl; and so she went and came between the shore and the boat, until all the children and women were got safely to land.

Then the men rowed back to the reef and took off the remaining portion of the crew and passengers of the schooner, and returned as near to the shore as it was safe to go. Mabel was not able to get the men to land in the same way as she had done the women and children, by reason of their greater weight. But these, by half clinging to her saddle, and half swimming, succeeded, one and all, in reaching the shore.

But Mabel's task was not over yet. The poor people, gathered in a group on the beach, presented a truly forlorn and pitiful sight,—the women worn out with terror, fatigue, and excitement, the children in a half-fainting state, or cowering and weeping at their mothers' knees.

'Stay by the poor things, Donelly, and I'll ride home as fast as possible for assistance.'

Drenched through and through, and by this time herself much worn with the fatigue she had endured, you can easily believe that it cost Mabel a strong effort to summon up sufficient spirit and strength for the remainder of her task. She had seven miles to ride before she reached home, and when she arrived at the house she had little more than sufficient

strength left to tell her story, while Aileen was at the last extremity of her endurance. But Mabel could give a sufficiently clear account of what had happened, and there was no need for her to say what remained to be done.

A couple of carts were sent from the house to the assistance of the shipwrecked people, Mr. Farrel himself accompanying them, and word was despatched to Shandon, the nearest village to the Farrels' house, for more vehicles. Thus all the crew and passengers of the ill-fated schooner were conveyed to Shandon, where they received shelter and accommodation, and were treated with all care and kindliness.

Mrs. Farrel had got Mabel to bed at once, and the brave girl, now fairly exhausted, fell immediately into a deep sleep, from which she did not waken for many hours. When she did awake on the following morning, she was aware of no very painful results of the great fatigue and excitement she had gone through. She was conscious only of a feeling of great tiredness. Her strong young frame, and her gallant heart, and the protecting hand of God had carried her safe and unscathed through all.

The first object Mabel's waking eyes fell upon was her mother, seated by her bedside.

'Is that you, mamma? You are up very early,' she

said. 'But I see how it is; you were anxious about me. Well, I am all right, I am glad to say. Nothing wrong whatever, except a considerable feeling of tiredness, just as if I had been dancing all last night. I assure you I have felt almost as tired after a night's dancing. But about these poor people; are they being seen to?'

'They were all taken to Shandon, dear, and are receiving every attention.'

'That's right. They all seemed rather poor people, I thought—working people, you know, though quite decent looking. I am afraid some of them must have lost all their clothes and other things in the wreck. But, mamma,'—and here a graver shade of expression came into Mabel's face,—'what wonderful strength I seem to have been given for my task! I knew that what I was about to attempt was a hard matter for a girl like me; and, mamma, I prayed to God in my heart that He would add to my strength and skill. That simple putting every matter into God's hands, and then going straightforward to the thing that has to be done, always has the effect—always makes you feel stronger and less doubtful, I mean, does it not?'

'I have rarely found it otherwise, my dear. Always hold fast to that conviction, Mabel; let no doubt or reasoning ever rob you of it, and not only will your strength be according to every day,

but according to your every strait and crisis, as it was yesterday.'

Mabel was silent for a few moments; then the grave expression of her face changed, with the suddenness with which the expressions of her features often varied, into an odd little look, part serious but part droll. 'But, mamma, wasn't it just lucky I didn't stay to finish that page of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme?*' she said. 'I might have been too late to be of any help to those poor people. Wasn't it fortunate?'

The story of Mabel Farrel's gallant deed was not confined to Shandon and the neighbourhood. It got quickly noised throughout the land, appeared in nearly every paper, and formed the theme of song to more than one rhymer poet, while in due time the Royal Humane Society presented Mabel with its medal.

But the fame her deed made in the world was not Mabel Farrel's highest reward, nor yet her handsome medal; though let it be at once confessed that this recognition of her conduct was very grateful to her. What was most valued by her was the heartfelt gratitude of the poor people whom she had saved from so sad and cruel a death,—gratitude that was expressed in many cases in but homely and unpolished fashion, but with tears in the speakers' eyes, that attested the depth and sincerity of their feelings.

And this was how Aunt Mabel won her medal. I have told the story as I have heard my mother tell it to us girls and our cousins, Aunt Mabel's own daughters. The medal is, of course, regarded as a sort of heirloom in the family, and will be, I hope, for many a day to come.

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