

# The Complete Crockett

*The Galloway Raiders*

*digital edition*

Scottish works



ROGUE'S ISLAND

S.R.CROCKETT

# Galloway Raiders Digital Edition

First Published by Faber and Gwyer in 1926

This Galloway Raiders digital edition published in 2021 is part of a decade long project (2012-2022) to bring the works of Samuel Rutherford Crockett (1859-1914) together in one place. The Complete Crockett comprises 66 published works, re-edited and re-formatted by volunteer labour to the highest standard.

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## INTRODUCTION

*'All my life I have had the love of the Out-of-the-Way. I have searched for it as for hid treasure, and as adventures are to the adventurous I generally found them.'*

This is the last of Crockett's posthumously published novels, not coming into print till 1926 and written perhaps nearly twenty years earlier. It is a rites of passage novel, written as juvenilia in the voice and from the perspective of one Jonathan Laurieston, who is a thinly disguised young Crockett. It tells the story, one which so many of us have our own version of, of that last glorious summer of childhood, the one that happens between leaving school and starting on the new, adult life – in his case, a place at university.

*Rogue's Island* was not published in Crockett's lifetime. It was down to his widow to see to its publication. The A.P.Watt archive holds details of correspondence between Ruth Crockett and A.P.Watt regarding the title. She is surprised to discover how long and hard he had to work to find a publisher. We might wonder why this should have been such a difficult book to place? I suggest the answer lies as much in the changing fashion of fiction as in the content.

Between 1896 and 1912 Crockett wrote what is essentially a series of children's books featuring the Picton-Smiths. They sold well, though the final one *Sweethearts at Home* didn't capture the public imagination as well as the earlier *Sweetheart*

*Travellers.* Times and fashion in fiction changed dramatically over a decade and Crockett, like most writers, had to write for the market in order to get published. While dating *Rogue's Island* is difficult, it is certainly from the later part of Crockett's writing career rather than the earlier. It is unlikely that it was written before 1907 (from contextual references in the text) and obviously had to be written some time before his death in 1914 if, as Watt stated, it had been around a long time trying to find a publisher. It's most likely that it was written somewhere around 1908 or 1909 after *Red Cap Adventures* and around the same time as *Sweethearts At Home* which was written several years before its publication date of 1912.

Early in his career, Crockett's autobiographical writing was of great interest to the public but later on his celebrity waned and with it the interest in his own life. His writing, of necessity, became more market driven and the market was changing. With *Rogue's Island* Crockett leaves the Picton-Smiths behind and tries something new. He places his own childhood slap bang at the centre of the fiction. It didn't pay off in his own day but it is a wonderful insight for us today.

To enjoy *Rogue's Island* you have to buy into the 'juvenilia' style. I have no problem with that. In many ways I can find Patrick Heron and sundry other of Crockett's ordinary boy heroes from Kit Kennedy to Duncan MacAlpine to Cleg Kelly in the character of Jonathan Laurieston. That's part of its appeal. And of course they are all versions of Crockett. *Rogue's Island'* perhaps gives us the most authentic 'Crockett in character' because it is the closest to the actuality.

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The story references many other literary works as diverse as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *The Newgate Calendar* and makes many witty observations (and jibes) about literature and publishing – especially as regards what makes ‘suitable’ reading material for boys.

The story starts with Crockett’s fictional version of his childhood town Castle Douglas, barely disguised as Cairn Edward and the town Fair. He tells us: *‘The Fair was held all up and down the High Street of Cairn Edward, from one end to the other. But the main influx of ‘shows’ was about the foot of the town, in a triangular spot, on one side of which rose the big freestone block of houses called ‘Willie’s Rents.’* And he goes on to give details about stalls, the Cross, gingerbread rabbits and a circus complete with elephant. The young boys Penley and Jonathan lap up the atmosphere with the declaration: *‘Penley and I felt that the world had nothing better to give - that is, for nothing.’*

The story swiftly moves on to the long summer holidays. There is a deal of self-referential humour to be found. The boys plan to spend the summer in the Galloway hills because they’ve read *‘The Galloway Reivers’* (surely Crockett’s own *‘The Raiders’*) and been inspired: *‘The Galloway Reivers had been published, and we boys of the town of Cairn Edward suddenly discovered that there was a part of our own native Stewartry full of mystery and swarming with legend. It seemed (on the map) quite near to us.’*

The boys are determined on adventure in the hills. However, like all good plans, it goes awry and they end up spending the summer on Rough Island.

*‘And now all our plans were changed by the*

*minister lending us a tent. It was not as good a tent as he was a minister. But it was big, and you can't have everything.'*

Rough Island is a more prosaic place than Crockett's fictional version of nearby Hestan, 'Rathan' Island but the adventures are familiar to anyone who has read Crockett's adult fiction.

*'Who has not seen Rough Island, has seen very little. It is a Paradise for boys, and I would rather be a boy on Rough Island than either Czar or Kaiser. Of course I have not tried these latter positions, while I have been a boy on Rough Island.'*

The Tower of Orchard Dean on Rough Island is a re-sited version of Orchardton Tower, whereas Peninsular House is a picture of Orchardton House as it was in the mid/late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Anyone who knows this part of the Galloway Coast will recognise the settings of the story.

*Rogue's Island* is very much a boys' own adventure. It is equal parts tongue in cheek romp and insight into some deeper questions regarding the relationship between romance and reality- '*It appears (when you first read about it) dreadfully romantic to live in a cave, going exploring, having baskets let down and so on. But after the first day it gets fearfully dull.'*

The conflict is not just one for adolescence. The Colonel (a figure we may find familiar from Cleg Kelly) is an elderly man living a complete fantasy. Mr Trevor, who is less of a hero and more of an adult role model, shows compassion in abundance and teaches the boys some valuable lessons in how to handle the competing life claims of romance and realism.

*'Mr. Trevor undisguisedly winked at me. I began to*

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*smell out the truth. The Colonel was romancing - with a difference. He was not lying. He had told the tales so often that he had come to believe in them himself, and I verily believe that he would have challenged any one to fight a duel who had doubted his word about the four winners of the Derby, and the great historic race for the America Cup.'*

The tension between romance and reality is at the core of *Rogue's Island* making it a deeper and more subtle book than it might immediately appear. As ever, it's a mistake to underestimate Crockett's writing. Look beneath the surface and you will find depth.

A decent role model is seen as a valuable asset and in *Rogue's Island* we see one in Dr Causland (a picture of Crockett's own teacher Cowper who helped him win the Galloway Bursary and become a 'lad o' pairts').

*'You see a fellow may like his schoolmaster very well. But after all, he is a schoolmaster, and you can't talk to him or even be grateful to him - at the time. Mark me, I say, at the time. Afterwards, you heap blessings on his head - the very head that you would at one time gladly have saluted with half a brick. If you and he live long enough, very likely you become great pals, and don't think of the times he caned you, any more than of your mother turning you across her knees, into the position most suitable for inculcating the elementary virtues.'*

*But a schoolmaster, even one so good as Causland - and there never was any better - has to take his gratitude upon long credit.'*

But the best role model is Mr Trevor – perhaps something of a wish-fulfilment father figure for Crockett. Jonathan admits: 'I now see that to know a

*proper, kindly, unpretentious, non-preachy Christian gentleman is about the best thing for a chap of my age - of any age indeed - but especially when a fellow begins to think that he knows everything, and can do everything. The Doctor did me a lot of good - oh, an awful lot. But then it was mostly head work, whereas I think that Mr. Trevor helped me not to be altogether a lout.'*

Like Shakespearean comedies, the battle of the sexes is also constant throughout. Jonathan has to deal with love in the form of a multiplicity of girls, at an age where he'd still rather be having adventures with boys. This makes for much humour and no little reflection on the relationships between the sexes.

Jonathan is dismissive of 'good advice' regarding behaviour between the sexes: '*Because a great man when half asleep, wrote down such 'gobble-gobble' hundreds of years ago, people who know much better go on forking out the old palaver, and feeding it to the young and innocent mind - which, however (I will say to its credit) receives the hoary 'gobble-gobble' with suspicion and soon corrects it by the teaching of experience.*'

And yet, the Causland girls, Girlie May and Cecille Garnier, provide rather too much love interest for Jonathan; however manfully he tries to manage the situation he never really understands it: '*It's a fine night! says you, just for something to break an awkward silence. And immediately the girl thinks, 'Ah, he says that because he wants to see me home or ask me to go a walk with him!' There are no proper Socialists among women. Like true Scots they are all individualists, and the number of each is One. Oh, I don't mean as to being heroic and sacrificing*

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*themselves! Oh, no, I know better. We men are selfish pigs as compared to women. But all the time they are doing it, they are saying to themselves ‘What is he thinking about me?’*

Here, Crockett pays homage to two boyhood friends. In Penley we see Andrew Penman who went on to become an engineer. Penman Engineering is now a global company. And in the boy artist Fitz we see Crockett's lifelong friend William MacGeorge who shared lodgings with him in Edinburgh and who went on to become a well-known artist in his own right. MacGeorge makes an appearance in the Sweetheart books as well as in *Little Esson*. The friendship between the boys is clear despite the brutality with which they seem to treat each other. For my money *Rogue's Island* offers an interesting insight into the social dynamic of the teenage 'gang' (in an earlier sense than we understand gangs today of course!)

*Rogue's Island* also explores juvenile views regarding politics and society: 'But after all, our internal troubles were only those of finance, such as are common to all civilized peoples who know what tax collecting is. Perhaps, though, as the Doctor said, our little island, the revolt of Fitz, and the coercion of Bob, showed the trouble which assuredly lies ahead, if ever, as some people think, Britain becomes a big socialistic republic. At any rate ours was the first English-speaking island to be ruled on strictly Socialistic principles. But we could not have done it, if we had not had a really strong Executive Power - that is to say, Penley and me.'

Jonathan espouses a sort of 'might is right' philosophy, while imagining he's creating a socialist utopia. But principally he is, like most adolescents,

rather too sure of his own rightness and determined that his views will hold sway.

There is no point criticising *Rogue's Island* for being 'juvenile' – that is precisely what it is intended to be. Jonathan Laurieston is a modern day Patrick or Maxwell Heron, his views of society and government are mixed and partisan. But we can find many interesting nuggets of information about socialism, despotism and views regarding government and society in the 19<sup>th</sup> century from reading *Rogue's Island*. It's not exactly *Lord of the Flies* but it is a precursor – and perhaps for all its domestic 'ordinariness' more believable than that later classic work on the social interactions between boys. There are a myriad of asides on authority, social class and the like which season the book beyond its juvenile stance.

Crockett knows the problems of being a boy. His fictional alter ego has endless trouble because of his name Jonathan: '*I also learned to know my own place in the scheme of things. I was slim, uninstructed, unready, knobby about the elbows, and was called Jonathan. So I was thumped in corners for the good any soul, and without much injury to my body - till in time I learned to correct all these deficiencies - all, that is, except the Jonathan.'*'

The battles fought with the Killantringan boys are reminiscent of those against the 'Smoutchies' in the earlier Picton Smith stories – but are also perhaps universal among groups of boys. These battles, firmly in the realms of childhood, take precedence over the more adult activity of smuggling which is still seen to be occurring in the Solway of the time.

In *Rogue's Island*, there are always adults at hand both as role models and figures of fun. These men

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and women are fighting a battle of their own, trying to ‘civilise’ their young – against the fierce adolescent desire for freedom and licence. The ‘crew’ on *Rogue’s Island* are deeply reminiscent of the boys on Isle Rathan – but the Rogue’s Island boys are more real, not least because the story is real; at least within the bounds of romance and realism which Crockett himself both sets up and explores throughout the story.

What’s interesting in *Rogue’s Island* is that this is an adult writing what might pass for juvenilia. And as such it stands up remarkably well. It’s not a mark of weakness as a writer, in fact it’s really a mark of versatility and strength. To be able to put himself back into the mind of the young person is a great skill.

As the summer ends in this fiction, Mr Trevor is able to sort out practicalities of the future for the boys, leaving Jonathan to reflections which might be familiar to many: ‘*Cecille and I affirmed that nothing would ever tear us apart - that we would always think of one another and so on. Just what very young folk always say!*’

And ‘*One thing is certain. Never will we have such a holiday as we had on Rough Island - nor any flounders so good (though there will be trout and gypsies and Murder Holes!).*’

As always with Crockett we should not overlook the small details. There’s plenty in *Rogue’s Island* about food and cooking – including details of the boys diet: ‘*Cold beef, potatoes, salad, mustard and salt - enough, but not too much so as to cloy the appetite or overtax the stomach. Only, the same amount could be counted on every day for a solid week.*’

Their budget being considerably more limited than their appetites, it is not surprising that the adolescent boys' interest in food is constant. They have a battle over wild strawberries and procuring fresh milk is a constant concern – as is the milk-maid Girlie May with whom their transactions extend beyond the purchase of milk! And they have to rely on the kindness of adults: '*He asked us if there was anything we would like. And we said, 'Oh, potatoes!' Not as a joke or to be cheeky. But you see we began to get quite empty inside, thinking of potatoes and the different ways of doing them - in their skins all mealy and nice (with butter, o-o-ooooh!) boiled in milk, or best of all battered in an iron pot ('rummelt' is the correct word) with milk, some cream, and the little cubes of cheese mixed all through to give a flavour.'*'

There are extended passages about rock-climbing (climbing was a passion of Crockett's from his early youth) which should resonate with those who like the sport today. These are amongst the most descriptive and exciting passages of the book. Like Crockett, Jonathan 'could climb like a cat.'

Crockett, through Jonathan, explains: '*There was hardly a roof in the town of Cairn Edward I had not been astride. The crumbling eighty-foot wall of Castle Thrieve, a very cliff of masonry, was safe and familiar to me as my own bed. If there was anything that was too difficult for me to climb, I did not know about it - or I should have had a shot.*

*In the days of my hot youth, I own that I have occasionally done it 'to show off.' But in more recent times the passion of climbing for climbing sake had grown upon me, and I used to seek out cliffs on the hills and heughs on the sea-board for the pure sake*

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*of conquering them.'*

The cliffs of Rough Island offer their own set of challenges and these chapters are as fine, perhaps even finer, than any similar in *The Raiders*, *The Dark o' the Moon* or the short stories in *Bog Myrtle and Peat* which involve climbing. Here's an example: '*It was a ripping fine morning for our project. The sky lightly overcast, with nice thin fleecy clouds, that let down the rays of the sun as through ground glass - stopping most of the heat but leaving all the light that was needed.*

*This was particularly good for climbing. For the glaring sun right overhead makes the rocks slippery, besides giving you hot coals of fire in the back of your neck - a feeling which becomes dangerous as your head begins to swim. Indeed, there is a point beyond which you don't even try to save yourself. Your skull grows empty as a drum and all that you think of is that yonder is the sea two or three hundred feet beneath - so cool and creamy and desirable! Fact! I've been there. Believe me if you like. Only if ever you feel like that, think on all your sins, the very worst ones - and hang on with feet, hands, teeth, and as the saying is, eyebrows. It is a sort of steam hobby-horse feeling - the world going round and round - all except the sea, which stops still, waiting for you down below, cool and so inviting. So mind and hold on like grim death. For however pleasant it may look, that is what it is - just grim death.'*

There is also a deal of insight into practical religion in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century which might surprise a modern reader's expectations, with the back of the woodshed offering more instruction in morality than any Sunday school. For Jonathan's grandfather, religion seems to have gone soft. In his

day, ‘Religion was not then made a lollipop, nor were children asked whether would they like a little more sugar in theirs.’ And while he makes the boy promise to read from the Bible each day, his attitude to prayer is somewhat unexpected.

Crockett’s powers of observation are great. His ability to go back into his own memory and recreate it make him a writer who, however you respond to the plot, can keep you interested in the reality of his detailed description, not just about the natural world around him but about the nature of people as well. From the two farm dogs called ‘Comma’ and ‘Full Stop’ who belong to Father Knock to the mapping out of an island and the use of air guns and salmon netting... there’s plenty more than I’ve mentioned here to make *Rogue’s Island* well worth the read. *Rogue’s’ Island* is a book that deserves to be a lot better known than it is, and one that I’m proud to have helped get back into publication after so many years in the wilderness.

I leave the last word to Crockett, as is only fitting: ‘*When in doubt, always shut your head and... observe! Take my word for it, you are not wasting your time. They say in our country ‘Keep a thing seven years and you will find a use for it.’ But I say, ‘Remember a thing... exactly, mind you... thirty or forty years and you will find a place expressly hollowed out for it, where it will grow and branch out and seed like a potted plant!*’

*Callie Phillips  
June 2022*

## CHAPTER ONE

## HOW I BECAME (TEMPORARILY) A 'GOOD BOY!'

'Death to all traitors!' I shouted, as I ran at full speed through the Espie Wood in search of Andro Penley. I was going to slay Penley. He was my dearest friend, but nevertheless, his blood must stain the heather. I had told him so, and I was armed for the purpose with a wooden sword and a fir cone. Deadly things are cones - when you can get them, where I intended Penley should receive his, on the noddle.

It was our usual Saturday afternoon, so Espie Wood, and the whole of the Isle Peninsula had been filled with shrieks and howls, the blatancy of triumphant battle, and wails of the vanquished unwillingly tendering their backs to the smiters.

The right side had won. I forget now which side that was, but it was mine at any rate. French or Scottish, French or German, Russian or Turk - it did not matter. Whichever cause was mine was the right-sided one. Mostly, too, the winning one - unless there were too many against me.

Today there were only Penley and FitzGeorge, and a I could lick them both, they took to the trees. This I considered an unfair and mean action. For suppose that I climbed one tree after Penley, then FitzGeorge would get off, and *vice versa*, as Dr. Causland would say. Dr. Causland is our schoolmaster and senior providence for five days of the week. But on Saturdays *I* keep order and it does not so much matter.

But I forgot to tell you that I am Laurieston of the Sixth - a day-boy at Causland's, and can lick any fellow in the school. Indeed, if it were not for appearing to boast, I wouldn't mind at all having a turn with one or two of the undermasters. My other name is Jonathan.

Ah, the torment that name caused me when I was too little to hit back - I mean argue with tight-shut hands in the interests of peace - you would not believe. Many a day I have gone back crying to my mother, who was just as sweet and dear an old duck as you can imagine - one cork-screw curl behind each ear, that was always shaking, and the rest of her hair (which had once been fair like mine, but was now getting silver streaks in it) all laid down smooth as a mill-dam. And if any boy at Causland's did not say that she was quite lovely, I'd have punched - I mean I should have endeavoured to convince him different.

And mother always said that my grandfather, who was a great and a good man, was called Jonathan. So was his father before him - who, apparently, was a greater and a better man than any of them. In short, she served out to me just the sort of argumentative pig-swill women feed up to children in the way of business. As if I didn't know, and didn't get the information punched into me each day of the week in every corner of the playground that was not overlooked by Dr. Causland's windows. And there were a dreadful lot of these secluded spots - or so at least I thought when first I went to Causland's.

It was a good big school for a country town, lots of boarders, who looked down on us town boys till we punched... I mean showed them in an earnest and helpful way, how wicked was the spirit of pride in

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such as they. We never minded the trouble of doing good at Causland's - not if it took us half an hour behind the playing sheds to finish it proper. That shows the kind of fellows we were in those days.

But of course there was a long sad time after I arrived from the little country school, during which I found out that, in the way of thrashings, it is more blessed to receive than to give. I also learned to know my own place in the scheme of things. I was slim, uninstructed, unready, knobby about the elbows, and was called Jonathan. So I was thumped in corners for the good any soul, and without much injury to my body - till in time I learned to correct all these deficiencies - all, that is, except the Jonathan. And even that was softened. It was a proud day, when, after beating Tom Craig, and asking him three times what was my name, he replied 'Johnnie! Johnnie! Johnnie!'

'Not Jonathan!'

'No,' said he, 'certainly not!'

'And never was?' I continued, arguing with my hands twisted about his stiff collar and a knee upon his chest.

'Never was!' he gasped.

And if he had been truthful as George Washington himself, I have reasons to believe that it would have been just the same. And at that moment I believe he thought he was telling the truth. He considered it his duty to say what he did.

So 'Johnnie Laurieston' became my school name, except when roll was called by a new master or Dr. Causland himself. Generally the new master soon took in the situation, but Dr. Causland, though the finest man in the world and the ablest-bodied - was not a gentleman open to argument. He had an

objection to it, and so (to tell the truth) had I. Therefore, I did not attempt to alter his conclusions, even when, as occasionally happened, I knew that his premises were hopelessly wrong and his logic would not stand a moment's examination.

You see, he was the Head, and I respected his office. Besides, Taylor Thompson and Harry McGregor, late of the sixth, had both tried it and were sorry for as much as a fortnight. I could see them making a grimace each time that a twinge of conscientious remorse came over them. This occurred chiefly when they bent to sit down on the hard school benches. McGregor said that he could have argued with Causland till he was blue in the face, and proved to him that he was all wrong - that is, if he could have done it on paper, or at a distance, with several referees - strong, prize-fighting chaps, to keep the Doctor in his place. But then Causland never did this. He was far too quick, and McGregor said that his behaviour would never have been allowed in Parliament, of which his own father was a member.

But now that you all know about me, I will tell you about the Sunday before the Summer Fair. It was a joyous occasion in Sunday School, and our teacher, Mr. Dobie, a tall thin man, black haired and melancholy, with the mouth of a conscientious oyster - an oyster that had been opened and would not shut again, because its feelings were hurt - said that never, no, never, in the long course of his experience had he known us so inattentive. This was saying a good deal, for Mr. Dobie was not interesting. And often and often I have read the whole of my new Sunday School library book - yes, from end to end, during the lesson, and asked the

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librarian for another at the close because I knew all that was in this one. He was a young man and smart, quite different from Mr. Dobie. He used to ask me questions to try me, but he never once caught me out. Once, though, he nearly did. For the book he had given me (I was an omnivorous reader in those days and difficult to satisfy) was Hitchcock's *Religion of Geology*. Now as I had just been having a course of Geikie and Jukes at school, this made Hitchcock seem a little mouldy. But, bless you, I rattled away about *strata*, and Hugh Miller, and old Red Sandstone and the dinosaur. It went all right till the librarian snapped the book to, and put it on the shelf, saying, 'I gave you that book - I am convinced I did - don't deny it - at two o'clock today, and I am equally sure that you could not possibly have read it!'

Which shows how near a court of justice may come to the truth and yet pass without a touch. I breathed freely, stud lo! when I rejoined my class, it was time to sing the parting hymn. It was Mr. Dobie who officiated in turn (don't think I don't know the proper words!), for the minister of our church having an evening sermon to think of, only looked in for the opening, and not always then.

So Mr. Dobie stood up and gave without a quiver of shame his favourite hymn:

*'I'm a little pilgrim  
And a stranger here!'*

And as for me I stood aghast to see him so calm, standing up before all the school and telling such a – well - such a stretcher - when he was six foot high and had never missed a Sunday, rain or shine,

within the memory of boy.

'Stranger here, indeed!' I wondered that the floor of the church did not open and swallow him up as the earth did Korah, Dathan and Abiram (I think it was), but I may be wrong, for it is a long while since I was in Exodus, or wherever the long chapters are, all about the fitting up of the tabernacle. Mostly they keep us big fellows away on in Daniel and the Revelations, which suits me. Because, you see, I can think up new historical explanations in my odd moments, dates and all correct, to pose Mr. Dobie with. And he is such a conscientious man that he never contradicts you as to facts and things you tell him, even though you have made them up on the spot. But he has to go and look them all up in his encyclopaedia - which takes till next Sunday and by that time you have forgotten what you said, and are quite prepared to agree with his particular Bible Dictionary - or in fact with any other. If you are like me, you are not particular in that direction.

Well, I talked this over with my grandfather, who does not in the least mind being called Jonathan (how times change!) And he does not hold with the new-fangled Sunday Schools at all. He was born before them, he says, and *his* father, Jonathan I, taught him the *Westminster Catechism* and the *Psalms in Metre*, by Francis Roos. Just that and nothing more. Only if he did not know them, Jonathan I made an appointment with Jonathan II to meet him down at the woodshed. And as grandfather said slyly, *that* 'calling' was always 'effectual.' But hymns about 'little pilgrims' who cannot get within the kirk door without taking off their tall hats - my grandfather cannot away with! The best he can say for them is that, on the whole,

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they do no great harm and may possibly keep some of the younger boys out of mischief. But as for me, he was going to put me through the first four pages of the 'Proof' Catechism that night, and I had better be letter-perfect on account of the woodshed and the fact of his (my grandfather's) bodily strength not being one whit abated. At call-over every one had to answer to their question in turn, but only I, as being newly off the irons, had to furnish Bible proofs as well. Even grandfather would take a sly 'keek' at the book sometimes, just to check my imagination. This, he said, was the right kind of household instruction, and worth all the Sunday Schools in the world. Maybe he was right. At any rate it is certain that I have never forgotten what grandfather made me learn, and can reel off page after page of the Westminster Assembly's Catechism. Whilst as to what Mr. Dobie said about Daniel, with that sidelong chewing movement of the mouth, it has gone into the Wastepaper Basket of Eternity, in company with my mathematics, Miss Barbara Celarent (which is Logic), shorthand, the explanation of the 'little horn' and - oh, loads of things that I once knew and now know no more.

There is a waste somewhere in ordinary instruction. My grandfather, worthy man, never said 'If you are a good, *good* boy, you will come prepared with your lesson next Sunday!' No, quite the contrary. He only looked at the woodshed, and his eyes took on a faint, far-away expression, while he murmured as if to himself, 'I learned a lot down behind that woodshed myself when about your age!'

A fine upstanding, sinewy man was my grandfather, an elder of the church, and much respected by everybody. He could fell a tree with any

man, and once he even came near to felling me - just for a little slip of the tongue which he mistook (but not so very much either) for impudence.

But of course all this 'is of the olden time, long ago,' - fearfully unmodern. Religion was not then made a lollipop, nor were children asked whether would they like a little more sugar in theirs.

Fancy my grandfather! But then there is no doubt that, though senior elder, he was dreadfully behind the times. However, from that outlying pinnacle of Horeb on which I stand at present, I think the woodshed infinitely preferable to Mr. Dobie of the sidelong mouth, the 'little horn' and his eternal 'Please *do* be a good boy!'

A well, a-well! It was the Sunday before the Fair, and I remember that Mr. Dobie had never been so tiresome, or so involved. I was so eager to get away that even my library book lost its savour, if it had one. And I could not rouse up enough spirit even to furnish a few imaginary dates concerning the three or four prophetical monarchies and the ten kingdoms.

We of the Senior Classes cleared out of the Sunday School that afternoon with a gust of suppressed happiness. If it had been any other day or place, we would have howled as we ran. The ranks of Tuscany could certainly not have forborne to cheer - save that the minister kept the bridge. He gave us each a penny as we went out through the gate, with a kindly nod and an advice to be wise and guarded in our spending of it. He also said that boys who had a great many pennies to spend at the booths of the fair, would perform an action meritorious in itself and not without immediate physical comforts, if they should give of their

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abundance to those who were lacking.

That was the way Mr. Mavor talked - a little plump, rounded man, with the glossiest crown to his head you ever saw, and spectacles so strong that they made his eyes apparently bulge out like gooseberries. I don't think many fellows took Mr. Mavor at his word. Not even though he told us about the Good Samaritan, and said that we would achieve the same sort of undying fame.

But for myself I did not care much about that. I had not too many pennies anyway, and if anybody were to call me a 'Good Samaritan,' he would hear of it on the deafest side of his head - yes, if he were as big as a house.

I admit it, we were a little exalted that afternoon. But the need of preparing the four pages of the Westminster Catechism, and the red roof of the woodshed lifting itself up solemnly at the pasture-end, calmed me. Now I am sorry for all the other chaps who have never had such a view and such a grandfather. They were most awfully tonic. And if any of my fellow Sabbath Scholars have gone to the bad, I must put it down to the lack of a conscientious, muscular, Cameronian grandfather, and especially to that peculiar enchantment which distance lent to the view—of the red-roofed woodshed.

## CHAPTER TWO

### I FALL AWAY FROM GOODNESS

I could wager that no boy in Cairn Edward slept much that night. I know one who did not. I should have thought it a profanation. So would Penley. Besides, he had lost a sixpence in silver coin, and kept wondering whether his brother John had found it. He even argued with himself whether he should get up out of bed and thump John fraternally for the sin of stealing - a brother cannot be too careful, especially when his sixpences are few. But Penley recalled in time that - first, that he had no proof, and secondly, there was a hole in his trouser pocket - and that his brother knew of it. So he forbore, and tried to fix his mind on the joys of the morrow. For the Fair Day was a whole holiday at Causland's. It was popularly believed that if Causland had summoned school to meet on that day, the angers of an offended Providence would have descended on his guilty head. At least, whether or not, no boy would have answered to the warning bell - be the penalty what it might. And I don't think that Dr. Causland was altogether sorry to have the great place to himself once in a way. He pottered round in his oldest suit - a jacket with great side-pockets full of tin-tacks and nails of all sorts. A hammer was in his hand, with which he 'fixed things generally.'

It was at such times that I believe Causland was really most happy. He actually loved the smell of the empty schoolrooms, the raw whitewash, the curious acid tang of the 'Perth Office Ink' clotted on the ink-

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pots on the desks, each with a palm-shaped zinc flap over it, turning upon a screw placed in its wrist (as it were).

From classroom to classroom Causland wandered, his eyes full of happiness, his mouth of tacks. And there is a tradition, quite uncorroborated however, that on one occasion, having smitten his thumb nail fair and square with his driving hammer, he said - 'Tush!' and then looked round quickly to see if any one had heard him.

Think then of Causland, perambulating these empty schoolrooms, these deserted dormitories, while the cheerful noises of the Fair came faint to his ear from far and far - especially the bray of the horn which told the least initiated among us that Pepper's Ghost was 'going in' for another half hour of breathless spiritual bliss. We agreed that, rather than become so careless of the pleasures of life we would be prepared to die - that is, if a faint but ever-present doubt as to our prospects in the future life had not restrained us from actively hastening unpleasant experiences. At least, I made up my mind to wait till I knew the whole of the Catechism (with the proofs) before I went up for my 'Final.' I had once put my foot and ankle into a bath of almost boiling water, and (though I removed these parts 'about the quickest,') I believe I may say that the experience had a good influence on my future.

The Fair was held all up and down the High Street of Cairn Edward, from one end to the other. But the main influx of 'shows' was about the foot of the town, in a triangular spot, on one side of which rose the big freestone block of houses called 'Willie's Rents.' It was currently reported that Willie got quite an income from the showfolk - Professor Pepper's

scientific adventure in the centre, Jackson's 'Temple of Melodrama' on the right, and a semi-circle of miscellaneous peepshows on the left - in which, at the price of one penny a round, you could see all the cities of the earth and their glories, uniformly coloured red, blue, and yellow - especially red. It was a sanguinary sight and to our young minds somehow smelt of battle, murder, and sudden death. We felt brave when we came out.

But it was early in the morning, between four and six, when the sight took place which we never missed - the allocation of the 'stances' on the main street to the 'sweetie-wives.' The places of the shows were all more or less arranged beforehand. They were Willie's peculiar fief, and he was even said to collect the money - which is just possible, seeing that Willie of the Freestone Rents was also Sheriff's Officer. But the favourite spots for 'stands' were not on Willie's property or even within smell of his demesnes.

At the corner of the Cross there met four streets and also four country roads serving four several country parishes. Here, more than elsewhere, the heat of battle waxed and waned. The voices of the sweetie-wives mounted most shrilly, while poles destined to support rickety boards, unwholesome 'candies,' and brimstone coloured rabbits with currant eyes, were suborned from their real position and used freely upon the heads and shoulders of rivals and encroachers.

Whence these women came was a standing wonder. Their appearance, which was red-faced, primitive, warlike - their vocabulary, which was ornamental and full of epithets, metaphors and comparisons, most of which ere odourous and all

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odious - their strident voices and windmill arms - brought us out of our beds at four in the morning, for the laudable purpose of extending our experience of the sex.

You could hear them long before you got to High Street. I knocked up Penley who lived at the corner, but he came out in a moment like a Jack-in-the-Box, completely dressed. He had not only sewed up his own pocket, but been through those of his sleeping brother on the look out for the missing sixpence. He was a bit down-hearted at not finding it. But the noise, as of a nest of jackdaws quarrelling, set both of us off running towards the High Street as hard as we could.

Long before we could get there, we could distinguish the voices of Mag Boyle and Flora MacNeish, two leading vendors of 'gundy,' disputing their favourite 'stance' at the west corner of the High Street. Flora (it seemed to the ecclesiastically minded Mag Boyle) was 'a blue-nosed Hittite and an Amorite, heathen and accursed,' certainly 'to be rooted out' - if in no other way, at least with the oaken 'rung' which Mag held in her right hand.

Flora MacNeish, less fluent in the use of Lowland tongues, made replies which had reference to the least highly considered of domestic animals - mentioning chiefly that one generally hated of eastern races. And when she could not still the flow of Mag Boyle's vituperation, being stronger of arm she backed her against her stall and, suddenly throwing her weight upon her adversary, brought stall and Mag and all to the ground. Here they continued for some time to whirl about, each trying for 'Top Dog Hold,' as it was called.

Then silver-buttoned officers of the law separated

them, still clinging to each other and scratching like crabs in a basket till the last possible moment. If it had been Saturday night, they would have been haled to prison. But even Sergeant Black of the Cairn Edward force, an austere man, allowed no small liberty on Fair Monday, especially so early in the morning, being assured that his hospitality would be trespassed upon to the uttermost limit before midnight.

The police patrolled the street, quelling disturbances and marking off 'stands' till from Anderson, the meal-dealer's, to Tom McCron's, where the shows began to barrier the way, both sides of the street were occupied with a line of booths, from which cotton flaunted and gay trappings of ribbon flicked, attracting the eye, much to the disgust of the staid and sober shopkeepers of Cairn Edward, who, paying rent and taxes, besides borough and local dues, felt that their 'fair' vineyards were taken from them by these wandering and ill-mannered Jezebels.

But for us – oh, the happiness of that day! There was a dive home now and again for a 'piece,' but no regular meals were thought of. All the time a fellow was eating there rang in his ears the 'thud-thud-thud' of the drum calling to yet another, another performance.

Lord Edward John's Great and Unique Circus was on the common down by the loch, and from it came the most appalling roars and fierce sounds of wild animals. There were also flecked ponies which, in the intervals of the performance, went peacefully down to drink, and young persons with tousled hair, aired themselves at the stage-doors, who would presently become crowned and bediamonded

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princesses of the ring. By the Isle Wood an elephant was browsing peacefully, or at least cooling his feet among the marshy grasses. Once he blew a spray of water from his trunk over his back. And Penley and I felt that the world had nothing better to give - that is, for nothing.

We had soon spent all our money, or at least most of it - that is to say the four of us - Penley, FitzGeorge, Kilpatrick and myself - I will tell you about Kilpatrick another time. I forgot about him when I started. But he was of our squad that day, and was the only one of the four in funds.

We liked him very much, and made him turn out his pockets.

He was good for one-and-six. But Penley, being his cousin, suspected him of concealment, which was against all law. So he first 'went through him' without success, and then all of us held him up head downwards and shook him carefully. We got sixpence more - twopence for each of us. For you see, Kilpatrick, having concealed goods from the community was guilty of the sin of sins, and might count himself lucky that we did not take away all and whole of the one-and-six too. Penley would have done it - for he said that Kilpatrick had disgraced the family - he being his cousin and he (Penley) having gone bail for him before he was admitted to our sweet society.

But I would see no man abused and said so. I told Penley to shut up and hand over the money to the treasurer. I was treasurer, of course. So we had therefore two shillings all told. That is there was eighteen pence among the four of us, and the confiscated sixpence among three. Do you understand that? We did, extremely well. So did

Kilpatrick. He seemed to feel the error of his ways with great acuteness.

The problem was this. The admittance to the Great and Unique Circus (and Menagerie) of Lord Edward John was sixpence per boy. But then there were only three clear sixpences among four of us - for the other one (which made the two shillings) did not belong to Kilpatrick. He had no part or lot in it. We told him so, and added that if he went on shaking his head from side to side like that, we would steady it for him. We quoted all we could remember about Ananias and Sapphira, but he declined to see the point. This, however, did not matter, so long as we had the sixpence.

Still I was not without hope. There were a good many people going in, especially when the lions roared loudest. For then all the fathers of families instantly pushed on with all their flock, and each was thrilled right to his spinal marrow by the sound. Afterwards we found the roaring was made by an employee (engaged for the purpose) with a great big conch or shell. But it did all right for the people outside, and of course nobody told when they came out. Because, it was really a good show, and worth the money, especially if you crawled in under the tent flap as we did.

So the man could blow on the conch all he liked. None of us said a word, and as for the lion, he only yawned, and looked at the conch man as much as to say 'Who goes by, playing so sweetly upon the flute?'

But first, I went up to the fat woman in a red and yellow silk nightgown seated in a sort of box six sizes too small for her, and says I 'Madame, will you let us four boys in for eighteenpence?'

And she says, says she, 'Are any of you children

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in arms?' And I said 'Yes, they all are, *when I like to carry them*, and I'll do it willing!'

She laughed and I believe we would have carried it through on this basis, but for a horrible big black-bearded man with a waxed moustache, who came from somewhere behind. At the first word, he ordered us all to a region mentioned in Milton, where the elephant could no more have spurted water over his back than have floated round the inside of the big circus tent, high up, with his feet to the canvas.

Now I had always tried to be an honest boy. It is horribly hard sometimes in the matter of chocolates when you carry the provision for a whole outing. But take it on the whole, it is the best policy. Because it is wrong to cheat your dear comrades, and besides, there is always some beast or other keeping track of you, so that you are sure to get found out. Anyway, don't try it on. That's my advice.

Strong in these principles we waited for the footstep of the man inside - the very same black-bearded, waxy-moustached man - and then we slipped in under the canvas and took up unobtrusive places here and there among the crowd. For of course the sixpennies had to stand, and when the black-bearded man came round, I was sure he looked hard in my direction. But I knelt on the seat in front of me and made myself a foot shorter. Also I pushed my hair up on end like a blacking-brush with my fingers, and in this impenetrable disguise I witnessed the performance.

But just as it came to the last item but one, I began to feel remorse. I think it was the weekly four pages of Proof Catechism, and the good teaching of my grandfather. But, partly also because I knew we

should have to pass that black-bearded man, who had been hovering in our vicinity for quite a while, with an eye in my direction.

So then I felt quite sure that it was wrong to cheat the poor old lady in the red and yellow silk at the door. I always meant that she should have the eighteen pence anyway. For I had offered it to begin with and she had laughed. Women do generally laugh back at me when I want to be nice to them, and anyway it would all have been O.K. if that old wretch with the dyed hair and peaky moustache had not shoved in his oar.

Besides, there were plenty more boys who had come in by the loosened string in the canvas of the tent. They would not have dared for a moment to do it themselves, but they took advantage of our doing it to sneak in after us. Mean wretches! Cheating my old Spanish Flag lady! I would teach them. Lots of them had money, too - yes, more than all of our band had had in the morning to start out with. I was resolved that they should be honest. It was *their* best policy. I would convince them of it. So I went quietly up to the old lady, while the black-bearded man was trailing a whip after a horse - with a padded barn-door on his back and one of the fuzzy-haired young persons standing upon it and kissing her hands from side to side - as if that were anything to be proud of. I went up to the old lady gently. She was half asleep, and what little of her wasn't, was going on knitting. So I whispered in her ear that there were a lot of bad boys inside, who had not paid their sixpences.

'Now,' said I, 'will you let me stand just at the place where they go out and make them pay - every Jack of them at least, all that they have got? It will

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be better than getting nothing!'

She seemed struck with this, but said suddenly, 'Weren't you the boy that was up here before? Where's your sixpence? Have you paid it?'

So I handed it over. I mean Kilpatrick's one, which was mine and Penley's and FitzGeorge's - twopence to each one. I was explaining this, when the black-bearded man came up, and threatened to horsewhip me for a deceiving young shaver.

But my old red and yellow silken lady was a brick. She told him to go away and 'do his hair.' *She* was running the till (she said) and when she wanted his advice she would let him know. And he had to go away, though looking very fierce at me. But for this I did not care. It was evident that the fat lady had him under her thumb, big and black as he was.

So old Spanish Flag and I took different sides of the 'Exit' door, and every boy that came along, with money in his pocket, I made him pay up, giving him the alternative of the policeman, plus a hammering from myself into the bargain. I got fourteen-and-six for my old lady, and she was quite pleased, because, she said, pony-feed came dear. Penley, Fitz and Kilpatrick she let through, perhaps from gratitude because they were friends of mine, which shows that virtue is its own reward. So we were well out of that show with the eighteen pence still in my pockets. The black-bearded man followed us some way out on to the common, and threatened to break our necks if ever he caught us about his place again.

We said, or rather I said, that it wasn't his show anyway, but to cheer him I offered him a shilling down if he would let me 'kiss him for his mother.' This made him just gorgeous mad, and he said that he would set the dogs on us. Only he hadn't any,

and as for the elephant, it made one reach for him with its trunk, and, lo! in a moment he was as bald as the palm of my hand. We laughed, but the elephant did not seem to mean it as a joke, so we thought it was a good time to decamp, leaving 'Lord Edward John' to his fate. However, the elephant did not kill him just then, for I think it mistook the wig for a new kind of fodder, as we saw him afterwards with only a sort of black skull-cap pulled very low over the ears. He looked dreadfully sour at us, but we excused him. For, no doubt, it was pretty trying. But, take it all in all, we had a royal time, and though really the whole of the money was mine, because I had jollied the old red and yellow lady, I resolved to be no end noble and we spent every penny of the eighteen pence together. Then we sent Penley home to see if he could not raise a loan from his father by discounting a promise of future good behaviour. But he came out of the front door in a hurry without minding the steps, or seeming to see where he was going. And when his father appeared, he said that Andro was not to trouble himself about his 'future good conduct.' He was quite able to charge himself with that! Just like my grandfather he talked.

'Foiled again!' muttered Fitz, as we retreated, quoting a tale out of the *Boys of England* he had been reading. But Penley was in no mood for jesting. He still felt the ache of the fifth commandment - the one with promise. And he knew the promise would be kept, too. So he cuffed Fitz just to teach him his place.

There were all the elements of a row. But I came down on them, promising them both a hiding if they did not make it up. I would have no angry passions

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rise when I was about. The minister had told me not to, only last Sunday, and I was bound to do what he said - as often as I could. Here was a case in point. So Penley and Fitz shook hands - sulkily, I admit - but still peace was made. And this brings me to my introduction to Kilpatrick which I promised to tell about.

He lived a good bit away at a place called, I think, Sanquhar - about which we had read in the *Traditions of the Martyrs*. There were, it seemed, plenty of Martyrs there, for some of them even emigrated. For Kilpatrick arrived just at the time that I was pursuing Penley and Fitz for some crime, and I had promised to make it warm and interesting for them as soon as I caught them, singly or together. And at the critical moment Kilpatrick appeared, strolling down the path, his hands in his pockets, looking everywhere for his cousin. For Penley's mother had told him whereabouts we were to be found. But Penley and Fitz, being 'treed,' could not come down to receive him, so Penley called out 'Bob, come up here quick. Climb a tree - any tree! *He's coming!*'

And Kilpatrick, accustomed to rapid decisions, and not knowing whether '*he*' meant the gamekeeper or a lion escaped from the menagerie, stood not on the order of his climbing, but clomb.

He had reached the height of thirty-four feet six inches from the ground, when Penley introduced him to me. I let him off that time, and we remained friends through life, always on the same high level.

## CHAPTER THREE

### PLANS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

At Causland's nothing happened all at once, except a licking. Lessons, exercises, games, the use and abuse of Saturdays - everything was talked over and arranged long beforehand. The minister's sermon was discussed - not quite as my grandfather would have done, debating subtle points of theology, but solely as to its length. If he preached too long, we stoned his hens. At least Penley and Fitz did, for they had no sense of proportion. I generally had the Proof Catechism to learn. And the noble words therein contained, and the trouble I had in committing them to memory, kept me from many such follies of youth as stoning innocent poultry. I can see that now. The minister caught them at it once, and sent polite notes to Penley's father and Fitz's mother. They were dealt with according, and put on bread and water for a week. But my grandmother, at the instigation of the minister, doubtless gave me a new top as a reward of virtue. I used to go underneath Penley's windows, also Fitz's, and shout to them to stick their heads out and watch me spin it.

Then I reminded them that if they had been learning the Proof Catechism like me, this would not have happened to them. In fact, I tried to be a real comforter in their hours of imprisonment and do them good. But they were not a bit grateful. In fact, they threw things, lumps of coal, and even the soap

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out of the soap-dish. However, Penley, being dark-complexioned, used this last so seldom that really, from that point of view, it did not greatly matter.

However, we had all to be pretty careful for a good while before the holidays. You see, there was the *Report*, which was sent to each of our homes in such a way that we could not nobble it or suppress it *en route*. Not that I would have thought of such a thing. But imps of mischief like Penley and Fitz would have done it like a shot. However, the Head - that is, Dr. Causland - put in a slip asking our 'parents and guardians' to acknowledge receipt of it direct to himself, which queered us considerably. There was no getting round that. And as the happiness of our long vacation (and the money too), depended on the goodness of that Report, it is certain that for a couple of months before breaking up time, Causland's was a model school. Every boy worked his best and from the purest motives - *i.e.*, to get as much money for his holidays as he could. As for us four, we made a sort of common fund among the band. We elected a council of war, and a treasury department (which was me). Then we voted where we should go, and made calculations how much we could spend a day and so forth. All this was nearly as much fun as going - and lasted longer.

This year we were particularly on the alert. For a story-book had been written about our part of the country, very romantic, though containing some of the biggest whoppers that were ever seen in print. It was called *The Galloway Reivers*, and set every boy in the country to playing at Smugglers and King's Men. Only the difficulty was to find enough law-abiding King's men to go round. For few boys of any pride, except little chaps (who couldn't help

themselves or knew no better), would condescend to be anything but smugglers and gypsies, and chiefs and captains of luggers at that.

After a while we had to toss for it, but even then the Smugglers and Hill-gypsies always beat. For, of course, as you may understand, the fellows who were set to catch them, mere naval officers and excisemen, had no heart in the business and longed to be out in long, low, rakish-looking craft, running kegs from the Isle of Man, and lace from Flanders, with beards curling on their chins like billy-goats, and faces and hands that had not been washed for a fortnight. We used to do the last part with lamp soot. Though as for Penley, he did not need to trouble himself. He was made that way.

At any rate *The Galloway Reivers* had been published, and we boys of the town of Cairn Edward suddenly discovered that there was a part of our own native Stewartry full of mystery and swarming with legend. It seemed (on the map) quite near to us. There were lakes and rivers, and lonely desolate places where the lightnings ran along the mural front of precipices, and lovely murder holes that never gave up the bodies of the foully slain, and lakes and hills where the ravens croaked and the eagle had his nest. (Though in a foot-note, all unperceived of us who never read Introductions or Notes, the Author owned that, though their nest was indeed to be seen it was a year or two - *i.e.*, 1886 - since they had frequented it.)

But from the moment we read this fatal book, all about our own country, we decided that we were to be Reivers - Galloway Reivers, living by rapine and hiding in the most desolate parts of the raiders' country, far from the busy haunts of men - or any

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other haunts, busy or otherwise. The water of the streamlet, softly sliding over its bed of granite slabs, was to be our drink - the stars of heaven our canopy. We were to sleep pistol in belt, sword in hand, ready for the least alarm. We did not see our way very clearly to what we were to smuggle. But that, after all, was a detail, and we could look it up in the encyclopaedia - where we would find the list of dutiable articles.

I did so that very afternoon, and was rather damped to find that these were chiefly wines, brandies and tobacco. We were all of us staunch total abstainers, of course, and we did not smoke - at least, no one had gone further than a first unsatisfactory trial. So it was a trifle hard to see what we were to do with all those constant caravans of spirits and Virginia tobacco. For *we* couldn't use them, and there wasn't a soul to buy them up there even if it had not been against our principles to sell!

It was a stunning blow, but I pulled myself together, and resolved to say nothing about it for the present. What we had to do was to be good, get the holiday money together, and to wrest permission from suspicious parents as to 'what we would be doing off there all by ourselves.' And, firstly, chiefly and lastly we had got to be Galloway Rivers on the very spot, as it were, where our forefathers had covered themselves with deathless glory and imaginative crime.

All of us felt that the noble past of our race and the new ideals of the present would not suffer in our hands. I know that when young I had a persuasive tongue, and we would assuredly have found ourselves up on the heather, but the inquisitiveness of that wretched Penley (who even then was a

weigher of probabilities and a searcher out of details) came very near making shipwreck of us and of our project.

He knew the sea-coast pretty well, so we had arranged that on that account he should be charged with the organization of the smuggling part of the business. This was all right, and a very good choice, if Penley could only have minded his own business. But he was a great chap for poking around, and it struck him - (something else would have struck him if I had been about!) that before going off for six weeks to the Reivers' Country we would do well to know about sleeping and other arrangements. I think Penley would have liked to have taken his own bedroom and his mother's dining-room accommodation with him, the sybaritic beast!

So when he was down at Rascarrel Bay, what did the fool do but take a rug and an overcoat and go down there to see what sleeping was really like in a cave! My, but I clouted him when I knew what an ass he had been. Here were we going to be outlaws in the centre of great mountains, thirty miles as the crow flies from the nearest salt water, unless you brought some in a bottle. And so, if you please, he must be discouraged because the little crabs crawled over him, because the black many-jointed 'jumpers' tickled him, because the grey 'crawlers' from among the stones bit him, the sea-weed dripped down his neck, the sand was damp, or the shingle lumpy under his sybaritic back - *faugh*, it made a fellow almost sick to think that lie had got to work with such a crew. For, you see, the others believed him, and refused to stir a foot without a tent.

I suggested a nurse and perambulator, several

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babies' bottles and a supply of soothing syrup. But I could not turn them from their (or rather Penley's) folly. So I said that they could go or not just as they pleased. I, at any rate, would go by myself. But this, of course, was a bluff, and they knew it. Because I might very well *go* up there by myself, doing without them. Yet, the mischief of the matter was, that I could not stay without their money. There were provisions and such-like to be thought of, not to be obtained on my meagre credit.

So I told Penley that he could look out for a tent if he liked, but that as for me I was going to take up my abode permanently in MacCulloch's cave as a smuggler ought. He said that 'one hole in the ground was just like another, and that he would not stir a step without a tent. He had had enough. *He would rather go with his mother to a Hydropathic and have to be in for tea!*'

It was this last sentence which took me by the throat. I had no idea of ever being spoken to like that by any of my band. So I remonstrated with Penley till he took back the Hydropathic (name of scorn, equal to devil-worship, witchcraft and sorcery!) But he refused to in the matter of the tent.

In vain I told him, 'See here, Penley, a cave among the mountains is not the same as a sea-cave with wet sand, into which the crabs crawl, and the high tides fill the whole place with blobby weed and sea wrack. Just you read *The Galloway Reivers* and you will see that the Auchty was more comfortable than your mother's parlour, besides not being so trucked up with things that you can knock over and break - which ought to be a comfort to you. There are no crabs up there, and, of course, no tides. Everything is as dry as a bone, and even if you do take a tent -

why, every time it rains you will come knocking to the door of my cave begging to be let in. You know you will. But I will let you whine. Back you shall go to your sop of a tent! Not one of you will so much as set your nose within my comfortable and commodious abode, fragrant with memories of John Faa, Brother Hector, Billy Marshall and other fine abandoned ruffians

But they would not believe me - at least Penley would not. I think Fitz was secretly game. They had even made a sort of cabal within the party to oust me from the leadership, and were using the tent as a lever. However I was determined to make them sick and sorry before all was done. In the meantime I had to sing small and meek.

For as Penley put it with some clearness and a certain conciseness (he became an engineer afterwards) 'You may be the King and the Queen and all the Royal Family, with the House of Lords, the Army, the Navy and the Reserve Forces thrown in - But *we* are the House of Commons and we vote the money, because the money is ours to vote!'

I thrashed him for this speech, because it showed a bad example of insubordination to the juniors. But still I felt the force of it. It was a poor and mean argument, but still it was an argument, and I could not deny it. Ah, if I had only had rix-dollars and pieces of eight of my own to depend upon! But, as affairs stood, I was good for no more than a dash and back again to Cairn Edward before I got too hungry. It would have sounded fine to perish in the wilderness. But I could not be selfish. I had my relatives to think of.

Six long weeks! - These could only be obtained by the assistance of Fitz, who had a generous mother,

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of the well-provided Penley, and the millionaire Kilpatrick, who sometimes had as much as a pound at a time in his pocket - that is, until he was obliged to hand it over to the treasurer - when, upon receiving it (though it was only trust money) I felt that I had increased in stature by at least a foot.

No, they held the inner line of communications, and so long as they had the money in some corner of the garden or in a crevice of the cow-shed from which the plaster had been carefully removed in the form of a plug, I might thrash them as much as I liked, and yet be no nearer than before to the much desired six weeks upon the slopes of the Dungeon of Buchan, or diving into the black depths of the Dhu Loch.

Finally, at long and last, the holidays were within sight. They were only three - two days off - one day! On the last morning Causland, as usual, gave us half-an-hour's good advice. He spoke of the necessity of one hour's work at least every forenoon and afternoon in order not to forget what each had learned. But for all his solemnity, there was a twinkle in his eye. Causland knew better. Well did he know that not a book would be opened, not the shadow of a lesson cloud the Bright Illimitable of our six weeks' bliss, which on that first day seemed as if it never could end.

He was right. Lessons are one thing - holidays another. 'Why,' as says so charmingly the author of *Rudder Grange*, 'mingle ague with your marriage vows?'

And so the holidays came. A hot June morning it was. A breathless feeling of damp earthy dust - (do you know it?) - before the dew has dried off the roads! The school was electric in all its

departments - no real lessons. Some threats, but no punishments. Discipline was relaxed so that we could hardly keep down the yells that would persist in mounting midway up our throats, and had to be plugged with handkerchiefs, not over clean. That was the morning of the first day of the long vacation.

The minister came to say bye-bye, and make a little prayer over us - not very long, because, having been a boy himself, I think he knew that we could not have stood it otherwise. Also he bade us be 'douce' and well-behaved. For if we were not, he would tell our folk. That, of course, was just one of the pious lies which the best people in the world allow themselves - not for their own sakes, but with the intention of doing good. For the minister, honest man, would as soon have thought of clapping us in gaol, as of going in cold blood to our homes to tell tales on us. He was a fine minister, with more sense than most, and his name was the Reverend George Greenock. I did not go to his Sunday school because they gave bigger 'bags' at Mr. Mavor's treat.

But he had a young wife, who had been a Miss Shipmaster, and in the concealment of the manse, she played upon the organ, with her eyes raised to the picture on the wall before her with an expression so rapt and winning that even I had vague thoughts of looking to my ways and being good. These resolves were certainly strong for the time being, but if she had not been so nice to look at as she played, I don't believe I should have felt so good and uplifted. All organists ought to be young, pretty, and play only soft, slow pieces, like the wind winnowing among westerly trees. They ought also to look up like the old-fashioned pictures of Saint Cecilia, even if they do run the risk of making false notes. So this

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is my advice to a congregation about to choose an organist. First, have a girl. Second, a pretty one, with fine large, dark eyes, lips that part slightly and are red, and fingers that seem to caress the keys. No others need apply — that is, so long as I am chairman of the Praise Committee. As for the noise they make with the instrument, I put it to you if it is not much of a muchness.

And now all our plans were changed by the minister lending us a tent. It was not as good a tent as he was a minister. But it was big, and you can't have everything. Before getting married he had been accustomed to take out reading parties of college students, who camped, and tented, and did what it pleased them to consider work. And after they had finished with the fit-out, they had given it to the minister, as the only one among them who had a local habitation and an outhouse. And there in the manse stable, annoyed by neither horse nor cow, the tent of the reading party had lain and gently rotted away.

We got it out. I remember it was on a Friday night, and our gratitude surpassed all that we could say. But I remember also the minister's rather disconcerted smile. He seemed to think (and I did not then know why) that we might not find it all plain sailing.

Nor did we. There were holes in the canvas. Worse—there were the beginning of rips and tears in the fabric, which (the minister said) would run the whole length the first wet day when everything 'tightened up.' He was a fine man the minister, but he ought not to have laughed. We spent the whole of our first good free Saturday, a day when we might have been happy with neither Causland's nor

Sunday School to annoy, and all that we got for it was only so many pricks in our thumbs and so much bad temper that I clouted Penley, who pinched Fitz, who pasted Kilpatrick. And I think we felt better after that - at least all of us except Kilpatrick, who had nobody handy to work off his feelings upon.

It was all no good however. Somehow our seams tore out again at the slightest pull, and we were on the point of stoning the minister's poultry, his cat and his dog and everything that was his, for leading us into all this and causing us to waste the chief treasure of our lives, the free untrammelled gift of heaven to Scottish boys - a Saturday!

But in stepped the minister, yes, Mr. Greenock himself. The moment before we had been thirsting for his blood, but he showed so much anxiety and examined the tent with such unmistakable interest, together with such headshakings and smiles that we could not make out rightly whether he was making fun of us or not. He rubbed his brow and bit the little finger of his left hand, as he always did when he was thinking deeply. And then he said, 'I am afraid it will have to go back to the maker, before it will be any good!'

And I am sure that at the words all our countenances fell a good inch. Because, you see, we had seen the maker's name and he lived somewhere in Leith. It would take a big slice out of our precious holiday, and besides, we had only just enough money - even including our hope of Kilpatrick's getting an answer to the letter he had sent off about the state of his wardrobe, which really needed attending to, but which we hoped there would be pickings which might go to the 'Johnny Laurieston Band-of-Hope-Holiday-Fund.' I wanted to put an

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advertisement in the papers, under that name, saying that the smallest or any contribution would be gratefully accepted. The object was a good one – to give four deserving boys the right kind of Open Air Treatment, and you must own that the title sounded all right. I am sure I could have worked it. But it had finally to be given up owing to the impossibility of receiving the letters. My difficulty was an athletic grandfather and the woodshed.

Penley's was the fear of hurting his father's feelings, or *vice versa*. FitzGeorge was out of the question, because if he did get money sent by post, he would spend it on his nasty paints. In short we had no confidence in FitzGeorge, when it came to the receiving and spending of money. Previously we had passed several votes of censure on him, which I had carried out with the utmost rigour of the law. But for all that, nothing appeared to have the least effect upon his rooted socialistic immorality - which means, the Law of the Early Christians which caused them to have everything in common. FitzGeorge denied that this included water-colours or Winsor and Newton pencils, these being known to but few of the apostles.

As to these matters, his principles, carefully formulated, may be said to have been, 'the Greatest Good of the Least Number' and Number One being the smallest and completest number, that was the only number which Fitz considered. The plan of advertising for funds had therefore to be given up, regretfully - but for cause.

Next day the minister sent the tent off to Leith. For he was a man of his word, and we set ourselves to wait as patiently as we might for its return, while the first useless days of the holidays appeared to go

whirling past with railroad speed. To cheer us Kilpatrick got his letter, a money-order being enclosed - though for a less sum than we had anticipated. To save time we executed the repairs on Kilpatrick's trousers ourselves and, as was only just and reasonable accepted the post office order as full payment for our trouble. The amount went to the General Holiday Fund and nobody complained - except Kilpatrick, who found a needle that I had lost sticking in one of the seams. He was just sitting down when he found it, and he made some few remarks. But we soon convinced him that he had better say as little as possible about the matter, having been found carrying off an article which was not only not his property, also concealing it in the least conspicuous place possible. 'Winsor and Newton' we could pardon, but the appropriation of a darning needle belonging to my revered grandmother - the offence was right down thievery. And so we told him.

Luckily before we had time to be hard on Kilpatrick in the matter of the eighth commandment (the breach of which was, in his position, fundamental), Penley remembered how during one of his sojourns on Solway Shore, had spent some happy hours in an old tower in the Dean of Orchard, at the back of the tidal isle called Rough Island. He did not believe, that, pending the arrival of the tent, anybody would object to our occupying it. It stood in an orchard in a sheltered part of the Isle, if Isle it could be called, which was only so at certain states of the tide.

First we shouted for joy, and fell on Penley's neck. Then we thumped him for not thinking of it sooner - as in the interests of the community was clearly his

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duty. Lastly we asked for details. But even before he had given us those we felt that the problem was solved. The Round Tower in the Orchard Dean of Rough Island was the place for us till the tent should turn up.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### WE BEARD THE WELL-BRED LION

Of course a good many things had first to be considered. We were firmly determined to be careful of our money, including what we had earned by the repairs executed on Kilpatrick's trousers. We felt that, with the distant excursion to the Reivers' Country yet before us, we had no right to go chucking money out of the window. At Rough Island, we would be within cycling distance of home, and though there was trouble about parents and guardians, food and bedding could always be obtained by approaching the women properly - I mean the women of our respective domestic circles.

Then Penley's mother inhabited a cottage by the sea, only a few miles further on, and so we naturally looked to him to do his duty, as a man with such a mother is bound to do - by showing himself worthy of us and of the trust we reposed in him. Altogether since it was he who had proposed the affair, the least he could do was to make it practicable. What else were parents for? We put this to him, and he invited me to come along and help convince the chief of the commissariat at Sea Cliff of our needs and deservings. He showed no great anxiety to go himself, but I must admit that he did show some faith in my capacity for explanation.

There remained other and remoter difficulties - land-owners, factors, game-keepers, tenants of net-fishing, land-thieves and water-thieves. But of them we took no heed at the moment. The great thing was to get there and then - let them put us out if they

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could.

So it was arranged that Penley and I should go down to Rough Island on a tour of observation. We had not been invited to stay at Sea Cliff, his mother's cottage, but I saw nothing at all out of the way in our inviting ourselves. He could certainly have stayed at my mother's if she had had 'a cottage by the sea.' Besides, what are mothers for, but to be got round? Fathers are different - tougher mostly, and the awkward thing is that they have frequently been boys themselves and remember things.

Annoying, unnecessary reminiscences are too frequent on their lips.

'When I was your age, my boy, I was earning my own living!'

As if *that* had any bearing on the subject.

Moreover, as like as not, when he was that age he was occupied in trying to 'make the old man fork out' (and failing) just as you are doing yourself. Anyway, it was Penley's mother with whom we would have to deal at Sea Cliff Cottage, and the boy who doesn't know how to work such a gold mine as his mother, when he gets her by herself, does not deserve to have one. That's what I told Penley, and he said that was very well for mothers who had but one son, the pine-apple of their eye and so forth - but that his had half-a-dozen (or more) and had grown hardened to the happiness of being 'chiselled.'

Now Rough Island being the property of someone (though only a few sheep graze on it, while gulls and crabs, with a tern or two, make up the fauna), I judged it wise to ask permission. I was told that it belonged to a young man called Mr. Trevor, who had just come to the district, but on his mother's side, was connected with the old Douglases. He was

engaged in enlarging Peninsular House till it should not know itself, and in the meantime living quite alone in a village inn, half-a-mile away through the policies.

We could, we thought, easily go to see him on our way to Sea Cliff. There seemed some chance of success, too: for Penley's father had had some business dealings with our landlord already, and considered him 'a very gentlemanly man, though with very little to say for himself.' But that would be no barrier to us - if only he would listen and at the end say 'Yes!' That did not seem much for a man to do when asked politely.

But it was harder to get to see Mr. Trevor than we had thought. Firstly, because two boys are natural objects of suspicion. They are chased by every hanger-on about a Great House, from the head game-keeper to the dog-boy. There is nothing for it but to take to the woods, where you are safe enough - at least we were. But then you have to be seen sneaking out of the woods again, and that is tenfold more suspicious than going in. Indeed, it marks you down as poacher at once. The stupidest people on the earth are the official prowlers about such an estate. I don't know why it is so. I have known quite decent men become brutalized in a few weeks by such a position. It cannot be unquestioned authority. For just look at Causland! - If anyone's authority was ever complete, his is. There is something of false perspective about it, doubtless - considering the estate and grounds as the whole universe and the owner as little (if at all) inferior to the Master of Worlds.

Well, of course, we were refused admittance at the lodge gate. But, as there was nearly three miles

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round of boundary wall, you may guess how little that mattered to us. Then a 'gamey' shouted at us and gave chase. To save time we ran him in the direction of Peninsular House, the turrets of which were beginning to peep over the trees. He was fat and had no dogs. The second who yelled at us was younger. He had dogs and sent them after us. But then hunting dogs never really do people any harm, being bred up for game and such like. They yelp about kennels, jumping up on bars and looking fierce, but that is all. A real brindle 'bull' four years old, kept regularly on the chain, says nothing, but he is at your throat as silently as the *whoof* of an owl. So, though Penley climbed into the lower branches of the nearest fir, it was mostly for the form, while I stopped down below and said 'Goo' fellow - was it then a deeeeeea' doggie' Which, on the exhibition of some scraps of hard biscuit, it was. The rest sat on part of their tails and wagged the rest, while the wicks of their mouths guttered it the sight of mere hard biscuit. You can get it by the bagful at any seaport. It costs hardly anything, and at times you yourself will find it not half bad. They say it is sold by auction when a ship is paid off, but I don't know. It is very decent when you are hungry, I can swear to that. And as for dogs - well, they aren't ever happy till they get it.

So we found the new house, swarming with workmen, defenced about with planks, mortar-heaps, lime-pits, erections of granite stones, and with a constant succession of men coming and going up and down ladders - some with hods, and others frowning as if they had something terribly important on their minds.

A bristly-bearded man who had been gesticulating

fiercely, and the sound of whose language had reached us from afar, came shouting towards us. I offered him a ship's biscuit, and for three or four minutes I thought he would have a fit - or killed me, or something. It came out afterwards that he was the contractor, Mr. Higgins, and not the proprietor of Rough Island, Mr. Trevor, of whom we were in search. He ordered us off - that is, so far as we could make out his language, which was that of an ex-carter troubled with habitually restive teams. I hinted to him that he was not pretty and that if I were he, I would keep as much of my head shut as possible and wash the rest. He appeared to be annoyed at this kindly-meant suggestion, but all the same we left there with a certain celerity. Fellows like that have no humour.

Then presently we came on another sort of man, done up fine in a topper hat and black long clothes to match. He asked us what we were doing there, and thinking we had Mr. Trevor sure this time, we took off our straws and made confidence-inspiring bows - that is, to the best of our knowledge and belief. But Penley said that I looked just like a billy-goat going to butt, and I answered, with equal frankness and more truth, that he looked as if somebody had suddenly and cruelly propelled him from behind. Anyway, we meant to bow, and it did well enough. For the man with the tall hat and swell get-up was only the architect, Mr. Earlston Driver, from Edinburgh.

Then *he* told us to get away. He said that Mr. Trevor would not see us - that he had taken that morning a train for London and would not be back for months. But somehow I knew that he was lying, which is a wrong thing for any architect to do except

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about the house he is building, and as to whether his chimneys will draw or not.

So we slipped through a gate without stopping to kiss good-bye, and went on through shrubberies, passing gardeners making believe to rake flower-beds. And they too ordered us off. We obeyed. For, by their ease in Zion, we knew that the Master was not in that vicinity.

But presently, we came to a sort of shallow pondy place, where there were all sorts of rockeries and funny, dainty little plants growing in chinks of the stone. And thereabouts all the gardeners and people were hard at work as if their lives depended on it. They had not even time to order us off.

So says I to Penley, 'We are warm. We have smelt the fire!'

And it was so, as Mr. Greenock would say. At the corner of a path where he could look down on all the people working, stood a young good-looking chap. He lifted his eyebrows a little when we took off our straw hats to him, and he took off his. For we knew from the very way he had his legs platted one over t'other, and the half-ironical ease with which he nodded to us, that we had got the gentleman this time.

Nothing in gentlemanhood! Bah! You go to a big estate and get chivvied about by every variety of whipper-snapper, and then - have it out with the Boss. You will know such a difference that you will never talk such rubbish again.

Yes, his name was Trevor. What could he do for us? Well, he could have done a lot, but we did not like to ask him too much all in a heap. So we told him our names, and he had been to see Penley's mother at Sea Cliff, which belonged to him - yes, he

had heard of my people, too. So far, good! But well, we had not come down all the way here to see him pottering about his Alpine Garden. Now, what was it?

And when I told him, he laughed a little and said, 'I suppose this expedition is quite open and above board - fathers informed and all that sort of thing? No poaching? Not that I think you would get much out there, but it annoys the keepers and they annoy me.'

I reassured him on that point, and then seeing a chance, and a sort of boyish smile in his eye, I ventured greatly.

'Mr. Trevor,' I said, 'if you give us permission to stay at the Orchard Tower on Rough Island, it will be a big thing for us, you know. And if you would come over any time - you always can at high water - we would show you the island, if you have never been there. And oh, a lot of things that the factors and 'gameys' don't know all about the fishing-nets too and what fish are caught in them -'

He rubbed his clean-shaven chin with the point of his fore-finger very thoughtfully, and says he very slow, '*Um-m*, that might be useful too. The lease falls in next season and- *um-m-mmm!*'

'I don't suppose you would care to rough it, sir,' I went on, 'but we can get some sacks and there is always plenty of hay - if we can have the loan of a boat for one or two dark nights. The farmers are very kind about lending it, and we would give them as little trouble as possible -'

'You can have mine if you take her up above tide-mark on the proper rollers and turn her upside down every time.'

'Oh, I don't really expect you would care, but it's

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rather fun, and if we knew when you might be coming we could, in a sort of way, put you up for the night, and give you some fresh fish –'

'What,' he said, his eyes twinkling, 'salmon from my own nets?'

'No sir,' I answered, pretty quick, I can tell you, 'we wouldn't dream of such a thing—besides Bob Irving would be after us - but flounders tramped out on the flats, saithe fished off the rocks at Black Point, and if you like them crabs, that you hook out of pot-holes in the rock with iron wire - monsters as big as your hat –'

As I talked I was growing warm and excited, and forgetful to whom I was speaking - so much so that I added, 'It is great fun hauling them out. Won't you come, sir? It is only a matter of a couple of tides. The house here will get on all right without you!'

'Oh,' he said, waving his hand carelessly in the direction of the towers of granitic Gothic and their attendant Goths, '*that!* It's the Alpine Garden *I* care about! This will be my working suit, my every day wear! That mansion, yonder, is only my consideration in the county!'

So saying he turned his back on us with a kindly smile and his hand sketching a salute.

'Of course,' he called after us, 'go to the Old Orchard Tower as much and for as long as you like, and if I am very much bored here, perhaps I may turn up and take a look that you are not getting into mischief!'

He was a proper brick - as Homer says of Hector, 60 per cent. above proof, special brand, patent process, copper-fastened and gold-embossed. Yes, pigs of gate-keepers, game-keepers, contractors, architects, top-hatters, and skulking cappers - your

# Galloway Raiders Digital Edition

Mr. Trevor made up for the lot of you!

# ROGUES ISLAND

## CHAPTER FIVE

### MR. UNCLE TOM SPIES OUT THE LAND

Who has not seen Rough Island, has seen very little. It is a Paradise for boys, and I would rather be a boy on Rough Island than either Czar or Kaiser. Of course I have not tried these latter positions, while I *have* been a boy on Rough Island. The old Tower, round and capped like a sugar-loaf, stands just at the seaward handle of the peninsula, where some past owner (who had kept a boyish tooth), had surrounded the tall grey tower with a now neglected orchard, famed in the neighbourhood for ‘geans’ plums and apples, each in his season.

There was good shelter in the old Tower, a kindly landward aspect, its back turned on the roar of Barnhourie Sands and the drumly tides of Solway. But the salt water, all in whirls of creamy foam and floating smother lifted off the sands (where it had been left by the ebb-tide) pushed past us with a soft Sabbathic hush that came through the trees like a light wind among the high branches. We had a word for the sound - ‘The wind that blows without stirring.’

The orchard would be as still as still. No leaf would rustle. Nevertheless through it all there would come to the ear the sough of that wind blowing from far, invisible by the swaying of the least springtime spray, yet in time manifesting itself by a thin deposit, chill and sticky on the face, which was the salt of the sea.

Our visit to Penley's mother passed off very well. She had nothing to say against our going to the Island. We had permission, and anything which

would relieve her from the sight of her dearly beloved Andro for a week or two, would be welcome, so long as he did not break his neck. This I promised to prevent, whereupon she delivered over to my tender mercies the remainder of his person as a compensation. Penley said there was a text in the Bible about such tender mercies. But when I asked him to find it, he said he had forgotten where it was. So for the good of his memory I cut a stick and made him learn a page of the 'Proof's Catechism.' Even then, however, he did not find the text. It almost seemed as if he did not much want to.

Our first day at the Tower was a Wednesday, one long to be remembered. It was on it that we began the voyage of discovery. The Island we knew pretty well already - Penley better than the rest of us. But the place of our habitation was new and strange even to my lieutenant. The Orchard Tower had been occasionally used within the last fifty years - though chiefly as a place of imprisonment in which to bestow a few vagabonds and evil-doers till they could be carted off to the gaol at Kirkcudbright.

The stone floors were a little dusty, the ceilings a little cob-webby, but a birch broom with a long shank and some vigorous calls of all hands to the duty of house-cleaning, soon mended that.

We had a double armful of pots and frying-pans from Sea Cliff Cottage, which the two younger, Fitz and Bob Kilpatrick had brought down on cycles that clattered like a tinker's encampment.

We borrowed some whitewash from the Great House (with the connivance of Mr. Trevor, who wanted to see the face of the contractor next day). It was rather fun, besides to join a couple of boys in robbing oneself, and then take a prominent part in

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the search the following morning. Of course Mr. Trevor saw to it that nobody got into trouble because of the mysterious disappearance of the materials for 'doing out' the Tower. But it was funny all the same, when you come to think of it.

We whitewashed the main first-floor room, then the kitchen below, and the bedrooms above. There were three of these - all of them (and the kitchen and parlour too) as round as washing tubs, but of course ever so much bigger. For the Old Orchard Tower was of the same shape, almost as tall as a mill chimney stalk!

We had fun too. For all off my own bat, I found some good salad greens, dandelion and chickory in a neglected corner of the Orchard - of which some shepherd or 'gamey' had held possession at no distant date - and I cut and cleaned some of the best and crispest. They were no end good to eat, with mustard and cold beef - though little used in Galloway, where people hold the opinion of the Welchman invited to try some - 'We do not eat grass in my country!'

In our castle we had nothing gaudy or superfluous, you may depend. For we had to carry everything to and fro on our 'bikes.' But the place itself was soon clean enough to take your dinner off, and the bright tin frying pans sparkled like silver. Oh, it was cheerful, I tell you, and the Old Tower had not seen the like of it for many a day.

Nor the like of our first meal! Blessings on tinned meat! Preserved meat! Chicago brand! We were not particular. There were no 'revelations' in those days, no trusts, no campaigns, and if there had been we would not have cared. We were boys and we were hungry.

At dinner I did the serving. There was no self-help. Therefore, as that cryptic jester Fitz suggested neither Smiles nor Thiers! Everybody took what was weighed out to him, and made no remarks. Cold beef, potatoes, salad, mustard and salt - enough, but not too much so as to cloy the appetite or overtax the stomach. Only, the same amount could be counted on every day for a solid week, by which time we would be released from any pressing need, by the news of the arrival of the tent, or a cycle raid on our nearest and dearest at Sea Cliff and Cairn Edward, the first quite near, the second only nine miles away.

It was on the second morning of our stay, and while we were busy giving an extra lick here and there to the whitewash to make it quite uniform, that Mr. Arnold Trevor came over to see us. He was called after a saint or somebody about whom you can read a great deal in *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, or maybe *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, or at least some of these books - so at least Fitz said. But then he may have been lying for anything I know. He also said that all the world is divided into Blacks, Whites and Arnolds. That sounds like 'Uncle Tom,' but those who have read the story more recently than I have, will remember.

At any rate Mr. Arnold Trevor did come to see us. We had not expected him, and were pretty various in our degree of cleanliness - Fitz, as usual, being the one farthest removed from godliness. The others (who had time and saw him coming) scurried off to hide like so many rabbits. They never gave so much as a 'Cavey' to warn me, for which I reckoned with them, both in the breach and in the observance, when next I caught them.

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For really they ought to have learned by this time when and with whom it is safe and desirable to fool. But no, they have to be taught fresh and fresh every time! It's the 'Westminster Catechism' that helps me to find heart and strength to make it hot for the evildoers. I swear by that, and call upon the names of my grandfather and the woodshed at such times. What was good for me and for him, cannot be bad for Fitz and Bob Kilpatrick - and particularly for Penley. They shall never go home and say that I neglected their moral training. They emerged warm and grateful. At least they *said* they were the second and as to the first I was conscientious.

When I saw Mr. Trevor come rowing all by himself - for it was just before the turn of the tide - I could not make out what the heap of red things in the bow was. I tried guessing, but could only think of lobsters. Still I was pretty sure that, this first time of his coming to see us, he would not bring anything to eat. Besides we knew how to reddens lobsters for ourselves.

When I went down to the beach to meet Mr. Trevor, and help him haul up the boat - not very far, for the tide was just at the turn - he called out, 'Where are the others?'

Then I had to think what to say, so as to speak the truth without offending our landlord. So I said that they were off exploring the island, but likely not so very far that I could not whistle them back.

'All right!' he said, and leaning over the bows he took quite a pile of red jerseys - which then used to be called Garibaldis - out of the boat and dumped them on the nearest dry rock.

I whistled pretty lively, I can tell you - three short toots and a long one. And that fetched them,

because it was our signal of Instant Danger. So they had to come or be forever disgraced - besides the licking they would get - an extra-special, hand-fed, three-twist hiding for neglecting the great solemn summons of our contract. Well, they came, and pretty hang-dog specimens they were, I can tell you.

Then Mr. Arnold said, 'Look here, boys, there are a good many keepers about and they are apt to shoot at things that have no business in the woods and plantations - stray dogs and such like. Besides, I am told there has been a plague of rats on the island. They come up from the stony beach at low water. Now you are to put on these red 'Garibaldis,' and there are four air-guns in the boat. I got them for you at Dumfries on Wednesday, with lots of ammunition.'

'And if you undertake to clear the island of rats, I will give you the guns, and you can shoot anything else you find in the orchard, so long as you leave the pheasants in the orchard alone (there are not many) and don't fire at the sea-birds. I like to hear them calling, and you could not eat them at any rate.'

You may be sure I thanked him, for the air-guns were really toppers. They made our hearts bounce just to hear them click. They were not quite all alike. One carried much further. So we drew lots and I got it - which was just as well, and saved a deal of trouble - not so much to me as to one of the other chaps.

Mr. Trevor puddled a good bit about the Isle with us, and as the case always turns out, most unfortunately caught his foot in one of our rabbit snares, called 'grins' - a pretty brass-wire affair, that took a rabbit or a hare persuasively about the neck. Then if they complained (as they mostly did), we

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went quickly down and eased them of all pain. We could not live on salad alone, and though 'Philip Armour, Chicago,' generally filled the bill, yet on a sea island with the salt always on our tongue, we ached for good fresh meat. So after thinking the matter well over, we decided that it was Providence which had put the rabbits there. We could not go against Providence.

The rats had not as yet bothered us much, except by squealing and galloping over us at night - enough to scare a girls' school stiff. But a sleepy boy does not care much for armies of rats - so long, that is, as they don't bite to hurt. However, except that one had nibbled at Penley's ear, none of us had suffered to get in a fuss about. And Penley had everything to gain and nothing to lose by the shortening of his ears, so he had better have held his tongue. I told him so plainly, and there it very nearly led to trouble. For Penley is sensitive if you call him a donkey. Now as for me I don't mind a kick if anybody at Causland's calls me twenty. In fact I rather like it. Because, you see, it opens the way for a bit of an argument. Only most fellows are shy now and don't do it. And really I can't blame them.

Mr. Trevor did not stay long that first day. He said that he had only come to spy out the land. But he asked us if there was anything we would like. And we said, 'Oh, potatoes!' Not as a joke or to be cheeky. But you see we began to get quite empty inside, thinking of potatoes and the different ways of doing them - in their skins all mealy and nice (with butter, *o-o-ooooh!*) boiled in milk, or best of all battered in an iron pot ('rummelt' is the correct word) with milk, some cream, and the little cubes of cheese mixed all through to give a flavour. So we

said 'potatoes' with one voice, whereat Mr. Trevor nodded his head, and said that if we brought over the boat to the Red Haven on the morning tide we might find a bag ready for us. He asked if there was nothing else we would like. We answered that we had nice bacon and lots of eggs - plovers' mainly, but we were not particular. The only thing we could think of was some sausages. But he said that we would need to wait a day or two for these, as they could only be got in a town. But he got them for us all right, and a little gridiron and turning-fork to help cook them with.

I tell you he was a fine man, Mr. Trevor, and it wasn't his fault if he was called after that Uncle Tom's Schoolday's fellow - and at any rate, you never could have told it on him. He was not superior - not one farthing's worth.

But he was ever so interested. He looked at everything, at our bed and our rugs and our larder. He saw where we had cut the heather, where we found the wood for the fire, and the old dry logs that had been thrown up on the weather side of the Isle. It was all as good as a play to see him stalking along between Penley and me, as grave as a judge and having these things shown to him, approving each with a little quiet nod of the head, or maybe suggesting some improvement with his finger on his chin, just as he did over at the new house of Orchard Dean. You never would have suspected that every ounce of firewood, every rabbit, every article of furniture, everything inside and out of the Old Orchard Tower belonged to him and to him alone.

And before he went, we told him about our proposed exploration of the Water of Dee - that is, if we could get the loan of a boat which drew very little

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water, and was light enough to be carried on our shoulders over the hard places. We called them 'portages.'

But he said, 'You fellows want to do too many things all in a heap! Here you are on your island, with a fine coast, lots of beaches and no end of swimming, guns to kill rats with (here he smiled, as if he really would not mind if we used them for other purposes). Take my advice. You let explorations alone in the meanwhile, and the first time I am over at Thrieve, I shall see what can be done.'

This rather shut us up. But it was so awfully good of him taking all that trouble, that of course we could do nothing but thank him - and we did so. Or rather I did. For the rest had not quite got over their awe of the great man. But I am not troubled that way. My notions of duty (in others) have always been so strong that I never saw the use of being backward myself. To be a muff is just so many chances lost, and in this world you don't got too many, even at the best, you take my word.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE CAUSLANDS - AND ESPECIALLY MYRTLE

We could see Killantringan from the edge of the Island nearest the shore. It was quite a little village which had once lived entirely by smuggling, but now contained some hundreds of decent working folk, half-a-dozen small shopkeepers, an equal number of poachers, some fisher-folk, the minister, a schoolmaster and a post-master. A little above, nestling on the lower slopes of the Wood of Colline, was a pleasant little house, grown over with ivy, looking white and coquettish in its frame of green fir trees.

Still further up the hill lay the farm-house of the Knock where the younger chaps, Fitz and Bob went every day to get their quart of milk. From them we understood that the House of Colline was to be filled next week with what are called in these parts, 'sea-bathers.' We heard no names, however, till one morning when, the tide being early full, we went over to pick up some of the supplies which Mr. Trevor had very kindly brought us. He had bought them in the town of Dumfries, on Wednesday, which is market-day there. As he had forewarned us, he placed them in a boathouse called the Laird's Cove, at the top of a small estuary. He had entrusted me with one of the keys, while the other he kept for himself. I think it likely that we were a great source of amusement to him, and for the time being, helped him through his rather lonely experiences in the private parlour of the Inn at Killantringan. But,

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however, that may be, he treated us as equals, which certainly was as nice as nice could be.

But what was our astonishment, on landing in a great racket of voices, to see on a bank above us, a man sitting smoking a pipe - a common clay pipe, too. He had on a grey inky coat, and a pair of trousers far too big for him, while his head was crowned by a Tyrolean hat, made of some kind of grass, with a red and yellow ribbon and a cock's feather stuck jauntily in at the knot.

It was Dr. Causland himself.

And the thought that ran through each one of us was, 'Oh, if only the school could see him like that!' Why only think - he whacked fellows for smoking cigarettes. And then the get-up! It was altogether the most astonishing thing I had ever seen in the whole course of my life. The other fellows said so too. In school he wore a black frock coat that fitted him as if he had been melted into it, grey striped trousers, and he changed his shirt every day - at home, I mean - not in the school.

But he did not seem the least little bit put about, and hardly took his pipe from his mouth, except to call out:-

'Hello, Laurieston, Penley, FitzGeorge - what are you doing here?'

We had really far more need to ask him what he was doing himself in such a rig. Only, you see, we had been taught (Causland had taught us!) not to ask unnecessary questions and not to be rude to our elders and betters. So we did not. Decent manners, and when to hold his tongue are about two of the best things that a boy learns at school. Dates and 'Maths' are things he probably soon forgets, but these he remembers. Because, you see,

not only the masters, but the boys have helped him to remember them.

So he asked where we were staying, and we told him on the Island. 'Bless my soul,' he said, much rued, 'all by yourselves?'

And I told him yes. I wondered what he thought we would have with us - Pinder's Circus maybe, or Pepper's Ghost.

But he was interested enough, and advised us to make geological and entomological collections - at which Fitz looked frightened, because he thought the Boss was going to ask him spell the word. I thought of the shells we had picked up, and the little crumbs of stuff like gold we had cracked out of the rock, besides Fitz's pictures of sea-holly which were most astonishingly lifelike. So I told him we were doing all these things by degrees, but that just at first it took us all our time to scratch a living for ourselves, catching fish, and digging in the pot-holes of the cliffs for crabs.

He considered us for a short while, and then asked 'Would you mind if I came over to the Tower, and shared a fry of your flounders some morning?'

And of course we said we would be delighted. But in our heart of hearts we would rather not. You see a fellow may like his schoolmaster very well. But after all, he is a schoolmaster, and you can't talk to him or even be grateful to him - at the time. Mark me, I say, *at the time*. Afterwards, you heap blessings on his head - the very head that you would at one time gladly have saluted with half a brick. If you and he live long enough, very likely you become great pals, and don't think of the times he caned you, any more than of your mother turning you across her knees, into the position most suitable for

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inculcating the elementary virtues.

But a schoolmaster, even one so good as Causland - and there never was any better - has to take his gratitude upon long credit. It will come all right and he will reap in joy what he has sown in tears - that is, if he is the right sort and the fellow anyway decent. Still, it took us rather by the short hair to have Causland offer to come over and breakfast with us. But the edge was taken off the difficulty by the Doctor's adding, 'I will bring some of my girls!'

Now this was something considerable of an order in the cooking and cleanliness way. For we in the school did not see much of the Causland girls - especially Hilda, who was quite grown up and was thought by some people to be a great beauty. Perhaps she was. She was nice anyway. She sang the solos in church and when young Princep of the Junior Fourth owned that every night, when he said his prayers, he added a rider that he might grow up quick, and have a moustache so that he could marry Hilda Causland, we did not kick him - at least not very much - only just told him not to be a little fool. So that shows, better than anything how Hilda Causland was popular and looked up to. She had deep blue eyes, set very wide apart, and when she looked at you it was with such an expression of candour that you would have let yourself be slain rather than not believe every word she said. This was rather much, for I know she said the same to different chaps. But perhaps - all girls do this - I don't know.

Though, really, she was an A1 girl and as straight as a die - never led fellows on to be in love with her and then chucked them - like her sister Myrtle.

But I like Myrtle best, for all that. The thought of being so paralysingly good for always and always as Hilda, would have made a fellow lose his appetite. It was like eating only the things you are always being told are so wholesome and nourishing.

Myrtle was the fellow for me. *She* stuffed herself with hips and haws and fruits in their seasons. *She* climbed trees after birds' nests, and though she had not yet had her skirts trailing on the ground, she put her hair up so that it would not get in the way or become what she called 'tuggy.' She was a good sort too, and very particular. She would never tell tales. You could depend on that. But if you did not mind your P's and Q's, she would fetch you one across the cheek with the back of her hand that made your eyes water. So I hoped it would be Myrtle that the Doctor would fetch with him when he came to visit us on the island.

Of course I knew that it would not be Mrs. Causland. She was always too busy about the house, occupied in keeping peace - besides seeing to it that none of the children got drowned, or tumbled from precipices, or mutually massacred each other. For there were ever such a lot of young Causlands, all in steps and stairs, and the boy part of them used to fight - well, like brothers.

'Go up to the house,' said Causland, taking up his book again, 'I will see to it that your boat is all right. Mrs. Causland and the girls will be glad to see you!'

So up we went to the white house of Colline and it seemed as if we were going back to lessons again, such an effect did the mere presence of the Doctor on the beach, have on us. But the thought of the grass hat with the greenish-blue lining, and the

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trousers six sizes too big, and the canvas shoes! We were learning. This was not the Dr. Causland we knew.

We found Hilda and her mother busy with the housework, and directing the two Biddies they had brought. But as for Myrtle, she was up a tree sitting across one of the branches swinging her feet - reading a book, or at least pretending. She had in her hand a long pole, the purpose for which I did not at first understand. It was evidently the handle of a rake or a hay-fork, but quite smooth like a balancing pole. Only it was t'other way round.

I called out to Myrtle, whereupon she looked up from her book and said 'Hello.'

So, of course, I said 'Hello' too, and asked her how she liked it. She answered that it was 'proper' and invited me to come up and try. She could make room for me beside her. She hitched over a bit, so like a fool, I accepted, pretty gladly too. And as I prided myself on my climbing, I caught hold of the trunk, and swarmed up till I got to the first branch.

'Now make a jump and you will be all right,' she cried with a smile like melted sugar. I leaped sideways to get hold of the branch. But the next moment I found myself on the ground in an undignified position, with (I admit) some anger in my heart. But I had found out the use of the rake-handle. It was an Unbalancing Pole, and the young lady kept it handy so that her retreat should not be invaded, either by brothers, sisters or others. Of course, they laughed a good deal at me. I could not help that, being only a guest, but I watched if Penley, Fitz or Bob followed their example. They were, however, full of sympathy and kept as solemn as judges.

It was not quite the civil thing of Myrtle to do to a visitor, but she did not seem to mind that, and resumed her book with the air of one who has deserved well of her country. When I got her on the ground, however, I meant to tell her that it was a pretty mean thing to do - which indeed it was, with all these young idiots looking on. Otherwise I should not have minded - at least not so much. I declare I should have been very angry with Myrtle, if she had not been so nice to look at and, in her ways, more like a boy than a girl - as you may see, indeed, by the business of the pole. And so it turned out, in the matter of the declaration of war, which had come so close upon us without our suspecting it for a moment.

War with whom?

With the boys of Killantringan, of course. They had been watching our encampment with jealous eyes, and who were specially angry that we had been visited by the Owner of Orchard Dean and Rough Island himself. But I shall have to tell farther on how the hostilities began. Already Fitz and Bob had been plundered of their milk, so that we had none for a whole day. It had been drunk up before their eyes by the Water Rats of Killantringan. For so we called the pack of fishermen's boys who were the ordinary shore-haunting hostile tribes of our neighbourhood, and in times past had mostly had the island to themselves, landing upon it as it pleased them.

Well, we determined not to be beaten by them, though we knew from the first that they were ten times more numerous. We had some difficulty as to choosing a flag. It was impossible to take the necessary time to make a Union Jack, nor indeed had we the materials. But when she knew about it,

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Myrtle Causland helped us out in a pretty decent way. She had a long blue scarf of pale-blue Liberty silk, but it was torn a little in places with climbing trees. I don't mean by itself, but when Myrtle went up wearing it. So she cut it into three lengths and patched up the holes with the small piece that was over. It made a famous flag, and flapped its prettiest in the wind.

Did you ever notice how flags behave or rather misbehave? Almost like something human! Now they flirt up their tails like girls crossing puddles! Again they stream out like fellows tailing off up hill at a paper chase. Then when the wind rises they have a veritable tug-o-war with the pole, and anon they hang and sulk like a spoilt chit because she does not get all her own way. Oh, and ever so many more!

But no matter! Our flag - that is Myrtle's - did all these things, and far more. But it is more interesting to tell how we took a dead tree, a pine that stood near the castle wall, and hauled it up with a long rope and a pulley lent us by Mr. Trevor of the Great House, at the expense of oceans of sweat - (I forget the longer word for that, but we have had it in our dictation). And I had to threaten to kick the boys several times, to keep them from letting go at the wrong time. For then the whole show would have gone banging down, very likely breaking Mr. Trevor's pulley at the same moment.

It was just after that, that the long-promised visit of the Causlands came off. Indeed the whole family arrived. Certainly the 'tribe of Causlandius, it cut a noble figure then!' And the isle was filled with their shoutings. We detailed Fitz and Bob to see that nobody broke his neck or fell into water so deep as to make him unfishable. Then Penley and I did the

polite and proper - so far as we could - that is, with that demon Myrtle walking behind and sticking pins demurely into us, when we were bowing and saying, 'Yes, Madam!' 'Certainly, sir!' to her own father and mother.

She considered this funny. We differed - with the difference which separates the pin-sticker from the pin stickee!

Hilda went on with her collection of Solway flowers, and Fitz would have given his eyes (which were not worth much anyway, except to see to draw and paint by) - for one of them squinted and the other - however that doesn't matter. For he had the cheek to say that not one of us could see straight enough to draw a cow, which was true, and that if everybody could paint as well as he, they would not care a dump how their eyes were set. But this reasoning though what they call logical, would not do for me. For how could you be nice to - well, say to Myrtle, when she never could tell whether you were looking at her or at her sister over her shoulder.

In spite of Myrtle's pins, which grew decidedly monotonous after a while, we had a good time. Mrs. Causland took an interest in us personally, and thought Penley looking delicate, pale, and grown beyond his strength. This was nonsense of course, but you couldn't tell Mrs. Causland so. She had mothered so many, that one or two extra made no difference to her maternal heart. If there was nothing wrong with them now, there was going to be.

But Penley *pale!* Why, a nigger could as easily be pale. One would have to whitewash him first - aye, and put on a good many coats too! Penley delicate! This so affected Penley that he tried his best to look

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lop sided and interesting. But Myrtle, with the first sign of good sense she had shown that day, cheered him up with a hat-pin. It was well that Causland did not hear what he said, but Mrs. Causland remarked upon his sudden liveliness.

'You should go out oftener,' she said 'there, you are quite a different boy, running on ahead and showing interest! It is the sea-air that does it. Laurieston,' she turned to me as she spoke, 'why do you let him frowst away his days indoors on such a place as the Island?'

Penley wanted badly to pull Myrtle's ears, but he had to grin and say that he would remember to sally forth oftener. I was sorry for him, but really it was his turn, and sufferings like his are excellent for the formation of the temper. Causland told us once in class about an old fool (I withdraw the word if Causland was only yarning), named Tallyrand, who was so great a diplomatist that he would go on bowing and smiling just the same, though somebody was kicking the other side of him. Now, Tallyrand was a mere circumstance to us. Try him with a hat-pin, and you would see him take that grin off his face pretty quick, I wager.

Well, in spite of the cure that was wrought upon Penley, Mrs. Causland's kind interest in him did not end there. She offered him Livingstone Pills invented by the great Dr. Livingstone to try upon the natives of Africa. These Penley rejected, because I whispered to him that it was a reflection upon his colour, which without doubt was the dusky livery of the burnished sun.'

We showed off all our most precious devices. In the bedrooms we had made flour barrels into capital wash-stands by cutting a round in the top for the

basin, and making a large archway below, in the middle of which was a shelf for the ewer. We draped this with a stuff we got in the village, called 'Swiss muslin' and I tell you it looked gay and clean.

Mostly we did not usually spend much time on superfluous domesticity except, that is, in cooking, but one of the younger kids, Bob or Fitz saw that the coverlets were properly spread on the beds, and put odds-and-ends away in their correct regulation cupboards.

Cupboards, you say? What were they doing in a round tower as old as the Druids? Well, we made them ourselves of grocery boxes from Sea Cliff and packing cases from Mr. Trevor's. We turned them up, open side out, split the lids into shelves, and nailed little slips of wood across to make crockery boards, specimen shelves - these last good enough even for clothes and things we were not wearing. Though of these we had not many. All our clothes were mostly either on us, or out drying on the line ready for the next wetting.

After dinner the Doctor put in his pocket a book and said he was going off to a quiet spot to do some studying. It was a strange thing that Mrs. Causland, as soon as she knew of this, called out, 'Oh, dear, we have got to find him, that's all!' And she took a shawl off her own shoulders, and called out - 'Go and seek him, somebody. Make him put this on. It is so bad for him to sleep in the open air!'

So Myrtle and I went, and I told her what a beast she was to stick pins into us when we could not even cry out without giving her away.

'That was why I did it!' she answered, demurely, 'pretty Spartan boys you are to grumble about a little thing like that - all done for your good too!'

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We found the Doctor all right. He was under a rock, stretched at full length on the short sea grass, and had it quite over his eyes. That is the way he studied after dinner, and is common to all really great men. Of course, I mean lunch, for you don't have late dinner on an island where it depends on the 'catch' of fish whether you have even supper or not.

Twice a week we went to meet Imrie, the baker, with his van, and on Saturdays Butcher Donnan used to come along with his smart little cart. He was abusively good to us and gave us what he called 'nice lasting pieces' without weighing them. Mostly we boiled these, because Penley and I were fond of cold meat, and the broth mixed with vegetables was good for the kids.

There was a cow on the newly-built home farm at Orchard Dean which Mr. Trevor let us bring over, because I think she was lonely, and the men about often forgot to milk her, or did it so badly that she kicked when they hurt her. We had also to get a girl to come over from the Knock to show us how, and after we had fed her out of our hands for a while, and called her 'Mooly-Cow,' 'White Foot,' and other pet names out of poetry books, she let us milk her as good as gold. Only you had to station somebody (not Fitz) abaft her stern to keep the flies off with a green branch from the orchard. Fitz thought it funny to tickle her up underneath at critical moments, and to see her let fly with her feet, tumbling milker and milking-pail head over heels. He performed this trick upon Penley once, and afterwards I held him while Penley impressed the fact upon him, with the three-legged milking-stool, that it was not funny at all - but indeed, far

otherwise. We went so far as to say he mustn't.

But, in spite of our promise to repeat the lesson as often as he offended, we could not quite depend on Fitz. He thought a thing like that so funny that he would do it even though he knew that he would certainly and deservedly get well licked for it. But it seemed as if at such times an Imp entered into him - an extra one, that is, and worse than the first.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

## WARS AND RUMOURS OF WAR

The Island was generally a place of peace. But there were times when it was certainly the reverse. This, of course, could not be helped. We were a peaceable people - that is, Penley and myself. The others, Fitz and Kilpatrick, had only to do as they were told to have a perfectly good time. Otherwise, when for instance they 'slackened' - Fitz being a born 'slacker' and his influence perverting the otherwise amenable Kilpatrick - we chased them all over the Island, and if they did not yield without giving too much trouble, we flung them neck and crop into what Fitz called 'the boiling brine,' but which was really only a big bay among the rocks on that west side of Rough Island from which the tide never went out very far.

Once Fitz's watch fell in along with him, but as it never went, and has no discoverable mechanism - though we puddled in its inside with the biggest kind of crooked pin, - not much harm was done. He tried, however, to draw upon the sacred common fund, on the strength of this accident - in order to get some more purple madder for the heather on the distant hills which would be due in a few weeks. But we foiled him, and one night finding Fitz groping about under my pillow for the purse general (called the Early Christian), I caught him and gave him something for himself - for which his expressions of gratitude might have been heard several miles,

except that it was a rough night and the wind and waves garrulous all about the isle.

His remarks were the more scandalous, because, like these same Early Christians, we had sworn to have everything in common. But the rebel Fitz was all on the side of personal property, and, as we found afterwards, he had arranged to teach Bob Kilpatrick how to draw, with the manifest intention of inciting *him* to buy needless and expensive colours and brushes - the which, he (oh cunning Fitz!) would appropriate to his own use on the pretext that Bob was not yet far enough advanced to need them.

But we saw through him in time, and collaring the letter, which was already written to a trustful firm of colour dealers in London, we held a solemn court-martial, Penley and I being the judges. Penley had occasionally to leave the bench in order to coerce the prisoner and stand him at attention with a drawn ash-plant. We were not sure whether to treat Bob Kilpatrick as a simple witness or as an accessory before the fact. But on his promising to give up all the money that he could raise by writing home to his people, without a farthing's deduction, we consented to pardon him, and received his sworn testimony. The prisoner only called him a liar fourteen times during his evidence, so that at last both accused and witness grappled, and had three very decent rounds before the unseemly combat could be stopped by the personal interference of the Lord Chief Justice - which was me, and the other common judge, who was Penley. The first two rounds were fairly even, and nobody hurt, rather scrimmages indeed than proper contests, but the third was short and decisive. Fitz, who was strong

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as a little bull, butted Bob in the wind, and the witness could not come to the scratch when time was called, so the accused won and was patted on the back, after which he very magnanimously shook hands with the court.

So on account of this, as is usual in high judicaries of the realm - or used to be in the days of Gage of Battle, we had to let him off. But we looked out very sharply for the letter from Sanquhar, and the morning it came, we summoned a council to open it. This was very solemn, and we did nothing without first asking Bob if he was content. We did not read a word of the letter, which was only full of the best advice. But we took awful good care of the two pound notes of the Bank of Scotland in the innermost envelope. This was a perfect gift of Providence to our fund. We asked Bob again if he was satisfied and he said he was. But Fitz called us a pair of sweeps. So we made him drink a pint of sea-water in order to cleanse his mouth from wicked words. Also it appears that salt water is a very good medicine, and much recommended by the doctors. We poured ever so much down his throat by the aid of a paraffin filler made of tin, and the lamp oil added to the flavour. It also is highly recommended by the faculty.

We told Fitz this, but for all that, he lay by the spring most of the day eating old cheese and drinking fresh water to get rid of the taste. At least so he said.

Such is the ingratitude of some fellows. We did not think it of Fitz, after all the trouble we had taken with him.

Bob's behaviour was much better. You should have seen the grateful letter he wrote home, telling

how we had all been on the rocks, and how but for the paternal (and maternal) kindness in going to the Sanquhar bank for the two quid, he did not know what would have become of us, as we were on a desert island. There, if it had not been for the kindness of his cousin Penley, and his cousin's chum, he would have been in a sad way. But all was right now, or at least for several weeks to come.

We did not quite shut the door, you see. Bob might ask for more to repay such faithful friends. But modesty forbade me to let him insert my own name, because, you see it was such a boss A1 letter, *and... I had dictated every word of it.*

But after all, our internal troubles were only those of finance, such as are common to all civilized peoples who know what tax collecting is. Perhaps, though, as the Doctor said, our little island, the revolt of Fitz, and the coercion of Bob, showed the trouble which assuredly lies ahead, if ever, as some people think, Britain becomes a big socialistic republic. At any rate ours was the first English-speaking island to be ruled on strictly Socialistic principles. But we could not have done it, if we had *not* had a really strong Executive Power - that is to say, Penley and me.

But our real troubles began when Mr. Trevor came over one afternoon rather late, to tell us that his nephew, a boy of thirteen or thereabouts, was simply 'daft' to come and stay with us. Of course we could not refuse to oblige Mr. Trevor, but it made us very uncomfortable, all the same. I don't think even the patients at an asylum really liked having a new lunatic.

'I think,' he said, in his slow way, biting at a salt fill of 'dulse,' 'that it may do Hamilton good to be

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with other boys. He has been rather spoilt - always had his own way, adored by his mother - will sulk a bit probably -'

'Has he never been at school?' I asked. For I knew that that takes it out of spoilt and sulky kids quicker than anything.

Mr. Trevor shook his head.

'Not considered strong enough,' he said with a winkle-twinkle of irony 'the only time I have seen him display energy was at meals. But he is to fare just the same as the rest of you, remember. I will send over a camp bed for him in the morning. His name is Hamilton Alexander!'

'But -' said I, and I flushed to my ears.

'What is it?' he said, turning pretty smart on me, 'don't you want him?'

He had the air of adding 'Then get off my island!'

But I cut in with an explanation all about Socialism, and the 'common fund,' and that nobody was allowed to have any money of his own. He seemed very much tickled.

'Never heard of such a thing in my life,' he said. 'Rum chaps, you must be! But it will suit Hammy down to the ground. How much cash have you and have you any debts?'

I told him no debts at all, because the only people who would give us credit were the farm folk, and that only because the girl, named May, was nice to us. So of course we could not queer her with her mother. Then he made a sum in Compound Division, and found that thirty shillings was the square thing to pay upon Hamilton Alexander's coming to us - and a pound a week afterwards.

I said that of course we could not afford to buy anything extra. We had just so much money to

spend, and his nephew would have to take his trick at ‘tramping flounders’ out on the flats with the rest. He must learn to eat corned beef and not too much of that - just his portion and no more. If he were hungry he could hunt for shrimps.

Mr. Trevor smiled again and said that it would be the making of Hammy. That is, if his mother did not get wind of it. However, we assured him that we would not post any letters Hammy might write, nor give him any except such as had been opened by the Executive Committee and searched for valuables.

Mr. Trevor thought the thing over and finally decided that on the whole these arrangements would suit the case.

There was a great explosion when Mr. Trevor went away. Indeed it was the nearest thing to a general rebellion that had been seen on the Island. Even Penley wavered from his allegiance. He spoke of ‘dry-nursing’ and ‘having the care of a mammy’s darling whom we couldn’t even kick into decent behaviour - spoiling all our good time,’ and so forth, and for once the powerful Executive Committee was divided against itself. But though the other two supported Penley, I hatched a counter-plot, proclaimed myself Dictator, and invited them to come on!

After they had been some time under the new Government, which by its nature had to be of martial brevity as to commands and inexorable as to the obedience due to them, the New Dictator condescended to explain a few things.

First, that it was impossible to refuse Mr. Trevor, living as we were, in his house, using his furniture, his guns, eating his rabbit-meat, as well as an occasional bird (when we could bring one down), besides all the provisions and things he sent us over

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from the inn or brought us on his visits to Dumfries.

Secondly, we had not yet seen the boy, and that, anyway, his uncle had said nothing about treating him as a prince - that, if he remained on the island, he should have to do as he was told - at least so far as I was concerned.

Lastly I advised them to stand no nonsense, neither to seek nor to avoid a quarrel. Not to domineer (which was the Dictator's business) but certainly not to suffer themselves to be domineered over by Mr. Trevor's nephew.

So they said they would not, and I began to think that Mr. Trevor had done a wise thing in confiding to us his well-beloved nephew, the only son of his mother (and of his father, but he didn't count, being dead). We meant to be faithful with the kid, and it would be a rest for Mr. Trevor. I did not believe, from what he said about letters, that, so long as Hamilton Alexander's mother did not hear of it, Mr. Trevor cared a bit about us taking a good deal of starch out of his nephew. Afterwards, it struck me that he had sent him over to Rough Island just for that.

Well, the bed came, a common strong sort of one, with good thick iron posts at the four corners to which one could 'spread-eagle' the occupant in case of need. This we called 'pegging out,' and it is done with the victim's face to the bolster and a pillow stuck in here and there to keep all comfortable. Then if the culprit hardens his heart, you argue with him, while he is given the regulation bullet to bite on. The effect is frightfully good in the case of 'cocky' or 'sidy' chaps. In fact, after one application of the patent 'pegging out' medicine, you couldn't hope to find a better boy - no, not if you had had the making of him yourself.

Wonderful it is, and not protected by any patent! Which is the beauty of it. Only, of course, you must let up on delicate boys - or at least distinguish between them and those who only pretend so to be, in order to be cheeky with impunity. Generally, however (and barring fellows who should be in the hospital), ninety-nine kids out of the hundred turn out better for being occasionally made aware of themselves. And the best way to do this is to point out the right and narrow way to them when thus 'pegged out.' Do it gently, but oh, so firmly - that is, if you would do your duty by them really.

It is no use at this stage, talking religion to them, nor about conscience, nor anything like that. Kids don't understand, and wouldn't if they could. They call it 'gobble-gobble.' But a nice little 'pegging out' on their own comfortable beds, with careful and individual supervision, makes them understand what 'gobble-gobble' really is. And the next day (and after) you wouldn't know them for the same boys. 'Pegging out' is the angel troubling the water. Only one is cured at a time.

Well, Hammy came with his uncle, and I tell you, he wasn't a beauty to look at. But then none of us were, when you come to think of it. Only Kilpatrick had any chance in a beauty-show. Yet for all that, he was neither happy nor grateful when we called him Cupid. And Penley - well you know about Penley already. But this youth was pasty-faced. I saw at once he had been stuffing. I knew a stuffer when I saw one, and I foresaw how good the rough fare of the Island would be for him.

He was so excited that he hardly spoke to us but ran to the house and went all over it by himself. Presently, he came out and said to his uncle, 'Please

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tell the men to take the things out of the big room on the first floor and put my bed and traps there!' This was where Penley and I slept every night each in his bunk. We had had first pick, of course.

We stared in amazement, though none of us said anything. But Mr. Trevor was not in the least troubled.

'I suppose you have looked out a room for Hamilton?' he said, quite gently, to me. 'Ah, yes, I will go up and see it - just to satisfy my sister of course. Not that it is necessary!'

Well, we went up, and at the first door the newcomer gave a sudden jump to the right, and bounced into our sleeping-room.

'Uncle,' he cried (or rather howled, for he was in a rare Paddywhack), 'this is the room I want. It is not very nice, but it will do. I suppose my maid can come over every day and do it up - brush my clothes and so on!'

We burst out laughing. It was rare fun, and each one of the four of us foresaw a long period of amusement, in which we should call him 'The Maid,' 'Sarey Jane,' 'La Pucelle,' 'Jeanne d'Arc,' and anything else that occurred to us.

But Mr. Trevor never moved a muscle. He mounted steadily up the staircase till he got to the fifth story. It was pretty exiguous, I admit, but Mr. Trevor informed his nephew that it had been intended for himself when he came over, and that what was good enough for him would, *a fortiori*, be palatial for Hammy.

Then 'The Maid' burst into tears and said, with a howl which, I fear covered a naughty word, that he demanded to be sent immediately back to his mother. But Mr. Trevor pointed out to him that he

had come there of his own accord, and that he knew beforehand how the Island was governed by an Executive Council and run on Socialistic lines.

Then Mr. Trevor said that we had better have dinner. He had brought some with him in a pot, that only needed to be heated to make a famous stew. He had had it cooked like that on purpose, I believe, so that Hammy might have to run about and haul drift-wood, chop-sticks, fetch rotten twigs out of our shelter-shed, and explore the pines that circled the orchard, seeking for big pine cones – all under his uncle's eye.

I think he enjoyed this pretty well, for we let him do just as he liked. But of course, that was just to start with. When his uncle was gone, and real work had to be done, he would need to learn to toe the line a jolly sight better than that. Of all things I can't stand kids monkeying about when they should be working. Penley says so too.

Well, anyway, the dinner was just top-shelf, and we all enjoyed it thoroughly, and voted a 'ban' to Mr. Trevor for thus gallantly paying his nephew's footing. We did not know, of course, what a 'ban' was, but we shouted and made a noise. Then we sang something which distinctly resembled 'For he's a jolly good fellow.' But this we had to stop because nobody remembered the words, except Mr. Trevor himself, who obligingly helped us out. Indeed, such was his good nature, that he sang the last verse all by himself in his own honour. That was the kind of joke he was good at – something quiet and ironic with never the ghost of a smile.

But 'The Maid' did not understand, and looked at his uncle as if trying to make up his mind if he had gone suddenly crazy.

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Then afterwards we went outside and sat down on the smooth springy bull's wool of the Rogue's Topmast - which was the hill in the middle of Rough Island, from which the Solway smugglers of old time used to keep watch on all suspicious Government boats, and the to-and-fro ridings of the preventive men on shore.

Having sat down, Mr. Trevor told me to go ahead and explain all our system to Master Hamilton Alexander.

I did explain everything. How that nobody had any private property, so far, at least, as money was concerned. It was a sin against the Commonwealth, punishable by the ordinary methods ---

Here Hammy broke in. He wanted to know what these ordinary methods were. But Mr. Trevor would not let me finish. He said that the Island Law was only strict justice all round, and that nobody needed to incur any penalty unless he wanted to.

At this point I saw Fitz wink at Bob Kilpatrick, and I laid up that wink against him. However, luckily (or unluckily for himself) 'The Maid' was satisfied, so I went on to tell how the Island was governed by an elected committee - Penley and myself, who decided everything, and whose word was law. I said nothing about the Dictatorship. For that was quite temporary and indeed was only used when Penley joined with the other fellows, thus deserting his own side and colloguing with rebels. But Mr. Trevor might not have understood all this, though the other fellows did - perfectly. A good healthy Cromwellian 'Lord Protector' was what they needed, and though we went through the formula of voting, I did not see in the least why that should have any effect on the result. You have got to vote

for some one as a Chief who will make you mind, and if you don't - well, it just comes to this, that the chap who *can* make you walk a chalk line IS the Chief whether he has been elected or not.

You see I had been reading Carlyle's *Cromwell*, also about *Dr. Francia*, and there is something like that in both books. I claim no originality. Carlyle was born before me, and I knew that if he had been alive when I started in doing my duty by Hamilton Alexander, he would have headed my Defence Committee, same as he did once in the case of Governor Eyre.

When Mr. Trevor went away, I think, the heart of 'The Maid' sank within him (or her) as he stood on the shore and watched the salt drops flash and spin from the departing oars. He was affected even to tears, so I set him to chop more wood, giving him Fitz as foreman to see that he did it and generally to cheer him up. Fitz accepted the position with alacrity. He had been so long 'bossed' himself (and never having had a chance of 'bossing' anyone else), that to put it in plain English, he fairly jumped at the job.

But Fitz had reckoned without his host, or rather, his guest. He was back presently.

'He won't take a word,' he said, breathlessly, 'and when I cuffed him because he refused to do his share of the work - only a little cuff -'

'Who gave you any permission to cuff anybody on this island?' I demanded, severely.

'Well,' said Fitz, 'if I had not made him do his share of the chopping, or if the kindling had been late, so would the supper. Then you would have cuffed *me!*'

This was so true that there was nothing for it but

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to investigate the whole case myself. So I bade Penley come along to add solemnity, and to give the impress of authority to the affair, I invited also the governmental ash-plant.

One cannot begin a good work too soon.

Our young gentleman was sitting under a tree in the orchard, His axe lay by his side, and one lazy leg was crossed over the other. He was smoking a cigarette. Now this was not allowed on the island - the same as in the navy - till the age of eighteen. And as none of us, myself excepted, had yet reached that age, I didn't do it either - for the sake of example. Because (I don't know why) I have always had a heap of influence with the fellows - you wouldn't believe how much. I suppose it comes from having studied Greek philosophy with Causland, and read all the Oxford lectures on poetry out of the Doctor's library.

So I was not long in telling Hammy that he had better fling away his cigarette, and hand over all the rest pretty promptly. He said he hoped that he might receive a witch's benediction if he did anything of the kind. So when I went to turn him upside-down, so as to shake the 'smokes' out of his pockets, may I eat frogs if he did not jump up with the wood-axe in his hand and make a swipe at my head. If it had not been for Penley who smartly kicked his feet from under him, this book would never have been written. And for cause? I should not have been alive to write it.

Then we disarmed Master Hammy without much attention to politeness and I sat on him. He was foaming at the mouth and trying to bite. So I pushed the axe-handle (the other end of which had so nearly cut short my brief but interesting career), pretty far

into his mouth and told him to bite on that. Then I quoted some lines I had once heard, which somehow seemed appropriate.

*'How sad, and mad, and bad it was,  
But ah, it was so sweet!'*

And at every adjective I thrust the axe-handle a little farther into his mouth so that he could taste the sweetness better. We saw clearly from that moment, that we had a contract on our hands, and we only wondered how it was best to begin. We removed everything with which he might hurt himself - and more particularly us - from his pockets. We threw a complete packet of cheap and nasty cigarettes with gold tips into the Rogue's Hole, which was our nearest bathing-place, and not far from the Tower.

Then when Hammy called us 'thieves,' 'blackguards' - and so on, we saw that it was quite evident that what his uncle said was true. He had never been at school. He did not know the language. He might as well have called us 'Tfaithl' or 'Varlets.'

But the lesson had to be teached - I mean 'taught.' So, first asking Penley in a low tone if he, Hammy was delicate, we took him up and cast him, vomiting out-of-date language and weak cursings into the Big Pool, the one we called Rogue's Hole.

We told him that we did not want his cigarettes, his matches, his silver-mounted case, his command of Middle English bad language, or anything that was his. But he could stop and look for them.

We then gave a 'One—Two—Three, and In-She- Goes!' And accordingly, due allowance being made for the rate of a falling body, *splash* went Master

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Hamilton Alexander, of the great family of the Alexanders of Elshiner, to the bottom of the salt-water pool. He rose sputtering. The 'Rogue's' Hole' was not very deep and we were ready to haul him out if necessary. So it was not so serious as it sounds. But before landing him, we made him declare on oath that he was sorry for the naughty words, spoken to such sincere well-wishers as Penley and myself - to whom, moreover, his own only uncle had committed him with the sacred trust to make him a good boy.

And a good boy we were bound he should be. He finally did repeat the formula of 'sorry for what he had done,' etc. But you could hear his teeth grinding quite plainly.

We felt that we could not finish with him till he was really repentant and not only making a pretence of it. So we bade him come out. He refused, weeping with rage, and muttering what he would have his mother do to us. Hanging was, I think, the punishment I should have preferred of all those with which I heard him threaten me. We also heard old 'hearts-of-oaky' words, which would not have been out of place on the deck of the *Victory* at Trafalgar, but which were quite misplaced issuing in a thin stream from the frothing lips of this weedy specimen of boyhood. We felt that in time this also must be corrected. And, though we rather barred Mr. Trevor for putting such a burden on our hands during a holiday, yet because we really did owe him a good deal, we resolved that we would do our duty by his nephew without fear and certainly without favour.

Now you mustn't think that we meant to be cruel, not even to be unkind. Only, placed as we were, we had to think out ways and means. We decided that

the time had not yet come for a regular 'pegging out.' You see a chap has to know beforehand what he is being 'spread-eagled' *for*. He has to be told that if he does not do so-and-so, he will lay himself open to such-and-such pains and penalties. But still, it would never do to let this forward youth take possession of everything. So we carefully gathered up his personal effects which I carried up to the house. There *I* took possession of his portmanteau (of crocodile leather, if you please) and hid it safely away to keep it from harm.

Then I brought a blanket off his bed, and an old straw hat with a hole in the crown, and a pair of very sloppy slippers which we sometimes used when we went to the mussel-bed to keep the edges of the shells from cutting into the soles of our feet. When we came home, the shoes were hung up on a line, tied by their strings, and so left to swing in the sun. They were quite dry now, though pretty sandy. 'Angels on horseback' was what we made of the mussels, and if meaning no offence, one might say as an exclamation 'Angels on Horseback! But these slippers were sandy!' They were, indeed. Yes, certainly You might knock them against a rock all day without their sandiness departing from them - though their soles might.

Hammy was still a bad sulky rebel when I got back. Penley had held him under observation with a catapult and good advice. But he did not come out of Rogue's Hole, till I had to strip and go in to fetch him.

Even then I had to reduce him to reason by pulling the stone on which he was standing from under him. In a moment more he was awash to the very point of his nose. When he came up dripping I

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rebuked him gently for 'language,' and each time that I saw a new instalment about to appear, I dipped him! His words all the way to shore were innocent enough for a kindergarten. He sneezed two or three times, so Penley and I kindly took his wet clothes off him, beginning with his boots. Then we towelled him till he was pretty ruddy and wrapped him in the blanket, crowning him with the straw hat, and when finished he was also shod with the nice dry sandy shoes. We then set him in the sun to get warm, giving him a biscuit or two to munch after his bath, because it always is good to eat after a bath. The doctors say so - which they don't need to do, because your own stomach tells you if you are a boy. For grown-ups and girls I could not say, at the time having been neither.

Hammy did not want the biscuit. He said he would run away first. So we let him and he tore round the island a good while stubbing his toes and looking for a boat. Because as you can understand he looked such a scarecrow with the flying blanket and his bare white shanks twinkling in the sun, that we had to lie down and howl till we were sore all over. Of course, we knew he could not get away. For it was high tide, and boat safe in the little shelter-hut, padlocked at that, and the oars hidden. But in one way he had the better of us, for Penley and I nearly laughed ourselves silly.

Well, of course, we caught him all right after we had let him breathe himself a bit. Also when we could stop laughing. He was crying with rage, real tears (oh, my sainted Hammy!) which made us laugh the more. A fellow has no business to make such a spectacle of himself, or his father and mother to bring him up like that, so as not to know when it is

healthy to toe the line. What do *you* say? Already he owed us a good deal, and his uncle, too, a lot, for having the good idea of confiding him to four nice, agreeable, conscientious boys like us, all alone on an island.

Now nearly every fellow, no matter how sweepy or cod-fishy he may seem at first sight, has got some good in him if you cultivate him sufficiently. This we resolved to do with Hammy - though the ground, so far as we could see, did look particularly stony and unpromising.

He was told very plainly that he had come to Rough Island of his own accord. We had certainly not asked him, and for all that we cared, he might go that very next minute. But then, we were responsible to his uncle for his good conduct, welfare, *and* moral progress. He knew the rules of behaviour before coming, and he could not expect just to land and take command of the whole show- !

Here we were interrupted with Hammy's parrot cry, with which we were getting almost too familiar 'But it is my uncle's island!'

Then Fitz who has a sense of humour of the practical-jesting kind, picked up a turf which he had cut in making a hazard on our future golf-course. He clapped it forcibly into Hammy's mouth, crying, 'Well then, eat your uncle's island!' I rebuked Fitz with promptitude and zeal. For really it was none of his business - though, I admit, annoying enough to all of us. However, I intimated to Master Hammy that he would continue to eat and sleep in that very same blanket till he had made up his mind to obey orders and do as the others there did. More than that, as he was not yet one of the community, he would have to scratch for a living, and eat the fish

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and crabs that he caught. However, as I did not wish to be hard upon him, I would let him have one tin of corned beef a week, together with some bread, paid for out of his own confiscated hoards (which were held in trust till he should join us of his own free will). After that money was done, if his uncle did not come - and I felt sure that he had gone to London - I saw nothing before him but starvation, which, say the books, is a painful and lingering death.

But whether he did not quite believe me, or whether, like old Pharaoh, his heart was being hardened, I don't know. It is quite certain that we would have made nothing out of Hammy that day except for one circumstance.

We saw a boat filled full of people setting out from the Bay of Killantringan and turning her prow in the direction the island!

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### HAMMY AND THE GIRLS

The boat was gay with bright blouses, and hats with flowers and hats with feathers. There was a man in his shirt sleeves at the oars. Undoubtedly it was the Doctor with his daughters and a bevy of their friends coming to visit us. This sight and the thought of his own costume, simple and effective as it was, had the effect of throwing Hammy into a violent panic. He forgot to threaten. It was no real comfort to him that the island was his uncle's.

He besought to be allowed the use of his ordinary clothes, and especially of a white shirt with striped collar, a purple tie and ditto socks. I pointed out to him that he was much better as he was - his costume of blanket and sombrero (with a hole in it) being much more appropriate and as it were racy of the soil.

'Hang 'racy of the soil!' he shouted, getting red to his very ears, 'they're girls - I tell you - girls! They will poke about everywhere, and be sure to find me. Besides I can't go to bed. Some felon has locked my bedroom door and taken away the key!'

This much was true. The key was in my pocket at that moment. Moreover I generously passed the word 'felon,' which Hammy may have mistaken in haste for 'fellow.'

Then I showed him how silly it was to be put out by a little thing like that. After all they were only girls, and boys were by far the scarcer article. All through the civilized world it was so. When a girl

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was born to any king or queen, they let off a salute of fifty guns. But for a boy, one hundred and one. Even this afforded little real comfort, though I offered to show him the statistics.

Then I advised him to put a bold front on the whole affair, to stand bolt upright on the old sundial in the orchard, with his martial cloak around him, and pretend to be a real scarecrow! There would not be much pretending, either. He looked the part to the very tip of his nose which was red and beginning to peel. There never was such a place as Rough Island for peeling the skin off in different layers, like a drying onion. It was a fine lesson in physiology or at least something that spells like that.

But you never saw such an obstinate dog as Master Hamilton Alexander. He would not be a scarecrow – no, not Hammy! Though I pointed out to him that he appeared to have been born and built for no other purpose. All was wasted on him. As he watched the boat come nearer he got himself into a perfect panic He dared not go into the orchard. He knew that the girls would go through that the first thing to see what there to eat. There was no other shelter on the island, except the caves, and some of these were mere death-traps for any one who did not understand about the state of the tides and so forth. This also we impressed on him.

To cheer him up, Penley gave him a look through the governmental spy-glass and he counted the girls – six! He could hear them laughing - by anticipation. Hammy could stand it no longer, but gave way all along the line. He promised, upon the Book and on pain of death (i.e., the nearest thing to it that we would not need to be hanged for) that hence forward and forever he would be an obedient and faithful

member of the community, that he would do as he was told, and be respectful to his elders and betters. We put in this last clause, though it was actually necessary, as the elders and betters saw to that themselves. He signed the bond in his own blood, and never winced when Fitz stuck the small blade of his knife into the plump part of Hammy's arm. Then he made one jump and raced upstairs. Following, I unlocked the door of his bedroom, and lugged his portmanteau from under my own bed. He was washed and dressed in six minutes, just as he had said - grey suit, purple socks, same colour necktie and turn-down collar, fancy scarf-ring and a dinky hat. Such a sight had not been seen on Rough Island since it arose from out the tawny waves of Solway.

But, strange as it may seem, I don't think that the girls were impressed. They had come mainly to spy out the way in which four boys kept house, to laugh at the pitiful contrivances of the kitchen, the scandalously-made beds, the clothes hung out to dry with all the imperfections of washing and laundry-work on their heads. These they pointed out the one to the other, with scornful little whisperings and nudges. One of the Causland's cousins, Margaret Bell, who was engaged to be married to Alf Steevens, the lawyer's son, showing a real effrontery of scorn - because, forsooth she was to be the mistress of a house of her own in a few months, that is if Alf could raise the money to furnish it.

Of course Master Hamilton Alexander, younger of Elshiner, took possession of Hilda Causland, both because she was the eldest, as also the most kind and long-suffering. I imprisoned Myrtle in the corner of the old Orchard, close by the wall, and kept her

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there till I had assured myself of the possession of all her hat-pins. This took some time, though Miss Myrtle made less trouble about the matter than one might have expected. She slapped me, of course, but nevertheless when I had taken them all away as a measure of self-protection, she did not seem so angry as you would have thought - only just a little teary and shiny about the eyes and eyelashes. But her mouth smiley and red with biting her lips. A few hair-pins had come out in the tussle and her hair was tumbled about a bit. You would not believe the time it took to make it, what she called 'look decent' again. Why, I would just have given my hair a rake with my fingers and clapped on my hat. But you take my word for it - it isn't like that with a girl. By no means! She has to sit down with wads of pins in her mouth, hair-pins I mean, and fiddle and fuss with them, driving them apparently right through her skull, frowning and wrinkling her brows, and muttering to herself all the while because hasn't a glass. All the same the quick, certain way arms and hands work when raised above her head is rather quaint. Girls can't do all that boys can. Their sort of dress, which is a foolish thing, hampers them. But I would be the first to admit that they have their good points too - at least Myrtle Causland had, and when she tied on her hat with her neck ribbon in place of the pins I had confiscated, though she pretended to be angry, I don't think she was really.

'I know I look a fright, and I shall never speak to again as long as I live!'

That was what she said. But - it is strange how girls, the best of them, will tell lies. For instance I have reason know for certain that Myrtle believed me when I told that she never looked better in her

life, and the way she glanced up to thank me, told as plain as print that agreed with all her heart. Besides, as she went on chattering to me just as before without pausing a minute, the second clause of her statement, that she 'would never speak to me again so long as she lived,' fell to the ground of itself.

'That cousin of yours,' said Myrtle, 'is he any good?'

'He is not my cousin,' I answered, pretty sharply, 'he is only the son of Mr. Trevor's sister. I don't know much about him. He is a conceited kid - at least he was. But I think he is not quite so much so as he was!'

'Ah!' said Myrtle glancing again at me, with a whole world of understanding in her voice and in the nod of her head. If she had been a boy she would have winked.

Then she added, thoughtfully, 'But won't he tell his uncle and have you punished?'

'Oh, no,' I said, confidently, 'supposing it to be as you insinuate, Mr. Trevor is not that kind. In fact, I believe that he sent Hammy here that he might be licked into shape.'

'Licked into shape?' she repeated after me, 'that's not half a bad way of expressing it.'

'It is a phrase of your father's,' I continued, modestly. 'Only you see, you can't always be sure about the shape -'

'But you can about the licking, eh?' she interrupted quickly.

Here I reproached Myrtle, gravely reminding her that whatever was done was for the patient's good, and that I never spared myself in a good cause.

'You hope then,' she went on, 'to give satisfaction to Mr. Trevor. But is he any good - this Hammy?

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Does he dress up always like that? On an island, too?’

‘It is in your honour,’ I told her. And, rather meanly (I admit), I gave a full description of Hammy’s costume of an hour ago. Myrtle laughed till she nearly cried.

‘Oh don’t,’ she said, ‘but if I had only seen him stand on the top of that sun-dial with the blanket wrapped about him, and the - the tufts of hair coming through the tear in the old hat - like eagle’s feathers - oh, scissors!’

She had been reading Scott and a book called *The Scottish Chiefs* - so she knew about such romantic things - in fact was full of them.

‘I asked,’ said Myrtle, ‘because our gardener’s boy, Tom Weady, whose father fishes the nets at Killantringan Point, says that the boys of the village who used to have the island as their playground, are now being warned off by Mr. Trevor’s game-keepers, and they intend to take revenge on you fellows some night before long. They are your enemies!’

She said this with great dignity, so I knew she had been getting it up out of some book.

‘They mean to raid us?’ I asked, ‘is that it, Myrtle?’

She said it was and only wished that she was there to see. ‘But I tell you what you can do,’ she added, with a sudden flash like summer lightning on her face.

I inquired anxiously what that might be.

‘Start a flare on the top of the castle wall,’ she cried, waving her hand wildly upward. ‘There is always a beacon in such places. It is made like a clothes-basket, only of iron and has a hoop to swing by!’

I had not seen anything like that anywhere about the round tower. But there was an old frying pan which might do. On hearing this Myrtle appeared disappointed.

'I had so set my heart upon a basket - a real iron beacon,' she said, sadly, 'and I would have watched for its being lighted, from my chamber window, far far into the night - like Robert the Bruce and - Ivanhoe and Rebecca! They were just lovely up there in the tower!'

It was a nice kind thought, but to my thinking Rebecca was rather nearer to Ivanhoe than Myrtle to me, when I should need assistance. But I knew that it was no use my saying anything if Myrtle Causland had once made up her mind. So I thought awhile and said that I knew where I could rout out an old pot and make holes in it with a cold chisel. I had seen one at the back of the last keeper's pig-sty, now broken down and desolate. I judged that 'it had been used in filling the troughs of the unclean animal with pigs' meat - '

It was no use. Myrtle broke out instantly.

'Oh, I had dreamed of a real beacon with a fire basket, and the dark, silent servitor waiting with his torch hidden under his cloak to set light to the warning signal, that would leap up with a rush and a roar into the darksome heavens, bearing upon its wings the message of need, the call to arms!'

I was quite fixed now. I smelt the works of Miss Jane Porter - those of sundry other dabblers in the same sort of romance not being then out of the larval state. But I did not laugh. That would have made Myrtle angry, and you can't flatten out a girl - at least one like Myrtle Causland. Besides she would have quoted to you (after having batted you over the

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head, mind you!) that hoary old chestnut about 'The man who lifts his hand against a woman, save in the way of kindness, is a *cowarrrd!*' Which, if you know many girls like Myrtle, is certainly the most absolute twaddle. For to lift your hand upon Myrtle and her like, whether in the way of kindness or not, requires the very highest kind of courage.

But because a great man when half asleep, wrote down such 'gobble-gobble' hundreds of years ago, people who know much better go on forking out the old palaver, and feeding it to the young and innocent mind - which, however (I will say to its credit) receives the hoary 'gobble-gobble' with suspicion and soon corrects it by the teaching of experience.

However I thought that it was well to keep Myrtle on my side, so I gammoned her about the excellence of her plan and said that very likely Robert Bruce's beacon was quite a regular basket-work one, such as a royal person would use, and so didn't go off on that account, while the other fellow across the strait had only an old pot with holes in it, that sent up a flame which the King could easily see from Rathlin to Pladda - and so prepared the way for Bannockburn.

I was not very much alarmed about her intelligence that the boys of Killantringan contemplated a raid in style upon us in the isle. Nothing, in fact could have suited me better, and I began on the moment to plan out a campaign of defence and reprisal.

I could not see for a moment what they could be after. But here Myrtle was again able to put me on the track. She had no sooner got to the more open corner of the garden-orchard than she clapped her hands and plumped down on her knees. She began

searching among the tangled leaves under the big old apple trees, on which fruit was of course still unripe. Here she found whole beds of strawberries - not cultivated ones, mind you (though at one time, they may have been), but little half-wild ones, fully ripe and in splendid condition. This was evidence. Here at least, was one of the reasons which would make the Killantringan boys angry with the present tenants of the Island. I imagine they liked ripe strawberries just as well as we did - which was pretty fair to middling.

I knew we should need to keep a very good guard on those berries. So before Myrtle and her sister left us that day, we got them to show us some different ways of preserving them. The result would have been more satisfactory, had not all our utensils smelt of cabbage and bacon - especially of bacon. Now fried bacon yields a delightful and lasting perfume, pleasant in itself and as a memorial of past joys. But I will allow that it mingles indifferently well with strawberry jam. Eaten with yesterday's boiled milk in horn spoons which Fitz had 'cleaned,' the flavour becomes altogether too complex even for me. The girls simply put their pocket handkerchiefs to their little noses and opened wide the door as well as all the windows which would open. But Hilda Causland said that she thought she could lend us a real preserving pan made of brass, if we took care of it, while Myrtle promised to come over and show us how to. *She* did not mind. I think that if only she had been properly dressed she would have made a capital boy - worth ten of Master Hamilton Alexander any day. But of course it was too late to put that right now.

Things had just to take their course. The second

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visit of the Doctor's people was more successful than the first. The girls had seen everything on the Island before. As for the Doctor, he maundered away by himself, and was only found when the table-cloth was pitched on the green sward, and all the nice dinner they had brought with them laid out on it. The strawberry messes had been thrown out of a back window for the sea-gulls. But Fitz was more than suspected of scraping the best part of them into a broken plate, and hiding it away in some cool, damp spot till he was sufficiently hungry - that is, till he was so hungry that he would have eaten a pair of leather breeches, same as they do in the exploring books. Only Fitz did not wait so long - oh, no, he got hungry quick and often, and stayed so a long while.

And the curious thing of it is, if you will believe it (and indeed whether or not, for it is plum truth) that while Hammy was walking round Hilda - and rare old cheek it was of him, being only thirteen-and-a-half or thereby - who should come across but Mr. Trevor himself, in his boat with the green stripe about it, which was just chock full to the Plimsoll line with the rippingest things to eat.

He seemed much surprised to see all the girls there, and said that he would be most delighted to make the Doctor's acquaintance. He had often heard of him, it seems - and so he went on spreading a good deal of taffy of that sort about. But for all that he did not seem in any very desperate hurry to go and find the Doctor.

He could wait. Oh, yes he could wait - he would not disturb a learned man in his meditations for anything, and all the time Hammy kept looking pretty sour. For, you see, he dared not tell on us -

not for his life he durstn't - owing to things which would have happened afterwards - sudden, disagreeable things, that did not bear thinking upon. We were actually beginning to have a good healthy influence on the boy already. Virtue is own reward - and as for the other thing, we rewarded *it* on the spot.

This Hammy knew and looked more sour when Mr. Trevor asked to be introduced to all the girls. Which I carried through, and pretty well too, just saying

'Hilda, this is Mr. Trevor.' 'Myrtle, this is Mr. Trevor.' 'Miss Bell - Mr. Trevor!' according to the amount of previous good understanding I had had with them at school. Mr. Trevor seemed to think he had done a good thing, having us on his Island. Indeed, it must have been something of a change from his books and looking after his Alpine Garden - interesting no doubt, but somewhat austere - all by one's self. Or at least, so I should have thought it.

But after ten minutes or a quarter of an hour I was just aching to be off again with Myrtle exploring. (We were both of us death on that kind of thing.) When lo and behold! Mr. Trevor made a move himself - the rummest kind of move. He packed off Hammy and Fitz to the house of Orchard Dean with a note about something extremely pressing - just horrid. They could not say 'No' out loud - because there was something about Mr. Trevor, quiet as he was, that made these imps think before they disobeyed or even laughed. If Mr. Trevor had had the upbringing of Master Hammy, he would have been a different boy, and not have needed to be heaved into Rogue's' Hole or rigged out like a scarecrow in an old blanket. But that he went into the boat and said

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nothing, seemed to strike his uncle, who glanced at me and asked what I had been doing to Hammy. I don't know why he should have picked *me* out, more than anyone else. But as he did ask me, I answered truthfully 'Nothing - only just having to do as the rest do!'

'Ah,' he said, slowly, "having to! Yes, that's it. Master Hammy never 'had to' do anything he did not want to do in his life before. Here's luck to you, Mr. John Laurieston!'

For of course he did not know about Jonathan being my name - an ignorance which was bliss for the others, who had kept their heads shut. He did not say any more in words, but he smiled at me in his quaintest, most quizzical way, and shaking his head gently like one who does not think that he has had the whole truth told him, he strolled away with Hilda Causland to look for the pretty heart-shaped shells we call on the Solway shore 'legs-o'-mutton.' But Hammy, looking back from the oar at which he was sulkily pulling, wished that he had the power to set his uncle on the sundial, blanket, torn hat, sand-shoes and all complete for the girls, especially Hilda, to laugh at. And at the thought, his toes crinkled up with hatred and jealousy, as he felt some of the grittiness still between them.

'The beast,' he murmured, 'I believe he sent us over here to get me out of the way!'

'Shut up and pull your share!' answered Fitz, fiercely, 'or I'll let you have the butt of my oar in your back in a minute. We will have a ripping time up at the Big House, and perhaps they will give us something good to eat at the inn on the way. Never mind the silly girls. There's lots of them about - can't go ten yards without stubbing a fellow's toes against

them!'

But, as it happened, Hammy *did* mind the girls, having formed a 'life's attachment' to Hilda Causland, who was at least seven years his senior, and who would have been much astonished to hear the sentiments of her precocious admirer.

'I'll pay him out, the brute!' growled Hammy, between his teeth. '*Outch!*' He caught his breath - as well as something large and round in the small of his back at the same moment. It was the butt of Fitz's oar, for Bow was a man of his word, when it suited him.

After that Hammy rowed on in silence, but thinking.

## CHAPTER NINE

## KIT THE CROWL

You may think that I have precious little room to speak, after all I have let out about keeping the fellows in order, and making them mind what they were told to do. But that is discipline - also government! And the world - any world, big or little, school or empire - could not get along without it.

But beyond the strictly necessary I draw the line, and I agree that the natural boy, left to himself (or worse, when like the wolves in winter he 'packs'), is a cruel little brute.

And it is no use hiding the fact. What I have immediately in my eye, is the life of the poor simpletons in the towns and villages of Scotland and the North of England. There is always one, rarely more, and he is known as 'Daft Jock,' 'Daft Davie,' 'Sillie Alec,' or 'Kit the Crowl.'

It was the last named about whom I have got to tell.

Kit the Crowl was the butt of the Killantringan fisher-boys. 'Crowl' means hunch-backed or deformed - the latter more often than the former. They are generally simple innocent creatures. Indeed, 'Innocent' was the old and best word for such as Kit the Crowl. Open-mouthed, loosed-lipped, vacant-eyed, arms a-dangle, generally mildewy, Kit the Crowl had always on his face an anxious frightened look. And well he might. In his native village I had seldom seen him except in one position - his back against a wall, one arm raised

piteously to shield his head, and one foot crooked outwards, more in the threat to kick than with any real hope of resisting his tormentors. I have come upon him like that almost every time I had been in Killantringan. On several occasions I had gripped my thick black-thorn and made an assault in his favour, delivering him indeed for the moment, but (I fear) leaving him to the pecking crew as soon as my back was turned.

Still Kit the Crowl was grateful. He would follow me about the village at a kind of respectful trot, and often I brought or sent him over some pickings from the Island in the boat. So that after our coming he used to haunt the beach, living chiefly on shell-fish, and spying for the daily advent of the boat fetching the milk from Nutwood or the Knock. He would stand on a rock for hours, crooning a wild song, that had neither words, nor tune, nor anything understandable by mortal man. But Kit understood. It was Kit the Crowl's psalm of gratitude. And, as the Doctor was wont to remark, gravely, who shall say whether it did not mount as high, and enter into the ears of the Eternal as surely, as swiftly, as if choirs and organs were chanting anthems in some great cathedral.

Oh yes, the Doctor could talk like that ever so long, sometimes till he made cold creeps run up and down your back, and you didn't know whether you weren't going to - well, behave like a girl. I think there was something about his voice at such times, which got me and the other chaps. I suppose it was a kind of religion in a way - though we didn't tell anybody. But what I am going to tell you did not happen to me - so I can spread myself a little more on the daringness of it all.

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It was Fitz and (if you please) Hammy, who were in it. More power to Hammy! Fitz of course we knew was all right, and in good cause or bad, would fight like a Turk. We had trained him that way. And I, who had my grandfather and my evening lessons in the *Bible* and the Proofs Catechism to post me as to details, read to him what Paul says about the equipment of a good soldier. But, curiously enough, this made Fitz kind of mad, For, says he, it might be all right for Paul, inside all these shields and breast-plates and helmets, with a sword as long as himself. But it was a different thing to go up the street of Killantringan in only a red jersey and a pair of corduroy knickerbockers.

I tried to make him see that it was all to be understood differently. But Fitz said, 'That's all very nice, but I've got a lump as big as a pigeon's egg on the back of my head now - It was a cobble-stone and I know the boy who threw it. You wait. I'll cobble him! But it would help me a lot to be peaceful and resigned and to love my enemies if I could do it inside a steel suit. Then those 'Killies' could rattle away at me with their stones all they wanted to, me caring no more than a new roofed house for a shower of hail!'

There is no doubt that when our chaps went to Killantringan post-office for letters, they had rather a rough time. Even I had, and so, when I couldn't go myself, I always sent the cubs in pairs. And a pretty good thing it was for Hammy, though he did not like being stoned, knocked down and clouted - not being used to that sort of thing every day of his life, like an ordinary boy at school. He could never be brought to understand that the world does not go round, nor the sun rise, nor yet the whole system of things

centre exclusively upon him.

But good for a boy - oh, it is no name for it! Hammy, however, had (up to the present) missed all this, and when a full score of Killantringan boys came about him, calling him 'Masher,' 'Softie,' and offering such remarks as 'Oor Cat's gotten a new tail,' - Master Hamilton Alexander, only son of the Alexanders of Elshiner, and heir to 'that ilk,' was more than mildly surprised. He had never dreamed of such disrespect existing in the world. Already, however, he had learned among us not to go telling tales, but in all such cases to help himself. Nevertheless his resolutions did not take a real concrete form till an egg - one which in justice to itself, ought long ago to have been committed to the deep, splashed upon his new scarlet-and-white tie and perfectly glossy shirt-front.

Then he said 'Ooh!' with a kind of howl of rage, and charged right head-down for the boy that threw it. He was a biggish lout, but Hammy had the advantage of having bottled up his wrath for some time. Also he came of good stock, which, when you discount all defects brought on by over-petting at home, is bound in the long run to get the upper hand.

Hammy had got the offender's head well into chancery, and was arguing with him, without much method but with effect, when half-a-dozen 'Killies' jumped on his back and bore him to the ground. Of course Fitz went in to the rescue of his comrade. *He* did not need to be heated to the point of argument. He took everything like that coolly, but he used every weapon known to primitive man - head, elbows, shoulders, fists, knees, feet and (it is affirmed) even teeth. Fitz says Killantringan boy is

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not bad (when once you get through the dirt) and he adds that the taste of salt does the flavouring. But I don't believe he really knows.

Of course, fighting on their own ground, and with their rallying cry of '*Killies yin, an' Killies a'*' penetrating into every hole and corner of the village, our fellows soon were hopelessly outnumbered. They were pulled to the ground, the clothes half torn off them. They were trampled, and the precious milk drunk before their eyes.

The 'pickings,' I had sent over for Kit the Crowl, consisting of a fine bit of boiled beef, some bread and a whang of cheese were divided while Hammy and Fitz were lying helpless and battered upon the ground. Hammy was in a state of foaming fury, and Fitz alternately wishful that he was inside that suit of armour, and engaged in photographing the personality of each of his aggressors against the time of reckoning when he should 'catch them by themselves!'

But out of Ill Fortune, the Good springs unexpected (one or two people have noticed the same thing before - but that does not matter. Awful mean of these old dead people to steal a fellow's best things. This is called 'plagiarism,' and is barred by the authors of today - at least so I am told).

Now you would never have thought that the dividing up of Kit the Crowl's provisions would have had the effect it had. It awoke a kind of holy anger - maybe you will say the other kind - in the breast of the poor 'Innocent' of the village.

He saw *his* beef, *his* bread, *his* cheese being eaten up his enemies - and ours. Hitherto he had only resisted passively, as the Doctor says true Christians ought to do. (Fancy the Doctor, in the

case of a school rebellion, only resisting ‘passively!’ Snakes and puddocks, but they do expect us to swallow a lot).

Now, however, the slumbering giant in Kit the Crowl suddenly awoke. He snatched a ‘stob’ from the nearest stake-and-rail fence, and whirling it about his head, rushed to the onslaught. The ‘Killies’ never knew till he was among them. Besides, they had been so long accustomed to persecute the Crowl all unresisting, and, as the Doctor would say, ‘passive, that even if they had seen him they would only have laughed.

‘Kit the Crowl do us any harm! Ha! Ha! Only imagine it!’

But the first sweep of the six-foot paling stob sent down three of the biggest. They were mown before him like a swathe in clovery grass. Soon the face of things was covered with limping and wailing ‘Killies.’ And still the scythe of destruction, blunt and wooden though it was, scotched a passage towards the fallen champions.

Presently the big fellow, who was sitting on Hammy’s neck and shoulders, felt a flail-like thud on his back which caused him to rise hastily and face the foe, only in time to receive the stob along his jaw with the vigour and good will that induced him to retreat hastily.

Fitz was relieved at the same moment, and the two rose a little dazed to see a kind of glorified, avenging Kit the Crowl swinging a paling stob, with as much vigour as when, in the legends of the Covenant, the Black McMichael dinted the thick skulls of the dragoons of Cornet Graeme with the Galloway Flail itself. It was a fine moment, and if they had been as well acquainted with the

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Scriptures (and the Proofs Catechism) as I was, they would have sung snatches from the Song of Deborah the Prophetess - which however I refrain from quoting because it might seem wrong to some people.

I say 'seem' - for of course we (or rather they) had as good cause to sing a song of victory as ever Deborah had. They had fought and had been delivered, suddenly, unexpectedly, when all hope of help was dead in their hearts.

I don't think I knew at the time of the old Scottish name for such 'naturals' as Kit the Crowl - *God's Bairns*, they call them about there. Good, isn't it? It was the minister Mr. Greenock, who afterwards called Kit that.

'God's Bairn, puir man!' he said, putting his hand gently on the Crowl's head with a gesture of benediction. Then in a lower tone and like one meditating he added '*His life is hid with Christ in God!*'

This is the whole story of the deliverance wrought (under Providence) by Kit the Crowl upon Hammy and FitzGeorge. And I ask you if it is not nearly as good (except of course in the telling), as a good deal of the Old Testament? Sometimes when the sermon is a little long, I have a good read at that splendid part from Joshua to the Kings. And I tell you what, it just seems as if they could never get their fill of fighting in those days. Do you know, I think that Samson was a kind of Kit the Crowl, bigger of course, and with more muscle - but being a sort of police-court judge, with somewhat less kindness. After all, the Philistines must have been pretty weak specimens. As for the 'Killies,' it was regular good sense of Kit the Crowl to take a paling stob to them

rather than the jawbone of any old ass that ever lived.

Of course, after what had happened, we had to take Kit to the Island with us. I went across and fetched him away myself. Fitz and Hammy came back with bruises all over them, but full of the praises of Kit the Crowl. When I went over to get some more milk from Girlie May at the Knock, I had a black-thorn on my shoulder, very thick and knobby, and I got the milk all right from May. She was the one who had come to teach us how to milk our cow over at the Island, before that ignoble quadruped cheated us by ceasing to give any milk at all. I told May how nice she looked, especially when she was milking. She called me ‘silly donkey,’ ‘wheedler,’ and other names. But she went and got her milking stool for all that. And so in this way, by the expenditure of a little milk of human kindness, I got at a cheap rate, fresh and ample supply of the more ordinary cow’s brand.

Then she walked with me down to Knock Bay, a pleasant enough walk, that is, with the dogs and Girlie May - lots of light and shade made by birch trees and hazels criss-crossing and dimpling over the path. I told Girlie May all about Kit the Crowl, and how I meant to whistle for him when I got to the boat. He would certainly be hiding somewhere alongshore to escape from the cruelty of the Killie boys!

*‘The beasts!’* said May, and became thoughtful for a while. She was a good sort and this is what she did. She went up to a hillock which had a fine view from the top of it, and whistled with all her might. Two farm dogs came bounding - a tawny wolf-like collie and a big brute of irregular descent, but with

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the most regular teeth you ever saw in the world. They were quite a pleasure to look at - so long, that is, as he was a friend of yours. Their names - rather unusual for Galloway dogs - were 'Comma' and 'Full Stop.' The yelping snarl and glancing eye-teeth of the collie suggested to the most casual tramp that he had better pause and think, while the red cavern, gleaming fangs, and deep growl of the big fellow shouted 'Full Stop' as plain as plain! Both got themselves attended to, but only 'Full Stop' could finish off a paragraph and begin a new subject like a hairdresser saying 'Next!'

Then with the dogs beside her, Girlie May began suddenly to cry aloud, so long and strong that she awakened the clamorous sea-birds and set them calling - Kit-Kit-Kit -Kit the Crowl!

It was indeed I think very wonderful that what we could not do, Girlie May of the Knock did in five seconds. We had all been looking northward along the shore in the direction of the caves and cliffs where hiding was most easy and likely. And lo! when we turned, there was Kit the Crowl almost at our elbows, panting like a dog after a long chase, and with his tongue out like one too.

He had been waiting, flat on his belly behind some rock, or maybe with only his head out of a salt-water pool - and this last was the more likely because he was dripping and had on his head a plait of sea-weed festooned about his brow and hair, so long that it depended down his back nearly to his waist.

At any rate, there he was, and we were mightily glad to see him - also very grateful to May of the Knock, though at first we felt inclined to blame her for her temerity. She might have called down upon

us the hordes of Killantringan boys.

But she only pointed to the two dogs and asked us if we remembered their names.

And we answered, as of course we had to – ‘Comma’ and ‘Full Stop.’

Whereupon she nodded her head and disappeared over the sand dunes in the direction of the farm-town of the Knock. She was a fine upstanding lass, but I have it in my mind that somehow Myrtle Causland and she might not have got on well together. At any rate, I resolved to say nothing to one about the other, or to t’other about the one. I never was a maker of mischief all my days. I considered it wrong, besides being forbidden in the Sermon on the Mount - which is a fine easy part of the Bible to read - though when you come to have to repeat it, is it one of the hardest things in the world to remember in what order the verses come. So many ‘blesseds’ make things sort of wamble in your head. But I like those chapters nevertheless, perhaps, because I loved mountains and have been a peacemaker all my days. Just wouldn’t I have liked to have been there, with the green fields of Galilee spread out like a quilt beneath and the Lake in its blue egg-shell in the middle. I got to like one picture of it best of all. It was in the old German Bible of my grandfather’s, though I never told anybody - having to stick out for my namesake Jonathan climbing up the rock with his sword between his teeth and his armour-bearer gasping behind under half-a-ton of Krupp iron.

At any rate there she was, May of the Knock, with her two dogs, standing on the last ridge watching us off. She waved her hand and the dogs their tails and so all three disappeared joyously into a little drift of

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greenery that foamed in a mist of birch and alder all along the foothills behind which lay the Knock.

As for Kit the Crows, freed from all his enemies, he landed half-an-hour afterwards with us on the western side of Rough Island. We thought we had done good to Kit by being, so mindful of him. It was not till later that we found out what an excellent stroke of business done for ourselves.

## CHAPTER TEN

### THE TWENTY-FOUR INCH MAP

It was a sign of the grace which was being fostered in Hammy that he took the advent of Kit the Crowl with at least a fair good grace. We could, at a pinch, have found a place within the Orchard Tower for Kit to sleep in. But he preferred to be out-of-doors. Indeed, for a long while it made him nervous and anxious even to have the door shut. He was a good general in this - that he always made sure of his line of retreat.

Long afterwards, he would take a rapid turn about the island before trusting himself at the table where meals were served. He would come in with eager face and stammering tongue at any hour of the day or night to tell us of an approaching, or even a passing craft - the latter generally bound with coals to Balcarry or Palnackie. He became, in fact, eyes and ears to us.

One thing, which astonished me not a little, was his insistence in coming in every night to the reading of the Word. I don't care to talk much about it, but the fact is I had promised my grandfather that every night before going to bed, I should read aloud a portion of Scripture to the boys.

'It will be for your own good, and make for the sobriety of demeanour of all who dwell under the same roof,' said my grandfather. And with this in view he advised the more doctrinal of the Epistles, especially his own two favourites - that to the Romans and the one to the Hebrews. He agreed with Luther that 'James,' which I liked best of all, was 'an

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epistle of straw.' So I kept well away from this last by reading only the wars of Saul and David. Indeed anything else would have been folly. For by this time the lads were so sleepy that they would not have kept awake, except to find out who beat. Grandfather added one other direction.

'Ye are not to pray aloud, though you may use the Lord's Prayer. The time for more is not yet come. For if you could pray well, you would only be uplifted and vain-glorious, and if ill - why then, it is better to say nothing at all, but that each should speak his own need on his knees at his own bedside!'

And, indeed, to this day I look upon it as little less than a miracle that the lads came in so willingly to the 'exercise' which my grandfather had prescribed - especially Hammy, who had never been used to suchlike in his own household. But he came with the others and was glad to wait, saying the Lord's Prayer louder and at least as reverently as any of them. And they said it with reverence, I can tell you. Besides, I really do believe that, though we read little that was not warlike and striking, it did them good, and they slept the quieter afterwards. There was, (I speak for myself and I hope you won't mention it), a kind of gladness in my heart when I shut the book, and even the kids went to bed with less racket.

Perhaps it was just because we read these stories of ancient Israel, of David and his crew in the cave of Engedi, of Nabal the old Brute-Beast and his wife the Wise Woman - whose name I forget - of Saul and Samuel and all those old fellows, to the roar of the wind bringing up the tides of Solway, to the chunnering of the sea-birds going to roost in their rock-clefts, and the broad blowing of the wind that

came straight and sharp from where the North Channel opens upon the broad Atlantic. Perhaps also, it was something other and better working within us.

At any rate, I could tell grandfather, without the least exaggeration, that we had done as I promised, and that it had done us good - though, because of the sleepiness of that unworthy band, I had confined them chiefly to what I knew would keep them aware of themselves. It was the only thing in all the day that they were not actually compelled to do, and perhaps they paid the more attention on that account.

What I mean is, that they could come to 'The Exercise' or stay away just as they liked. But if they came, of course they had to be reverent. And they were. There was no punishment, even so - only we should have cast them forth another night. Kit the Crowl arrived regular as the clock. He sat grave and silent with a light on his face I had never seen there before, and in a week he could repeat the Lord's Prayer. Indeed he went about the island muttering it, and sometimes he would use it as a kind of spell - as for example, when he thought the time was about ripe for the threatened onslaught of the Killies. But he had also a fine cudgel, long, thick and grievous, laid by in addition.

One of the very nicest things we did was a regular crib from *Robinson Crusoe* - only brought up to date. Mr. Trevor had given us a measuring chain, and the Doctor came over very willingly to give us lessons in surveying. We started out to make a correct map of every part of the island. Yes, no less! It was in four sheets and on the scale, as near as we could make out of twenty-four inches to the mile. This is the way

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we did it. We had of our own - or rather Penley's - an ordinary Ordnance map of one mile to the inch. Naturally that scale did not permit of any details. But we magnified the outline roughly twenty-four times by means of measurements and dividers. We had only a carpenter's three-foot rule, but by dotting and measuring in pencil, it worked pretty well. Afterwards we found that a tape measure was better - one marked on one side with inches and the other with centimetres. Only it was too late before we found out that. Most women have them and Penley could as easy as not have 'borrowed' one out of his mother's work-basket at Sea Cliff. She would not have minded, in such a good cause. And besides she would not have known.

Then, most offensively the Doctor wanted to stuff us with trigonometry, so that we could take the angles of the mountains. But as it was not the time for lessons, we let him explain, and afterwards - such was our reverence for our preceptor - do the calculations of heights himself. But we knew from the one inch map the height of the Hill in the middle of the Isle, which was four hundred and fifty feet. Then we flew a kite from the shore with a different coloured rag at every hundred feet previously measured along the cord, and by levelling with a spirit level on a long T-shaped cross stick, we managed to get the contours pretty correctly. The other method which the Doctor recommended for finding the heights of mountains by heating water and observing the temperature at which it boiled, did not work. It might do very well for Everest or Aconcagus, but on Rough Island Peak we found that we only burned our fingers trying to hold the thermometer. Besides we set the heather on fire -

which brought Mr. Trevor over a fast as two men could row him. Only the water was not wasted after carrying it so high. For it made very good tea, and Mr. Trevor had some too. He was hot and rather cross because of the burned heather, but of tea put him all right again.

Oh, applied science is a fine thing, and as for the map, it proceeded apace. We did it in pencil first, and kept it covered with tissue paper, so that it would not get dirty. It was a noble piece of work, and Mr. Trevor said that when it was finished, he would have it framed and put up in his study. He promised us each a photographic copy of it, but the original he would keep for himself. We were glad to be of so much use to him. For, though he had unloaded Hammy upon us, he had made up for that by bringing us things to eat from Dumfries - oh, in a hundred ways.

Then we had to invent names for all the places - ripping names, they were, too. We would have none else, of course. Fitz suggested funny-dog ones, till he got his head smacked. But, after all, when finished, hardly any but mine were adopted. That was because they were the best.

Penley was always beastly good and exact in figures, so measuring and calculating were all in the day's work to him. We gave him Hammy to help drag the chain for him and to do as he was bid generally - also permission to thump him if he wouldn't.

Fitz, of course, was a dab at colouring, and at last we saw the use of the Winsor and Newton paint-box, the miscellaneous pencils, brushes and fit-outs generally. Fitz said that it was sacrilege to use these for maps, and at first refused his assistance. But after a private interview which lasted a short quarter

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of an hour, he changed his mind, and said that it had even been the unattained dream of all his life to make a twenty-four inch map of Rough Island! So, after that, we had no trouble with him, and really he did it as nice as a row of marrow-fat peas, and printed the names of the capes and inlets, the caves and humps, every bit as clear and good as real type. He did it all with Indian Ink got on the sly, which he rubbed on a slab, and if the beggar didn't make the finished map the finest thing ever seen, well it is no matter! Why, it was all coats of arms and dolphins and dragons sporting about in the offing, like in the old maps in Penley's home atlas. And the 'Title Page' was all cords and anchors interlaced like a frame round the words:

### MAP OF ROUGH ISLAND

The property of Arnold Trevor, Esqr., J.P., D.L., etc., of Orchard Dean, drawn and surveyed to a scale of 24 in. to the mile, by J. Laurieston, A. Penley, W. FitzGeorge, R. Kilpatrick, and H. Alexander.

I allowed no foolery about any of the names of places and so forth. For being responsible, I was not going to have anything that was not creditable hung up in Mr. Trevor's study with my name to it.

But what we found most wonderful was the lot of things you can put into a map of that size. Once Fitz and Hammy sneaked a spade and made one of the highest promontories along the coast - fourteen feet high it was - all in one morning when I was over at the Knock harrying a falcon's nest, the builders of

which had been bothersome in the matter of the family chickens.

Fitz entered it most beautifully on the map and even indicated the cairn of stones on the top of it. But I would not put up with this - interfering (as it were), with the original scheme of Providence. So I gave them the credit they deserved by naming the place, 'Two Fools' Mark.' The mound of earth was entered as 'Hammy's Folly' and the tall stone on the top as 'Fitz-Idiot's Beacon.' It took me some pains before I could get our draughtsman to perform his duty. He proposed 'Spade Mountain,' and 'Dug-out Creek' for the hill and the valley behind it. But I stood no nonsense, and as a lesson to Fitz and Hammy, I let their names go down to deserved obloquy in Mr. Trevor's study. I had to stand over Fitz, though, till it was finished. He tried to get back at us by marking the track we had taken Myrtle, the Doctor and Mrs. Causland on their first visit to Rough Island, 'Hatpin Promenade,' and upon the little round top with the view he printed, 'Squeal Hill' in Gothic capitals.

But Penley and I, who were the only ones concerned in the affair, considered this feeble. However the names could not be expunged, and so they stand to this day. You can't fool with Indian Ink - or if *you* can, we didn't know the way. In spite of this torn-foolery, it was a proper map all the same. We numbered the very trees in the orchard, and I believe that with a little care we could have marked the apples and pears. To keep us from getting mixed, we divided the whole orchard into squares with kite string and mapped each separately.

Fitz wanted to make a kind of drawing of the way the wood looked from the top of one of the highest

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trees. But I stuck out for little round dots of different colours, so that Mr. Trevor could see at a glance just how many apple trees, plum trees, cherry trees and pear trees he had.

We did not mark the wild strawberries, which were just beginning to be famous eating, and varied too much to be scientific. Altogether it was a wonderful work of art, and we were astonished that Mr. Trevor did not come oftener to see how it was getting on. At first he would have taken a hand himself - he was so keen - but now he seemed to have altogether forgotten about coming across to stay. And that though he knew his room was always ready. Or at least we were always ready to turn out Hammy and make him sleep on a straw shakedown if his uncle should come. Moreover Hammy had learned so much now, that he would have done it without a murmur. Indeed, we were rather eager to show him off in his quality of 'reformed character' to his relative. Only he gave us no chance. And we could not understand it till Girlie May from the Knock told me one day that Mr. Trevor did not appear to care nearly so much for his building plans as he used to do. All his time, or at any rate the most part of it, was spent at the House of Colline. I thought instantly of Myrtle, and would have started off at once to see how much of this was true, if Girlie May had not been watching me - ready (as I knew) to make fun.

'He is reading up his Greek with the Doctor,' she went on, maliciously, 'he has just discovered that it is a fine mental training, and that he did not get nearly enough of it at college.'

'Well,' said I, making as light of the news as I could, 'he has gone to the right shop for Greek with

the Doctor. He will get fed up with it proper. He can have my share too!'

'Perhaps,' suggested May of the Knock with a kind of glitter in the eye that I was getting to know, 'he will take more of your share than you will quite like!'

And with that she whistled up 'Comma' and 'Full Stop,' and so swung away over the hill, leaving me, for the moment, quite bewildered, and hardly knowing what to think, say or do.

# ROGUES ISLAND

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### OUR NEW LEASE OF ROUGH ISLAND

One day Kilpatrick brought me a letter from the minister. Mr. Greenock said that he had heard from the tent-maker down at Leith. The tent was so badly in need of repairs that it would take a longish while to have it sent on. He was awfully sorry and asked if he could do anything else.

It appeared, therefore, that we were in for a much longer stay on the island than we had anticipated, and that we had better make arrangements with our proprietor immediately. So I resolved to go over to see Mr. Trevor, if *he* would not come to see us. Kit the Crowl refused to be left on the island without me, and so in spite of the danger from the boys of Killantringan, I took him with me.

This was good for me also. For of course, I had to take him up to the Knock to put him under the care of Girlie May. I had been several times to see her, when we needed more milk - so I knew the way in by the back. May did not mind being generous, and as she was the daughter of the house, she did not need to go asking her mother all the time for so small a thing as a quart of milk. When I had any money, of course she made me pay for it. But then I squared the account by getting as much as I could drink at a go. I could make it three pints on an empty stomach. But of course, if there was any harm in this, it was neither the fault of Girlie May nor my own, but undoubtedly that of Mr. Trevor who gave us the use of a cow that would give no milk after we had learned to milk it - and a kicking beast at the best! It was disgusting to see how she would not

even fall over the cliffs, so that we could have had some fresh beef, but only turned up more and more lively every day. Once, however, she charged down on Fitz's easel and sketch-traps, making a festoon of them about her horns. So we forgave her a lot for that.

Such an animal did not really deserve to live, and like the good desperadoes we were, we gave her many chances of flight or suicide. But our cow, whom we designated Sappho, declined to leap from the cliff, and could be seen in different parts of the isle, keeping mainly to the sky-line, and marking with a wary eye our various scouting parties.

The day that Kit the Crowl and I went over to the Knock, I left him on the edge of the wood, near the dip in the ridge which we called the Shipka Pass - for we had been reading all about Osman Pasha and Scobeleff and Gourko and these chaps in *The Wars of the Century*. I went off towards the farm, whistling warily on the dogs, because I knew that where they were, May was apt to be also. They came at full charge, both 'Comma' and 'Full Stop,' And I stopped very still till they had had a good sniff, and satisfied themselves that I was a person worthy of confidence and withal a friend of their mistress's.

Presently Girlie May came - we called her that to make her mad - and she said that she would have to wait awhile before she could get the milk, owing to the fact that there was butter-making going on in the dairy. So it would be better to leave our little operations till there were fewer people about. I asked her if she did not deliver up the money I gave her to her mother. She was offended and snapped out, 'Yes, *when you give it!*'

This was quite an uncalled for observation,

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because they had loads of milk at the Knock, and I always paid the money afterwards, if I did not have it at the time. Still there is this to be said, that a good deal of our transactions - I mean between Girlie May and myself were conducted on the long credit basis. Not that it mattered really, for if *we* had not had it, the milk would as likely as not have been given to the calves, and we on our island were certainly of more value than many calves.

So I shouted to Kit the Crowl to come on and left him with the dogs and May. Here he was perfectly safe, because no Killie boy dared to come within half-a-mile of the Knock. You see, not only was there a couple of dogs, not to be trifled with, but old Father Knock used to go about with a gun loaded with small peas under his arm, and sometimes for a joke he would fire it over the heads of scampering boys, laughing to himself at their sudden terror. He had made for himself a name in the country, and the mere sight of him in the distance, would send every boy - aye, and young man also, to the deepest coverts of the fringing woods of Shipka.

I do not deny that this may have been one reason for the care with which I made my approaches to the dairy-house of the Knock. But chiefly it was for Girlie May's sake, and to prevent any ill-feeling between her and - well, anybody else. So leaving May and Kit the Crowl, I hied me all alone to the Great House of Orchard Dean, that hitherto had been called Peninsular House - some said because it stood on the neck of a peninsula, and others because it had been built (or at least added to), by old Major Douglas Trevor, who had been a veteran of the Peninsular war. I remember the odd yellowish house with the flat, white-sashed windows, and

especially at the corners many 'blind' windows made up with slabs of stone painted to resemble real panes of glass from a distance. That was on account of the old window tax about which my grandfather used to tell me.

But of course, the new house, quite different, was all of granite, and if anything was left of the old it was tucked away inside and you could not see it. I found Mr. Trevor knitting his brows over a map of what at first sight I took for a plan of Orchard Dean House. But when I got nearer I saw it was something very different. It was patchy all over with splotches of blue paint, and had little star-fishy things marked in green on a kind of orange yellow base. Mr. Trevor saw I was surprised, and he held out the plan for me to look at, explaining that it was of his Alpine Garden and he was marking where he had put in all the species - each with botanical names the length of my arm. But oh, how badly it was done! I told him on the spot that I would lend him Fitz for a while to draw it out prettily - that is, if he would send a man over to the island to row Fitz back in time to clean the boots - because in a way I, being the eldest, was responsible for his doing his duty.

Mr. Trevor said that he would be very glad. And he added, pretty generously, that it was us fellows who had set him on making a survey of his Alpine Garden with streams and pools. This was my chance, and I said we would do him a proper one with a lot of pleasure, if he wouldn't mind us staying on the island a bit longer,

I gave him Mr. Greenock's letter and he read it with his long legs crossed easily, his back leaning up against a slab of rock, which was to form part of a

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rockery, and all the while at his moustache in a quiet kind of pensive way he had - mainly, I think, to hide a smile.

I wasn't much put about. I guessed all the time he would let us stay - first of all because we amused him, and, secondly, that if we had to go to the mountains (or worse, pack off home), he would have Hammy on his hands again with extreme suddenness.

'I don't see any reason against it,' he said, at length, 'but how about the money?'

I am afraid that I changed colour a bit at this unexpected query. It was what might be called a bolt from the blue - although I never saw one of these, though I've looked all through geology books and museums and such likely places. So I answered that I thought we could manage to pay him *some* rent for the use of his house and island. But I was afraid not very much, unless he would take it out in flounders and crabs.

At this he laughed again and asked how much I thought we could manage. He did not want to be hard on us, he said, and he would see his factor about it tomorrow. He spoke so solemnly that for a moment I was a bit daunted, and inwardly said to myself that if he once went to consult that factor, we might as well quit.

But all at once there came the kind of good thing into my head - what Mr. Greenock calls 'a happy inspiration.' So I said, looking him straight in the eye, 'About as much as we will have to charge *you* for looking after Hammy!'

And it would have done you good to have heard him laugh. He clapped me on the back, saying that it was the breed that did it, and that he was only

now beginning to feel himself a real Scotsman after so long in England, which (he said) had a softening influence. Then I knew that we would have no more trouble with Mr. Trevor.

I told him that, on the whole, we had stuck pretty close to his rules. I had argued with Fitz once and with Hammy twice for shooting off the bunny-rifles at seabirds.

I knew very well that neither of them could ever hit what they were shooting at, but he (Mr. Trevor) had forbidden it. And besides, they might possibly knock over something by accident. You can't keep gulls and sea things from dashing about without warning. So after some faithful dealing, both Fitz and Hammy saw the error of their ways. Hammy took longest, having been brought up haughty. Nevertheless he too ended by qualifying for the blessing of the meek, about which we had been reading the night before, when I gave them a let-up on King Solomon's prayer - because I had promised to my grandfather that we would say our own prayers - all except *the One* - in to ourselves. Besides there were an awful lot of verses in Solomon's, and I knew that somebody would be sure to get bumped for sleeping. You see I hated interrupting the only hour when the fellows were decently quiet of their own accord.

At any rate I soon arranged with our landlord on these terms of mutual accommodation - he to go on letting us have the Island, and we to look after and manage Hammy - generally to 'tone him up,' he said. Mr. Trevor was pleased, and said so. He had noticed a difference in the boy already.

'Keep at it,' he said, 'for when he gets back to his mother, and feels his foot upon his native heath, he

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may relapse.'

So we promised to feed his nephew up with good counsels and excellent reasons for not making a donkey of himself afterwards. The best was to tell him that he would certainly have another turn with us if he told his mother. For Mrs. Alexander of Elshiner was always going off to this bath establishment and that summer resort for the benefit of her gout or her spleen, or something equally unpleasant that she imagined to be hers.

I thought I could safely promise that Hammy would not tell his mother anything to cause anxiety to that good and careful lady, and I revealed to Mr. Trevor the secret of the pint of salt water - it was nearer a quart - but never mind. He owned that the amount might perhaps be considered rather drastic, but as Hammy had not suffered he supposed that it was all right. He had left his young friend in our hands and certainly he did not see any reason for interfering.

As we walked away towards the village Mr. Trevor told me, that, finding the inn small and noisy, he had found and furnished rooms in the house of an old gentleman, once of pride and fortune, but now retaining only the former. His name was Busby - Francis Busby, but better known for miles around as Fuz-Buz Busby. He had had at one time a great establishment, and for reasons best known to himself he had spent his money in the course of half-a-dozen riotous years - 'hail-fellow-well-met' years, years of trampling fours-in-hand, of all the world and his wife - not to speak of his sister at Colonel Busby's for balls and parties. For it was then thought that he was very rich, and all the fathers of large families called upon him, and all the

corresponding mothers were flattered by his attentions to their daughters.

But it was a different thing when one day the gay Colonel came to the end of his money, and had to sell carriages - all, that is except a little dog-cart in which to drive to church. One old servant alone remained - the same Sally who had been his nurse and meant to see him in his grave. He had still a small patch of land which the neighbouring farmers tilled for him every spring - aye, and Mr. Trevor said, even found the seed for. He had one or two grass parks which he let, and in the shell of his once great park a huge hulk of a mansion house, with stupidly solemn Gregorian front and double range of steps, broad as a street, leading to a carved majestic portal. Here it was that, till his own house was set in order, Mr. Trevor had taken up his abode. But he warned me that I was never to hint that he was anything but a guest of Mount Busby. For the Colonel kept up that fiction, and hardly the sight of Mr. Trevor's cook and his valet - James - the latter a staid and stately importation from London - could convince him that all the provisions and dainties upon the table were not the produce of 'my properties, sir' and prepared for the table by 'my kitchen people, sir. Confound them, they are so careless - they sometimes forget the proper amount of truffle stuffing to put in a turkey. I tell you what it is, I shall have to go down tomorrow and see about it, Mr. Trevor! I will indeed, sir!'

## CHAPTER TWELVE

## OLD COLONEL FUZ-BUZ

At Busby Hall I had to be on my P's and Q's, I can tell you. The old Colonel was not used to boys, and considered them like warty growths upon the fair face of things. But for all that, he was gracious enough when Mr. Trevor introduced me.

'The tenants of the Island out yonder, well known to you - Rough Island, I think,' he said, with the quiet dignity peculiar to him, which but for a certain glitter in the eye might have been called 'sleepy.' 'My nephew, Hamilton Alexander of Elshiner - the younger - is of the company!'

'Ha,' cried the old Fuz-Buz, 'must go and call upon them some day - but most difficult, no driving over there! And my boat the *Painted Swan* has been out of commission for some years - indeed ever since my poor sister died.'

We used to have a yacht then - Yes, sir, one of sixty tons register, the *Narcissus* - I daresay you have heard of her. She raced for the America Cup in the days when yachts were yachts with living people on board come to enjoy themselves, not surface flying machines that you never dare take out in half-a-gale!'

Here Mr. Trevor glanced at me slyly, as if to take me into the secret of an exquisite piece of humour. But aloud he only said, 'Yes, I have heard you speak of her. She must have been a flyer - by all accounts.'

And with this encouragement the Colonel took up the tale. He had owned four winners of the Derby.

He was at that moment thinking of adding to his stables and -'

But here I was quite sure that Mr. Trevor undisguisedly winked at me. I began to smell out the truth. The Colonel was romancing - with a difference. He was not lying. He had told the tales so often that he had come to believe in them himself, and I verily believe that he would have challenged any one to fight a duel who had doubted his word about the four winners of the Derby, and the great historic race for the America Cup - 'Lost, sir, lost by a steamer crossing my bows three feet from the bowsprit - sir, not an inch more when I snatched the wheel from Captain Brunt, hung over it like grim death and saved the lives of all on board - But, sir, I lost the race, and with it my fortune!'

'Come - come,' said Mr. Trevor, 'your fortune is surely a pretty fair one as it stands.'

He looked out at the window and waved his hands towards the grass parks on which herds of fine oxen were browsing peacefully. He knew as well as possible that these were Butcher Donnan's - and so, for that matter, did I. But the master of the mansion house of Busby Hall stood with his hands behind him tilting himself back and forth on the heels and toes of his long boots as in a rocking-chair. Following the direction of Mr. Trevor's finger he pulled down his brows, pursed his mouth with the slightly contemptuous air of a connoisseur, and remarked, carelessly 'Pretty fair - oh, pretty fair! But you ought to have seen them in the old days before I lost the boat-race. Then every beast on my home farm had taken a prize at the Agricultural Hall, and when I wanted to sell I had only to intimate my willingness to dispose of any number of these noble

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animals, when lo! down would come a score of buyers from London! You remember, Trevor? No, it was I daresay, a little before your time. They used to wire on ahead and take all the cabs and traps in Cairn Edward - not to use them - oh no, but to keep the other fellows from getting first to my house. They actually got the length of sending cabs to the different stations along the line and paying the porters to call out that this was the station for Colonel Busby's! Funny thing, sir, to see an eager dealer, all the way from London, arriving from a station fifteen miles away when every horn and hoof was sold and the cash paid down on the nail!

It certainly did seem remarkable, considering that the Colonel's coat had been frequently mended, doubtless by the faithful Sally, or still more likely by his own experience of military necessities, for he had indeed seen fighting. His elastic-sided boots were seen to be drawn and cross-stitched when the straps of his trousers pulled a little upwards. He walked with a curiously stilted crane-like jerk forwards, as if he owned a pair of wooden legs which swung outwards from the stiff axis of his back, like the limbs of a well-made lay-figure set going by clock-work.

I had to stay to lunch. And then it was just beautiful to see how Colonel Fuz-Buz *would* order around James, Mr. Trevor's admirable man-servant, and send down admonitions to the cook, who was also of Mr. Trevor's household. Sally, the Colonel's old nurse, lingered about the doors - rather wistfully, I thought - for now she was only employed in carrying the dishes from the kitchen to the door of the dining-room.

Still she thought of her master, for I could see her

pointing out to James the portions which the Colonel preferred. But Old Fuz-Buz who was a gentleman, though of a quaint sort, insisted that Mr. Trevor, in his capacity of guest, should always be served first. Nevertheless by holding the dish in a particular position, that faithful man succeeded in conveying a kind of imperceptible warning to his master, and so generally managed to reserve the required tit-bit for the Colonel's plate. At which old Sally would beam approval, and disappear kitchenwards.

Of course, I, as a boy (or little more), did not count. And indeed I was glad enough merely to eat and listen.

You never heard anything in the least like that Colonel - the face he put upon things.

He pressed his guest to eat of his own dishes. He enumerated their merits and enlarged upon them. He pointed out portions which had been overlooked, and sent James round again to Mr. Trevor that he might heap them on his plate.

'I believe, sir,' he said, 'that it is no longer considered good breeding to press a guest to partake, but it *was* good manners in my day and my father's day before me. And, sir, I will change for no man. Have a little more of this delicious roast wild duck, killed on my own ponds down by the estuary, sir!'

It was certainly a fine lesson in good breeding - thorough-breeding, perhaps, is the best word, to watch Mr. Trevor, bowing and thanking his host. Still more to see James promptly executing the Colonel's every command with silent dexterity and without a smile on his face - though both of them knew perfectly well that the wild ducks had been

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sent from Leadenhall Market in response to a telegram despatched by James himself and that the invoice had arrived the morning before in an open envelope addressed to Arnold Trevor, Esq.

Nevertheless there was something about Old Fuzz-Buz that one could not help liking. I could not myself. He was so simple and transparent. He boasted of everything 'boastable' about. Yet he remembered to set aside portions of the soup and vegetables, of all the dishes indeed, for this and that ancient and precarious pensioner - the Widow McTaggart down the avenue, Tom Greg up the Loaning. That bone, now, would do the Jones family for a week. James was to tell the Housekeeper. (Sally was immediately behind the door and heard as well as if the Colonel had spoken into her ear) that she was to take this, that, and the other thing to the McTaggarts, the Gregs, and the Joneses, 'with Colonel Busby's compliments!'

'One must not forget old dependents, even in times when the increase of brutally-earned commercial wealth has cut off a good deal of the ancient splendour of one's family name.'

It was a fine sentiment, but I could not help glancing at Mr. Trevor whose good things were thus freely disposed of. But that rare soul was gazing at the Colonel with a sweet and pensive smile of respectful sympathy - such as a young man might have for a senior whose character and achievements he greatly admires.

He was a regular tip-topper, Mr. Trevor, and no mistake.

The Colonel turned suddenly to me and said, 'Laurieston, I think your name is? I knew a Captain Laurieston well, sir - relative of yours, no doubt.

Came from this part of the country, at any rate. He was killed at Alma - no, at the Redan. He got through all right up till then. Night of the Alma I promised him a cruise on my yacht. For I had a private store of provisions brought only once, sir, to the port of Balaklava. But after that one cruise I kept the yacht going to and fro to Varna with the sick and wounded. I would have been proud to entertain your uncle - only, sir, he was shot dead at the first fire!'

I had never heard of this uncle by sudden deed-of-gift. But a warning glance from Mr. Trevor told me that I must not disavow the dead hero. So I held my tongue. Which last was an easy thing to do seeing that the Colonel buzzed contentedly on with his reminiscences, apparently unable to keep silent, or to remain in his seat. He would be round to Mr. Trevor's side to snatch away a glass which James had just placed there, but in which the keen eye of Old Fuz-Buz detected the shadow of a stain. This was the only time when I thought I discovered the faintest cloud on the impassible countenance of James. He simply cocked an eye for half-a-second to see what the owner of the house was up to, and then with an almost imperceptible shrug of the shoulders, went on carving the roast lamb.

But Old Fuz was in great form. He even deigned to take hospitable notice of how little I was eating, and related anecdotes of his own appetite when a boy - how he had got his nurse - 'faithful old creature, Sally, sir - I daresay you have seen her among the other servants - I cannot bear to part with her, you see. She is not able for much now, but she is in this house at this moment, I daresay taking her comfortable after-dinner nap in the house-keeper's room. Sally is so jealous - she always likes

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to be served before the other servants. And I am not the man, sir, so long as it is in my power, to disappoint the little innocent cravings of one so old and faithful - as I may say, grown grey in the house of my ancestors!'

Now, this astonished even me - accustomed to Buz-Fuz as I was. For of course we all knew, and indeed all the countryside knew that Sally was the sole servant whom the Colonel had had in his house for a score of years - indeed till the very day of the arrival of Mr. Trevor.

But I was to learn something of Sally which astonished me yet more, and made me understand Mr. Trevor better.

As he started out after lunch to walk part of the way back to the boat with me, he seemed in a mood to talk.

'No, I have not much in common with my neighbours,' he said, thoughtfully, 'It is my own fault. I daresay. I like odd characters. I do not care to sit on the justices' bench and sentence poor fellows for taking an odd bird or so home to their families. And putting aside the politicals, the county is sporting mostly. They care still less for the things I care about - my garden, my flowers, and the wild things of the woods. I am therefore rather an outsider. I have travelled a good deal and the talk which interests me is of books and far countries. But I will own that Colonel Busby suits me. I have never met anyone like him before. He has really been a soldier and a good one too-'

At this I cried out involuntarily, and Mr. Trevor laughed at my disbelief.

'Oh, no, you are mistaken,' he said. 'That was not one of his inventions. He has really been in the wars

and I think that a touch of the sun in India has had more to do with his fabrications than any real intention of deceiving.'

'And Sally?' I asked, for I had heard curious stories about the old woman appearing at the houses of entertainment such as the 'Blue Boar' at Killantringan, and without more than the command of a nurse to a naughty boy, marching the Colonel home to bed.

Mr. Trevor glanced at me as if he were making up his mind.

'I can trust you,' he said, 'of course you will be meeting the Colonel pretty often if you remain on the Island. Indeed I daresay he will very likely come over and visit you. But there is no need to tell the other fellows what I am going to tell you. The poor old fellow has gradually had to part with every acre of his land. That is, it really forms part of the estate which I have added by purchase. On taking possession, I got my lawyers to take up all outlying bonds on the Colonel's estate. If it were to be set up to auction tomorrow, the sale would not clear them – no, not if the house itself were sold and every tree on the property cut down. Indeed, when I came to find out more about Colonel Busby, which I made it my business to do as soon as I arrived at Orchard Dean, I discovered that for years he had nothing whatever to live on, and that he was actually subsisting on the savings of his old nurse, Sally, who had been with him from his birth.'

'Of course now the thing is different. I am paying all domestic expenses and also a rent for the portion of the house used by me and my servants. I also take care that a part of each month's allowance is put in the bank to the credit of Sally.'

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'And you are actually paying rent for your own house!' I cried, astonished.

'Well, I am afraid that it works out something like that - if you put it that way. But then I am an odd fellow and having no ties, I can do what I like with my own. The Colonel pleases me more than a score of excellent people who are not amusing. He is an old gentleman, for all his romancing - which by the way do nobody, not even himself, any harm. And besides nobody knows - except, that is, my lawyers and now yourself!'

'And what,' I asked, with some curiosity, 'do your lawyers say?'

'Oh,' he answered lightly, 'I think that if it were not that I am a good client and that they have some notions of professional fidelity, they would institute an inquest into my sanity in behoof of my next-of-kin!'

He waved his hand and was setting off - as I remarked, not in the direction of Orchard Dean, but to pay an afternoon call at Colline House.

He turned again, however, before he had gone many paces, and called out, 'Please don't think I am such a fool as I look. The Colonel has instituted me his heir! Already he treats me as his son, for which honour I trust I am properly grateful and respectful. Goodbye!'

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### THE GLIMMERING WAND

Indeed we soon had occasion to remark this feature in Mr. Trevor's character. He behaved with touching delicacy to the old Colonel, and was always ready to listen to variations of stories, the main features of which he must have known by heart. The two came over a few days after to visit the island. And it was the Colonel who led the party, explained its history, its geography, the geology of the coast as seen from Round Top, showed where imaginary ships had been cast upon very real rocks, and ended by a general exposure of the defensive possibilities of the island if only the Government would buy it from him.

Now there was something almost too much for us in this. For we knew that the island and old tower had been in the possession of the Trevor family for hundreds of years - appearing even in *Pont's Atlas*, which (the Doctor said) had been mapped out in the beginning of the reign of James the First.

As for Mr. Trevor himself he never winced, but hoped that his friends did not intrude upon Colonel Busby's property. In a moment of absent-mindedness he had given us permission to go there. But, as the two estates were under the same lawyers' hands, and the same factor, the matter could no doubt be easily put right.

If the Colonel had taken a dislike to us, I don't know what would have happened - whether we should have had to quit, or Mr. Trevor to leave

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Buzby Hall.

In any case I am sure that he would have sacrificed either us fellows, or himself, or both together, rather than annoy the old man to whom he had taken so strange a liking, and for whom he was providing in so original a manner.

Before they went off home, the Colonel expressed himself as exceedingly pleased with the order and cleanliness he had seen everywhere that day. It was just as if he had been an officer of regulars inspecting the camp of a party of volunteers. The discipline he remarked upon as specially good - as indeed it was liable to be. For I had promised every member of the party, severally and individually, a sound hiding, if they did not toe the line when the old Colonel came. For this Fitz and Hammy very nearly qualified. But I managed to get behind them when the Colonel was examining our cooking things - *batterie de cuisine* he called it. They were sorry for sniggering, and discipline was re-established without anyone but themselves being the wiser. Order reigns in Warsaw. After a little furtive rubbing, all was quiet along the Potomac - as they used to say in the American Civil War.

When our visitors went away we were left with something else to think of. In going round the island with them I had noticed a tall peeled wand (like Locksley's) stuck into a cleft on the summit of Hammy's Folly. It had not been put there by any of us. I made searching inquiries, and in such a way that I knew they dare not tell lies about it. So Penley and I went down to see what it might be. This is what we found. A challenge in due form - no less! Though who had placed it there, we could not for the moment make out. Here it is :

## Galloway Raiders Digital Edition

*'WE, the BOYS of Killantringan do challenge you fellows on Rough Island to fight for the strawberry beds and other things on the Island, which you have taken possession of by sucking up to Mistr. Trevor. We mean to come and drive you out, so be prepared. You are great sneaks, if you do wear colars and ties, and have no business on our island, that has always been ours since Timy Memoryal!*

*Signed, Chief Thomas,  
of the Band of the Black Hand.*

*Killantringan, Thursday July - 2nd week.'*

*'P.S. to the Chief of the Band of Town's Boys unlawfully occupying our Island and to all whom it may concern. At answer will oblige, stuck in the same stick. We have given you fair warning - you can't say different, and we hope you will not betray him that comes to bring back the answer to this our Cartel of Defiance.'*

It was written on ruled school copy-book paper, and the engraved copy-line heading at the top had been cut away with a knife. But the style and directness of the message showed that there was a good schoolmaster abroad in the village of Killantringan. The boys who got up a thing like that had certainly read some books or papers. I suspected *The Boys of England*, and the *Young Men of Great Britain*, which we also read on the sly, obtaining them through the medium of the barber of our town – neither of the local booksellers being able to endure the anger of parents when these publications dropped from underneath our waistcoats. What a relief it was to our minds, also to our persons, when the first number of the *Boys' Own Paper* appeared. I remember it as if it were

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yesterday! With what joy did we show the Publisher's imprint at home! Even the ministers praised it from the pulpit - which was certainly not in its favour so far as boys were concerned. But the paper, once handled, triumphed over all. It was as good and exciting as any, while owing to the notice of origin on the front page, it could be read in the strictest houses even on Sunday - due care being taken to keep the most exciting portions from the perusal of suspicious seniors.

Of course such a challenge had to be replied to, and it took us a good deal of thought before we could make up our minds what to say. But as usual, it all came to me during the night. So I rose and waked Penley to hold the candle and be growled at, if the proper words did not come into my head. I meant to write about it all afterwards under the very swell title of 'The War of the Glimmering Wand,' so I made Penley wake Fitz to take down notes.

We three made a really imposing council of war under the uncertain light of the candle, and 'through the tall oriel' (only it was small and square) were the rounded moon and the rolling sea all correct. At first there was trouble - oh, very little and only what was to be expected! First Penley was sleepy and wobbled. He let candle grease drop on my first answer to the Cartel of Defiance. This, of course, would never do for the Glimmering Wand, and all the terrible events on which we were embarking. So *he* had to be thumped.

Then Fitz was sulky, and instead of behaving like a proper Roman shorthand clerk - 'the cropped, obsequious secretary,' I meant to call him in the account of the war - he drew devils and imps with horns and hoofs on the edge of the paper. So *he* had

to be kicked. The President had to rise to do it personally. Having thus been taught their several duties and places, the sitting of the committee continued.

I resolved to make out very stringent conditions of combat, which I knew to be the right of the party challenged. So I wrote:

'The Captain Commanding the garrison on Rough Island to Chief Thomas of the Black Hand, Killantringan, via Palnackie, N.B.

'We accept your challenge. Don't make any doubt about that. We will be pleased to meet you any time by night or day. But there have got to be some conditions of combat arranged, We don't want to be hanged for killing any of you, nor to see you scragged for laying out some of us. Here then, is what I have the honour to propose. (*I put that phrase in 'for side'*).

1. You have got catapults, but we have got air-guns. Both are barred. We don't want eyes put out, rows with parents and such.

2. You are to land in a fairly shallow place, so that if we do pitch you into the sea, as we mean to, you won't get drowned or stuck in Bob Irving's salmon-nets, thus spoiling his fishing.

3. Weapons allowed - fists, head, shoulders - but not feet, except when the opposing force is in full retreat. N.B. Combatants not attending to this, or striking below the belt, will be thumped by both parties signing this treaty of Uncivil War.

4. Ammunition, etc., allowed - clods, turfs, lumps of peat, ash plants without knobs, wooden swords

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not more than a yard long, spears (but blunt), bows and wooden arrows without barbs and with tops rounded.

5. Both sides may put up defensive works, trenches, dig shelter-pits, build walls, and fortify themselves according to any rules of legitimate warfare (I did not know what this meant myself, but it sounded fine and, if we saw the Colonel, he would be sure to tell us).

6. The wounded to be equally well treated by both parties.

7. See here, if *you* take our defences and keep the orchard for half-an-hour, you shall have half the strawberries, and we shall all go crabbing together. There are lots of tricks you could show us, if you like.

8. If you keep the garden for one hour, the whole of the strawberries are yours, but if we chuck you all into your boats or into the sea, you are to pay us a war indemnity of twelve pounds of fresh fish, flounders, saith, lythe, or anything good and eatable each week we stay on the island.

9. If either party fails to fulfil their part of this agreement, they are mansworn and kickable wherever met with, and their names shall be handed down to posterity with dishonour.

10. We agree to supply bandages and medical comforts for your wounded, and if all goes well, both parties will have dinner together afterwards - excepting, of course, the strawberries, if you get them. You can bring anything you can pick up. Future battles to be arranged according to the fruits in their season. N.B. - Cherries are coming on, and apples promise to be early this year. Plums middling, ready in about a fortnight. Bring some

sticking plaster - we are out.

(Signed) J. Laurieston,  
Captain Commanding the Garrison on Rough  
Island.

'How about the flags?' asked Fitz, who having got over the sulks, was growing interested and almost forgetting to take notes. It was a pretty decent idea - for Fitz. Also I think he wanted to do something noble with his colour box. So I added as a postscript:

'Combatants may use any flag they choose, but the Union Jack is barred as not fair.'

At this last Fitz grinned melodiously, and with the laughter still in his throat, he chuckled, 'You need not have bothered. The 'Killies' would not mind fighting against a dozen Union Jacks. They will shake out a white shirt with the print of a black hand done in tar upon it! That's their size!'

'Not a bad idea,' said I. For I had read something like that in stories about the charcoal-burners in Italy.

So in the dead of night, with the setting moon squinting down a faint light over our shoulders, we wended our way, in the proper nerve-strung fashion, to the point on which stood the cairn called Hammy's Folly. The first of us carried a lantern for form's sake. Each had his left arm bound about with flour-bags criss-crossed with twine, and in our right-hand we carried a stout cudgel.

Fitz wanted to take his air-gun, on the ground that the treaty was not yet signed, and they might

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'fall upon us and massacre us.' But I made him put it down on the pain of immediately massacring him myself.

We found the Glimmering Wand without much difficulty. The waves of a full tide clattered gently about it. Across the bay we could see a light from a boat rising and falling on the swell. We stuck the folded letter in the cleft stick, and turned to return home. We had reached the top of the ridge, when, turning, we saw a dark figure dart from some hiding-place among the boulders, reach up for the War Message, snatch it and sprint away in the direction of the sea. There was a hail, a splash, the sound of the oars of a boat receding into the distance and all was quiet.

Our message was on its way. The Killies were cleverer than we thought. They had been watching us all the time. It was evident that they meant business, but in my heart of hearts I was doubtful if they would fall in with my suggestions for the conduct of the war, which might smell too much of Geneva conventions and such-like for hungry boys with grievances.

However, I hoped for the best, and, in fact, finished up by having more real confidence than either of the others. For, you see, I felt that the hostile leader must in some way be a fellow after my own heart, though of course he had not the advantage of going to Causland's and making - I mean being friends with Myrtle, not to mention all that Mr. Trevor had done for me. And though I cannot explain it, that was a lot. For I now see that to know a proper, kindly, unpretentious, non-preachy Christian gentleman is about the best thing for a chap of my age - of any age indeed - but

especially when a fellow begins to think that he knows everything, and can *do* everything. The Doctor did me a lot of good - oh, an awful lot. But then it was mostly head work, whereas I think that Mr. Trevor helped me not to be altogether a lout.

# ROGUES ISLAND

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### FUZ-BUZ TAKES COMMAND

We had a good deal of nervous work awaiting the next move of the Hostiles. We hung about the island, planning fortifications and fishing for anything we could catch. The island was pretty clifffy towards the open, with caves and arches into which the sea came slapping and jumping at high tide when the wind backed into the mouth of the channel. This made a heavy northward run past the coves and little sandy bays, which was first-rate for boat-landing and bathing so long as you did not get into the suck of the out-running tide.

On the inner side towards Killantringan stretched out a long spur of sand and shingle dry occasionally at deepest ebb-tide. But away to the right and facing the village, the ground was all gently sloping, tufted with long benty grass, short 'bull's-wool' heather, and bearing everywhere great dull-green crops of bracken.

Then again came the sand and the cliffs.

Of course not all these places are good for beaching even a small boat. Inshore there are big boulders, and farther out fragments of tumbled-in caves standing like old tooth stumps about the sea-way in a tangle of currents and cross-runs of tide. But a large part of the island to the north and north-east is open enough, and (what was the worse for us) it was exactly in that direction that the Orchard, our bone of contention, had been planted.

About noon of the same day we saw a boat put out from an inlet near Killantringan. There was a solitary figure at the oars. Penley ran for the glass,

for he thought the messenger would surely bring the reply to our Geneva Convention conditions.

But instead, it was no other than the Colonel.

What had brought him all the way from Busby Hall was more than we could imagine. But there Fuz-Buz was, his long back swinging like a pendulum as he knowingly worked the boat into the current that sweeps round the north end of Rough Island. He sped far to the West and then let himself drop down upon us in a way which no one could have attempted who had not a perfect knowledge of our intricate Solway tides. You might call the old Colonel all sorts of things, but one thing he was not. On the water he certainly was no fool.

He jumped ashore as lively as any of us, and with the wave of the hand summoned us to help draw up his boat on the shingle.

'I am glad to see you so comfortably installed on my island,' he said, 'I was speaking of it only the other night to my friend and guest, Mr. Arnold Trevor, and he suggested that, in order to assure myself of the wellbeing of my property, I should drop down upon you unawares and see for myself. Eh, what? Well, here I am!'

He did indeed look about him. He examined with a military eye the cooking and other multifarious makeshifts about the house. He mounted to the roof and saw the pot pierced with holes in which the beacon was placed all ready. He commended us for having the fire materials sheeted down against the weather, but found fault with the mess the tar made by dripping through. He showed us how by plugging up the chisel-holes with corks we could stop the leakages, and then at a moment's notice pull them out.

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We thanked him and, as we had not enough corks in the house, he promised to send us a few score to the landing-place that night, with anything else that we might need in the way of military stores. I expect, however, that he thought we were doing all this just to amuse ourselves – that is till he came to our earthworks, designed for the protection of the orchard.

It was then that we had him. He flung up his hands, and I do declare that he actually blushed plum-colour with a kind of pleasure. Of course he was pretty much of that hue already, so that it did not much matter. Still it showed. And you should just have seen him square his shoulders, till you would have thought he felt once more the weight of the epaulettes. He pointed along the lines with his riding whip.

'Somebody has been reading *Vauban* - who is it?' he cried - and he turned a pair of sharply questing eyes upon the five of us. Fitz promptly gave me away.

'It was him!' he said, ungrammatically.

'Ha,' cried the Colonel, 'I thought so - got hold of some old book, did you, thinking it was something like the *Boys of England*? Very good in its time - good even now, but you have not enough men to garrison all that! What you want are a few earthen forts with connecting trenches. I will show you!'

And in a moment more he had launched himself upon a perfect sea of military reminiscences - explaining how field defences had taken the place of scarp and counter-scarp, ravelin and ditch.

'Cover – ' he cried, 'cover and little low forts to lie down in – that's the trick - where you can pop away and take the enemy at a disadvantage!'

'But the book - *Vauban*?' I ventured to suggest, 'I have copied everything exactly to scale!'

'Of course,' he cried, slapping his leg with his little carrying-switch, 'Doubtless - yes, I do not doubt it. That was the way at Namur, and even in the Peninsula with Old Nosey. But Plevna, the 'Zaribas' of the Soudan, and the blessed mole-runs of the Transvaal, have changed all that. How many men do you say that you can put in the field?'

'Five!' I answered, 'that is, four and the captain! But we are better armed than the 'Killies' - I mean the Killantringen boys!'

Here he nodded with something of knowing in his eye.

'Aye, they are rascals from the bottom of the pit. Many a time have I scourged them. But they will never dare to set a foot on my island - no, not they.'

And the old man smacked his calf so hard with his swagger-cane that he had perforce to pick up the limb and rub the ankle very tenderly, though without seeming to see anything out of the way in so doing.

So as pieces of conviction I handed him the challenge and the copy of my acceptance. He shook his head at the clauses which forbade the use of hurtful weapons on both sides.

'Rosewater!' he muttered contemptuously, 'you can't make war with rosewater! Give them pepper, red pepper. I delegate to you authority in my place. I bid you to defend my property! - So does my friend, Mr. Arnold Trevor - for such rights as he may have acquired on these shores. Therefore, you are quite within the law. Defend the orchard to the last drop -'

'Of strawberries and cream,' I murmured so that only the boys could hear.

## ROGUES ISLAND

'Of your blood, against all comers. This property is mine, sir, mine - and in part also, my friend's. You are left here in charge. Responsibility weighs upon you. Shades of Sir Colin, but for two rows of pins I would take a hand myself! Yes, bless my old bones, if I don't. Fry me, but I will direct operations. Naturally my dignity will not allow me to do more. Because, sir, the sight of me would scare thirty of the Killantringan cubs out of their senses - such as they possess. They dare not face me, sir. They dare not look me in the eye.'

At this moment Fitz came running up to me with a folded paper in his hand. I recognized it at once as identical in paper and handwriting with the challenge which had already been found in the cleft stick on Hammy's Folly.

I asked leave of the Colonel to read it. He nodded, answering shortly, 'You command here - for the present!'

His nostrils blew out and in like those of a sensitive horse scenting danger, and as I read I could see his eyes glancing sideways with the most eager curiosity.

To Captain Laurieston, Commanding the Boys on Rough Island. Sir, This is not a paper chase nor yet a game of O's and X's. We will fight you when we can, and how we can, and with whatever comes handy. If you don't like it - why, you can get out. That's all,

(Signed), CHIEF THOMAS,  
CAPTAIN OF THE BLACK HAND.'

The Colonel smiled as I passed over this most uncompromising document.

'Well, that's about the size of it after all,' he said,

'War is war, not sham-fight. And though you are on the right side of the law and these chaps on the wrong - I don't know but what I prefer - well there - !'

He did not finish the sentence, but broke away upon a new topic. 'Mind you, I do not say you are wrong. Taking things as they are, and you not carrying His Majesty's commission - you did very right to try to arrange that these men of yours should not get seriously hurt. But having made the proposal of arbitration, and kept a copy, and I being here to bear witness to the receipt of this insulting message of the enemy, I do not see what can be done but to hoist your flag and die under it to the last man!'

I think that at these brave words all of us turned pale - that is except Penley - who, being as I have said, of dusky skin, couldn't.

I didn't want them to die to the last man, or even to the first. For they all had parents and guardians, and I should be held responsible. Think only of Penley's mother, not to speak of Mr. Trevor, and Hammy's. It would be a pretty kettle of fish. I was disappointed in the Captain of the Black Hand (of Killantringan). I thought he would have shown himself a little better brought up, and more adapted for scientific and civilized warfare.

The Colonel continued tapping his leg more gently, changing hand and legs when one calf after the other was sufficiently tickled up. With the other hand he seemed to be tracing out something in the air.

'I have it,' he said, 'a zariba! I have seen them in Egypt - at the Atbara, and elsewhere. A zariba is just the thing to stop the first ugly rush, which, with

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your four or five fighters, is what you have chiefly to fear. You have plenty of thorns, I can see. I will bring you over a Union Jack tomorrow and – ’

‘But,’ I objected, ‘I propose that neither side should be allowed to use that flag.’

‘You proposed – yes – ’ he spat and crackled, slapping his leg angrily, meanwhile, ‘but your proposition was rejected. It therefore falls to the ground in all its parts. And with an officer of His Majesty’s regular service, though sometime retired, to command your troops, you have every right to use your country’s flag against a hostile, rapacious, and savage tribe. I will bring over a boat-load tomorrow early!’

I could not quite understand what he meant. For a boat-load of Union Jacks was a trifle more than was absolutely requisite to fight under. It would be like a Jubilee or Coronation day - what with the bunting and the fireworks at night.

I need not say that we passed a pretty anxious evening. The stars came out as usual, and we went and came from our look-out station on the crown of the hill above us. But, though it was so little past the mid-time of the year, the night seemed terribly long and, as I can now see, nervousness was unsettling all of us.

What was more likely than that the ‘Killies’ should take advantage of the night to land and attack us. The brusquerie of their message seemed to give warning of an immediate invasion. So anxious did I grow that I resolved to set off by myself in the boat to spy out the landfall towards Killantringan and mark if there were any signs of an approaching flotilla. Now I knew very well that I had no business to do this, but the fact was I was

restless, and I thought that Penley could take command as well as I. He had all the ammunition and stores at his hand and he was to keep watch along with the others while I was out in the boat.

At the last moment Hammy begged so hard to come that I felt inclined to let him. He would not be the slightest use (so we thought then) in the defence of the orchard, and if left alone in the house he would only snore. So on the whole I judged it best to take him with me. At least with an oar in his hand and my foot in close proximity to his person, he would not be tempted to give way to vociferous sleep.

The trip would be good for him, too, and teach him that the whole world was not made for his convenience. So we got out the little cream-coloured boat with the pale green stripes and launched her as usual at the bay beyond the Rogue's' Hole, where so many ankers of French brandy had been rolled on shore in their time.

It was strange to lie there in the shadow listening to the doings outside. I could hear Penley or Fitz moving about in the orchard with the noise of bullocks, evidently to warn anyone approaching that fully armed watchers were on foot. It was bad scouting, nevertheless, and I resolved as soon as I got back, that they should hear about it.

Come to think of it, however, it is quite likely that they made just as much noise when I was *on* the island. But not till we were clear of the land and passing out through the narrow strip of dusky water which united Rogue's' Hole to the open sea, did I realize how water carries the sound and how careful we would need to be, both ashore and afloat.

Hammy was pretty fair with a steering oar, which

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was just as well, for he was no good at all for sculling and regularly got taken by the oar-handle in the pit of his stomach each time that he pulled a full stroke.

So with the moon dropping her crescent, slim and pallid, down into the west, we also let ourselves be carried by the strong eastward sweep of the incoming tide towards the rocks which overhung on both sides the little fishers' haven of Killantringan.

We were in the enemy's country.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### THE FRENCHMAN AT PORT LING

Both of us felt a little wae, leaving behind us the cheerful Island, with its round tower, its orchard and with all the trenches we had made with infinite pains and care. Yonder were the embers of the evening fire yet smouldering red in front, under the gipsy tripod, down where the birch trees grow prettily to the very burn that fell into the estuary where we often fished and afterwards beached our boat to have her ready under our hand.

The reek of our camp fire had mounted in the still air and then slowly spread itself away eastward towards Killantringan. The scent of it came to us over the water very homelike and pleasant, making us think of the difficulties of our task and all the comforts we were leaving behind us. It is curious, when you come to think on it, how little one needs to cause that homelike feeling - a shelter, companionship, a little common life, the absence of excitement - and lo! it is as if you had never lived elsewhere all your life.

So we began to think about Rough Island, its tower and the orchard of which we had been put in charge. It was as a place of peace and joyous repose that it now struck us, out there on the bosom of the deep, with the wind blowing soft and tranquil and the moon going down. I was not in the least sure if indeed we could get back, and I knew what mercy we had to expect from the 'Killies' if they caught us spying out their country.

But what actually happened to us I did not for a

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moment foresee - which is indeed, mostly the way. I had rigged a little foresail with Hammy's coat (of which he had no need) and it drew beautifully with the wind on our starboard beam. Hammy did indeed complain of being cold without it, but I told him sharply to hold his tongue. For he would be a deal warmer if the 'Killies' caught him, coat or no coat.

Soon we could make out that all was a bustle about the harbour and rocks of Killantringan. Everywhere there were lanterns moving, doors opening and letting out streams of orange-coloured light. Now if we had had the gumption of a couple of rooks, we might have known that the honest householders of Killantringan, each man holding his house directly from Mr. Trevor, would never have allowed their sons seriously to assault Rough Island, where, among others, was to be found the nephew of their feudal lord. But we did not think, and Hammy and I both set down all this stirring of the ant-hill to an approaching attack in force upon Rough Island.

We were idiots. I know it. But then it was night. It was dark there under the rocks, and the tide ran strong with a gobbling sound. An unknown coast, inhabited by hostile tribes of boys who would listen to no reason and accept no conditions, stretched darkly before us.

What more natural than that we should lie along the thwarts of the boat, peering over at the gathering tumult in and about Killantringan, with the breathlessly exciting persuasion that we were the object of it all. Yet would *we* have taken our parents into our confidence if we had been going forth to smite the enemy secretly at night? Not much! Indeed, we should have done our utmost to slip out silently as shadows, such being our eager desire to

give no unnecessary pain to our dear parents. And though these fisher boys were our enemies (for the time being) and ready to use all weapons against us, had we any right to suppose that the Killantringaners were bigger fools than we? No, surely not. That Captain Thomas of the Black Hand must have something in him, in spite of his savage reply to my well-considered message regulating the terms of conflict.

But at any rate we gradually swept up into the loom of the land quite near to the shore. So close, indeed, were we, that we could hear voices. But they were not such as we had expected. We heard boys being shouted for. And there was no back-talk from such as they. It was evidently a man's night, and it was - 'Tam, ye lazy hulk - fetch down that trail net - you and Aidam, and look slippy!' Or 'Mary, wife - bide in the hoose and the less noise that you and the bairns make, the better it will be for them when I come back hame!'

I could not make out what it all meant. Smuggling was out of the question. That was done with now, in these days of telegrams and lighthouses - that is, except by a few yachts, as I shall afterwards record with some fullness.

A boat passed close to port of us and hailed us out of the darkness.

'Are they coming?' I shouted, with the best 'Killie' accent I could assume.

'Coming!' answered a voice charged with contempt and rage, 'What may you be doing there at this time o' the night?'

'Waiting!' I answered as firmly as I could.

'Waitin' is it?' came back the reply, 'better far get your nets out, for the fish are running free up the

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firth. The Urr and the Nith are both choked with them. What for should we not have our share with the others?’

I understood it now. They were blocking the river mouths at the time of the great summer rush of the spawning salmon. And the words I heard next, bore out that guess. ‘Have ye the sinkers for the bag-nets?’ cried a third voice.

‘Bring along the cords to close the ‘cruives!’’ said another.

The whole village was in an uproar. The men anxious and short tempered, the women curious. The boys took their places silently, getting cuffed for letting fall an oar with a clatter, or in any way disturbing their seniors of the male sex. I am sure that night there was no thought of raiding Rough Island and its orchard among all the youth of Killantringan.

What they were doing was against the letter of the law. That is always enough to make a youngster quiver with excitement. They were out on the search of ‘foul fish,’ as Scots legal authority calls them. But the people of Killantringan suffered no harm from eating their illegal catch - neither in the preserved form of ‘Kippers’ nor yet fresh with lines of curded fat between the flakes.

Law had never had any great hold on Killantringan. That is - so far as concerns the fish that swims in water fresh or salt, the wild beast that runs, and the bird that flies up from heather or covert. They were otherwise an honest hardworking set of men, a little shy, a little apt to get out of the way of unknowns who might be ‘water-watchers’ or ‘tax collectors.’ But in the main male Killantringan was exceedingly honest and truthful, besides being

unanimously talented with their fists, and ever ready to use them - either upon each other or more especially upon the alien intruder.

But they looked upon the salmon as belonging to the sea - therefore theirs, and in no wise to be protected for the sake of the use of 'lairds' who owned each his little strip of river-bank. The sea was for them and the fish in it. If the law said otherwise, so much the worse for the law. God, they argued, had given Adam dominion over these gilled and winged things. They were children of Adam, so they of the open sea had a right which was above all 'Laird's Law.' They had a right to bring home to their larder the tribute of the salt waves, the harvest of the uncultivated land, and if a stray deer (not to speak of such small game as hares and rabbits) came their way - that also was theirs. Such had been the law of their fathers. Such was their law. And neither landlord could fright nor minister preach them out of it.

Though it must be said that the present incumbent did not make any great attempt to do either, being fond of a shot at anything that happened to come across his glebe. But, simply as a matter of duty, after each of these salmon raids, the minister always preached his celebrated 'Render-unto-Caesar' sermon, which every one expected of him. Indeed there would have been almost a mutiny in Killantringan Kirk if he had failed to give out that text.

But those who enjoyed the sermon most knew that there were half-a-dozen barrels of the finest kippered salmon stowed away in the manse cellars, presented by the congregation. At least they had been conveyed there and placed where Manse Janet

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would find them at a time when meat was scarce and dear. The minister was not expected to ask any questions.

If he found out, he was at liberty to rebuke his best, and to say, 'An enemy hath done this!' But he ate thereof all the same. The minister of Killantringan loved kippered salmon - cold, with some vinegar and a little cucumber. He raised the latter in his garden, to show that there was no ill will. And by some strange means one of the prominent elders (who in his time had made frequent voyages to Fecamp), saw that the minister had always a small cask of vinegar under the sink in the back kitchen.

So all was happiness along the Killantringan shore. The minister did his duty. The congregation contributed of the spoils of the sea, according to their ability and the largeness of their catch, and the one extensive operator (who had a shop with a counter) attended to the vinegar as well as to the minister's sermons. He, too, rendered unto Caesar.

The ravens by the brook Cherith, which is before Jordan, were not a patch on these rude sea-maws of Solway in the way of providing for their prophet.

With breathless interest Hammy and I watched the long procession of boats file out of the narrow harbour. A few rowed outside and then, and not till then, hoisted the big leather-coloured sail, darkened with tan-bark. But the most part, manned by old hands, sure of their clean-run seamanship, set sail within the harbour and came sweeping out with the assurance of a man finding in the dark the door of his own bedroom. There was always a dusky figure in the stern-sheets, steering, and looking keenly ahead. This was the owner of the boat, and the

captain over the herd of youngsters who were busy with the bag-nets in the fore. They passed silently, each gazing straight forward, keen upon his work. None but the first of all came near enough in shore to spy us out. It was weird to see this procession of silhouettes gliding silently away, one after the other till all were lost in the misty blue-blackness which falls upon the sea after the moon-setting.

It was quite evident to both of us that there was to be no attack on Rough Island that night, nor indeed so long as the run of the salmon up the Solway rivers continued. Of course the time is different in every estuary, though generally the Urr (which was the river they had then in view) was the earliest of all to receive it quota.

'There is no use going back now,' said Hammy, 'we may as well run across to Salt Flats and see if old Cumberland Bet is on foot and will give us something to eat.'

Cumberland Bet I had heard of before, chiefly because of her cat - and her husband. The one was a Persian of mixed breed and eyes which the Doctor classed as 'complementary' - one being light blue and the other straw-yellow. The husband was a French sailor, a well-educated man whom Bet had married and with whom she talked a strange dialect in which they understood each other perfectly, though even good French scholars could make nothing of it. It now appeared that Hammy had passed a good deal of his time there, when he could obtain leave of absence from his uncle. The front of Bet's house was made of the hulk of an old lugger, such as we had seen that night going out to the bag-net fishing.

Besides we were sharp-set. Being out at night,

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scouting in a boat, is hungry work, especially if nothing happens to make you forget it. I can tell you I was glad of Hammy's tip. Accordingly I pulled up our little grappling anchor - just enough to keep us from swirling inshore - and with Hammy at the sculls and I at the steering oar we dropped along the coast to the inlet called, in common talk, Port Ling - which is to say, Port Bell-Heather. And indeed there was plenty of that growing anywhere among the rocks. So bright was the rose-coloured glow among the boulders, that it seemed as if the whole coastline at that place swam in a sort of mild phosphorescence - a milky radiance like pinky opal, with black spots where the granite boulders came, and ridges where the stone dykes cut sharp against the sky.

On his first coming Hammy had made friends with Cumberland Bet, the landlady of this then unknown but henceforward famous eating-house. He was on grinning terms with the French husband, who did the cooking, and wiped the dishes and his brow with the same dirty rag. He was *bon camarade* also with Cecille, the daughter of Bet and her husband-cook, a young lady of sixteen or seventeen who washed the dishes and ran the cliffs like a wild-goat between-times.

It was certainly not the kind of society I should have expected Hammy to have the good sense to frequent by his own choice. But so it was, and I thought better of that youngster ever after. Certainly the starch was wearing out of him.

All my life I have had the love of the Out-of-the-Way. I have searched for it as for hid treasure, and as adventures are to the adventurous I generally found them. But this time it was Hammy who had

put me on to a good thing. Still, as I have schooled and reformed Hammy, part of the credit certainly was my own.

We found the little harbour of Port Ling without much difficulty. Turning sharply into the neighbouring inlet of Portowarren, we hauled our boat up the clinking pebbles. Then we walked over the 'heuchs.' The way was not long, but it was various. First we skirted 'Willie's Cottage,' situated down on the very edge of the shore, with riddled outworks of wave-worn sandstone to the seaward of it - the softest rock of its kind to be found in Galloway.

We climbed the steep and crumbling cliff, passed the carpenter's shed, stumbled over the trams of a barrow left for repair, turned sharply to the right among scattered boulders and lo! - there below us was the small half-moon of sand and rock which people call Port Ling! At the farthest corner a beam of light, long and narrow, caught the eye, as if escaping from a door on the jar.

'That,' said Hammy catching me by the elbow 'is Cumberland Bet's!' I wondered how he knew so well. But he was right. Cumberland Bet's it was, and her daughter Cecille peeped suspiciously through the chained door at us.

'Who may you be, at this hour of the night?' said a rough voice. 'But, anyway, bide where you are till I make myself faceable!'

But Cecille, a tall slim girl with dark eyes which she kept continually shaded with long lashes that quivered, laughed till her Gretchen-braids shook along her back.

'Cast a shawl about you, mother, and come out,' she called, 'it is only the Castle lad and his friend

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the Boy of the Island.'

I do not know how she could possibly have known me, but of course Rough Island is in full view of all the northerly coasts, and no doubt our possession of it -the smoke we made by day and the pillars of fire by night must have aroused the curiosity of the dwellers all along the Solway shore.

As we entered the quiet Frenchman smiled, and immediately began to talk. I could understand about one word in twenty and in reply was prodigal chiefly in *Oui's* and *Non's* - thrown in mostly at hazard. The old fishing lugger had its landward side removed, and at the back was a big cave cut out of clean dry sandstone. This was divided into apartments by curtains, and in the middle passage a stone chimney and hearth had been built, the flue cutting the keel of the boat at the rudder post-hole, and conveying the smoke smoothly up the side of the cliff.

This of course we could not see all at once. For there was no light but that of the stable lantern which Cecille held in her hands high above her head, the protecting outer wires turning and making the night a checker-work of glossy blackness, and flecking even the smooth dark *crepe* which was her hair. A tall girl, taller than Myrtle Causland, taller even than Girlie May at the farm - I had never seen anyone quite like her. Somehow, if she had been dressed 'according,' she would have made a fine Claude Duval, or maybe D'Artagnan in a flame-coloured doublet and blue trunk hose, a feather in her hat and a sword by her side. As it was she could fence better than anybody about. Hammy told me that his uncle said so. Her father had taught her. Before going to sea, he had (so it seemed) been a master of that arm - and of all arms - in a French

regiment. But having taken the wrong side in a revolution, he had come over to try his luck in England. There he had found Cumberland Bet, a little girl of sixteen doing tricks upon a horse in a tenth-rate circus. After her turn he had watched her leap to the ground, to be received with smiles and head-patting by the ring-master, who conducted her to the door by which the horses entered and the performers went out. Baptiste thought how pretty it all was - this big heavy-faced man showing such politeness to the child. But once outside the sight-range of the audience in the circus itself, the ring-master manager gave the girl a rude push forward, and, lifting his whip struck her heavily across the shoulders saying, 'There - that will teach you not to miss your hoops again, my young lady.'

Then the girl ran out into the darkness and cried bitterly.

Here Baptiste found her, murmured all his slender stock of comforting words over and over to the girl. Finally, learning easy marriage customs of the country he took her to a minister, who delivered her to his beadle in whose house she stayed till they could be duly married. This happened three weeks after, and all that time little Cumberland Bet did not once go outside the door of the beadle's house. Not even when the circus was far away, and big quiet Baptiste was her husband, did she feel quite safe unless the whereabouts of the circus was known - which it always was to Baptiste. His fellow exiles sent him word in foot-notes to the interminable letters he received.

She need not have troubled. The ring-master would not have lifted his eyes upon her if he had met her in the street. And this because of a certain

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interview he had had with that same Baptiste the night he had struck the girl across the shoulders. The next day he had to get himself a new ring-whip, his former one having had its handle smashed into little bits and himself being scarred and battered by falling over it. So at least he said.

Better still - he kept away from the part of the country, which he knew to be inhabited by a newly-married couple, one of whom had quite forgotten the stroke of the whip which had made her Madame Baptiste Gamier. But big sleepy-eyed Baptiste with the Basque blood in him slow to arouse, had not forgotten. And indeed, in spite of his accident, the ring-master had come rather well off. He was more careful in his dealings with the members of his company after that - especially if they were pretty and of marriageable age. Baptiste had taught him a lesson, and he never took whip in hand without thinking of it.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### THE SIGN OF THE BLACK HAND

The rough hillside, all stones, wild heather, and scattered boulders rose immediately behind us. There was no road, to call a road, between Cumberland Bet's and any houses of the village. The fine highway that had come all the way from Dalbeattie by the Cloake Moss and the Kirk of Co'end petered out suddenly, and in its place was no more than the merest trickle of pebbly pathway, an occasional shell glinting freshly up, wet with the salt smack of the evening's sea fog still on it.

All too soon it was time for us to be moving. There was Rough Island to be thought of - the lads thereon, and the newly-devised defences of the orchard.

Cecille said that she would come and help us into the water with our boat. It would not be a long portage, because the tide never goes far out from Port Ling, while from its neighbour Portowarren it never retreats at all.

Well, as you may imagine, Hammy and I sallied forth as bold as brass - especially Hammy. For I have ever been shy before girls, especially when they have grown great and dashing, and Claude-Duvalish like this tall Cecille of Cumberland Bet's. But Hammy was as full of pride as a meat pie fresh from the oven, and strutted on his legs like a pair of compasses - all because he had brought me here - where was a girl with curiously unique eyes and a way of looking out from under them when you least expected it. It was not much to make a fuss about,

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for if you watch them closely, most girls look at you like that when they think you are not noticing.

Still it was something. You see Hammy had had such an unadventurous life that a very little went a long way with him. But he was soon to dip deeper in the raw stuff of romance. Then it would be seen in what way he could comport himself.

You never can be sure of a fellow till he is tried. Your loud and cocky boaster is as likely as not to cry and call for his mother in the hour of danger, whereas your shy and silent youth is pretty sure to close his lips and go through with it. We had not gone thirty yards from the house in the direction of the sea, and were still involved in a mesh of tangled heather and deceiving boulders, when all of a sudden someone - neither of us could believe that it was our Cecille of the Long Lashes - whistled as a herd does upon his fingers. We were instantly jumped upon, disarmed, our pockets searched, and ourselves bound hand and foot.

Neither of us could see our aggressors, nor so much as what became of Cecille. We were not actually hurt. It was just the shame of it, to be trapped like that, which told upon me. I think I bit somebody, for I certainly clenched my teeth upon something like a thumb and I heard a yell - which somehow did me good.

All the same we were tightly bound, all except our feet, which were left, say - as widely apart as if we were being taken out to immediate execution. It was so dark that we could not see where we were going, except by the uncertain glimmer which came up from the sea, a kind of vague shining like the wooden matches you rub on your breeches, which don't go off. There was a bit of cloth bandage across

my eyes, but not drawn very tight, for I could see my feet straggling along drunkenly beneath me, and (generally) I could escape stubbing my toes. But who our captors were or whither they were leading us, of course I could not tell.

After perhaps half-an-hour of this - it was not so long nearly - I know now - we were brought to a kind of refuge cave, very dry and with the sand and little broken shells banked up at its entrance. We had seven pretty high steps to mount. I counted them. So I knew that there would be no danger from the tide, a thing which a fellow always thinks of on the Solway shore, where the water rises high and is so mercilessly quick.

There was in the corner a lot of heather so piled together as to make a kind of bed. The rustling of it smelt nice and homelike, and made me think of my dear island and what a fool I had been to trust to Hammy. Then our hands were untied, something that reminded me of ship-repairing over at the Scaur was pressed on my shirt-front just beneath my collar. A voice informed us that we would find biscuits and water on a shelf just over our heads. A door banged, was locked, and we were left to our meditations.

I meditated upon Hammy aloud for some time, and kicked him on the shin. But really I ought to have kicked myself (I did this later) for being such a loon as to be taken in by his promise of a good hot feed - me with an island to defend, troops to command, a frying-pan, and everything comfortable.

However it was no use now. I hitched round, like a jackdaw on the edge of a chimney pot, seeking for exits and entrances. All was in vain. Those who had put us there, had been before me, and knew well

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that there was no way out, except that which they had barred so carefully. It was a pretty clean cop, and when the 'Killies' came back from the bag-net fishing, they would have nothing to do but to scoop in all our strawberries and everything we had on the island!

It was a regular trap, and I had walked into it like the softest of softies. Of course it was owing to Hammy. But then Hammy never had any sense anyway, and nothing was expected of him, as it was of me. I thought of my *kudos* among the fellows, and perhaps most of all of what that little brute Fitz would say. He was always so beastly ready with his jibes, anyway, and licking him was no permanent relief, when you knew that he would go about shrugging his shoulders and winking to everybody what a fool he thought you. And worst of all, there you were thinking just the same yourself!

Of course things like that kept me from sleeping - things also which needed to be thought out. First of all, what had Cecille to do with all this? That demure, shy, heavy-eyelashed maiden, as quiet to look upon as paste in a pot - only that she was dark? I could not make this out, nor where we might be, nor yet how we were going to be fed.

Then there grew up a wild hope in my head. After all, there was nobody (except grown men, of course) on that coast that I could not lick with one hand behind me. They could not leave us to starve. The provisions on the stone shelf above us were only a biscuit or two and a pint or so of water. They would not want to kill us and have our whited bones brought up in evidence against them, when they were old chaps like Eugene Aram, or to be led out to be hanged very repentant! They would, therefore,

certainly have to feed us.

Well, then, my hands were loose. I could soon undo the remaining bonds. Then I could free Hammy. We could break off fragments of the rock, good solid chunks, and when our jailer came to open the door and hand us our food we would seize him, knock him down, and after tying him up, well gagged, make our escape.

I had read something like this in a book once, and when I told Hammy in confidence, he said he was game to do anything. He thought, however, that he could be better at tying up the fellow's body, while I could take care of his hands, mouth and feet.

Hammy was a better sort than we had thought. But owing to want of practice, as much as anything, he was limited in a scrimmage. However, there was no use reproaching a fellow with that. He was doing what he could, and moreover, we had first of all to catch our jailer.

I never knew a night of summer when the time passed so slowly. The morning simply would not come. At first I thought it must be because we were in a cave utterly without light of any kind - which, though awkward for us, would be a kind of 'rest cure' where we could think up things and enlarge our vocabularies. More than that, a turnkey, whoever he was, would need to have a candle or lantern - which would make a very decent weapon in our sacred fight for freedom, besides being a comfort to the poor man when it came to be his turn to be locked in, while we were making the straightest tracks for Rough Island. And before I slept, I had the whole plan worked out in my mind.

I waked Hammy to tell him all about it. But he did not seem to take much interest, and only said,

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'Oh, all right – any plan!' And fell to snoring again. I tell you I came near to stuffing a good handful of sand in his mouth. And would have done so, but for Humanity's sake, which caused me to refrain - also on account of the splutter he would have made, and the water he would be sure to drink - of which we had no great quantity in our present Black Hole of Calcutta.

All the same the morning did arrive. That is, there came first a kind of subdued light from nowhere in particular, of a faint rosy hue, by which I could see Hammy and he could have seen me if he had not been in a hog-sleep. An irregularly-shaped hole designed itself in the roof of the cave about twenty feet above my head, could have wept, for I could actually see the red heather and green rushes peeping through. It seemed as if I would never be out on the plain face of upper world again, or catch the glint of the sun on Myrtle Causland's hair, or the blue smoke, kindled by Girlie May, floating up from the kitchen-house end of the Knock.

Strange that I should think about girls at the very moment, when another of that fatal tribe had brought me so low. Of course it was Hammy's fault and as I looked at the beggar asleep and snoring, I had half-a-mind to awake him and give him something warm to teach him not to be such a fool again.

But I compromised by turning him over on his side so that he would not snore so badly, and as I did so, I saw for the first time something strange on his clean white shirt-front.

It was the imprint of a black hand, neatly enough done in tar! In a moment I understood the curious smell of boat-repairing which had bothered me all

night. I opened my coat which I had buttoned to keep off the cave chill, and there on my own shirt, right under my taggy ribband of a tie, was . . . the *Sign of the Black Hand!*

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

## OUR CAVE PRISON

I never knew so certainly before that I was not the only clever fellow on the earth. And to fall into such a trap at the tail of a decoy duck like Hammy! Not that he knew, poor fellow! Yet for all that, I felt strangely inclined to thump him. Curious! The desire to pound Hammy continued to come over me in little gusts like some heady perfume - like the frying of bacon-ham with eggs in a pan, the sweetest of all odours to a hungry fellow of my age. But I made myself a kind of philosopher, and argued that I was a bigger and a worse fool than Hammy - first because I *was* the elder, and second because I was in charge, not only of our own good name but of Mr. Trevor's boat with the green stripe. For me there was simply no excuse. So not Hammy but I must set about seeing how to get away.

It was about eight o'clock when Hammy awakened, asking with the coolest cheek in the world 'Why his breakfast was not ready?'

It is true he was not really awake, and thought he was back at Elshiner. He actually wanted to ring the bell for 'his man.' But I served him out a nudge with my elbow that fetched him up all sitting. Then I set his share of the biscuit and the half-pint of water beside him, and told him to go ahead. His honourable breakfast was on the table.

He began to remember things, vaguely at first, and then he said all at once, 'I believe it was that monkey of a Cecille who has been playing pranks

upon us!'

I showed him the two imprints of the Black Hand, and he did not seem to mind very much about that. The bother with Hammy was that he had no more imagination than a snail, or at least a woolly caterpillar - which always knows just what it wants to eat - that and nothing else.

He actually did not understand that we had fallen into the clutches of the fell Band, whose chief had twice challenged us to deadly combat. He only said 'Uncle will soon make them sit up, and you had better believe they will be sorry when he turns all their parents out of their houses and burns them flat to the ground!'

I told him he was a bloodthirsty little fool, first because his uncle was too wise a man to think of doing without the rents of all Killantringan village, and secondly, because even if he set them afire, stone houses don't burn - at least, not to the ground. This Hammy might prove for himself on the first stone dyke that he came across with a box of vestas in his pocket!

But there was no arguing with Hammy. He was grumpy about his breakfast, and said that what he wanted was plovers' eggs on toast, cold with watercress, and a sprinkling of white wine to give him 'tone.' It was not till he had seen me eat half his biscuit and drink a corresponding quantity of water that he became interested - so interested indeed that he actually snatched the remainder out of my hand and tucked into it like a good one! For he saw clearly that if *he* did not, I was good for his breakfast and my own too. Which was indeed the George Washington fact.

He yearned no more for plovers' eggs on toast

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with white wine sauce. No, he did without, and was jolly glad that I had not eaten any more of his biscuit. Oh, Hammy was bleaching out, and would be quite decently white after a while.

It was past eleven of my watch, and I was sure that all the boats would be back from the illegal salmon fishing, when suddenly it grew dusky in the cave. The aperture above was blocked up - at least, partially. We did not see any face. But we heard a voice.

'Look out you fellows, here comes your breakfast. Untie the strings carefully, and send up the can for more water.' For a moment or two I was about to refuse indignantly. But a hollow square localized itself vehemently in the region of the buckle of my waist-belt, and so I refrained - out of pity for Hammy.

So I said, 'Thank you!'

And down came a basket covered with leaves.

'Take care,' said the voice, 'take everything out carefully. There are two layers, and enough for both of you!'

And so I undid the cord which was let carefully down till it rested on the cavern floor, and lo! on the top, under a covert of damp leaves reposèd a perfect nest of - what do you think? --

Well, Rough Island strawberries - fresh from the old orchard, which we had not been there to defend! Underneath were liberal slices of fresh caught salmon.

I could have howled with spite and anger, especially when I read on a sheet of paper, in the same hand of writing as before:—

'WITH THE COMPLIMENTS OF CHIEF THOMAS OF THE' - and then the same imprint of a hand done

in tar, which Hammy and I carried on our shirt fronts.

To show you the sort of chap Hammy was, I need only say that he thought it was A1 of them (being our enemies) to feed us so handsomely. He never once minded about the other fellows on the island, very likely massacred, or at least wounded, or prisoners pining in the deepest dungeons of the Round Tower.

'Wounded!' How that word stung me up! Ah, if only I had been with them, fighting as I had vaunted I would. But here was I laid by the heels and shamefully fed with the produce of rapine and robbery - the very strawberries that I ought in justice to have given my heart's blood to protect. How could I ever look Mr. Trevor, and Myrtle Causland, and Girlie May of the Knock in the face again?

For the truth must be told. I had bragged more than a bit of what I was going to do, and here was I taken in the commonest of traps.

'In vain,' says the Bible, somewhere, 'is the net spread in the sight of any bird.'

But I was an exception—a goose. Yes, a foolish guillemot, a squab, brainless chicken. Pah - it made me sick, only to think of my own folly. Still there was nothing to be done, and after eating I fell to the thinking, and Hammy, perhaps more wisely, turned over again to sleep.

If I had known what had become of the others - Penley, Fitz and Kit the Crowl - and by what means Chief Thomas had triumphed over them, I don't think I should have been so uneasy. While Hammy slept I made a quick survey of the cave, which bore in its every part the impress of the hand of the

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smuggler. Passages had been hollowed out, and stout doors made. But, though there were windows in the roofing, natural or pierced by tool, they were far out of my reach even if I mounted on Hammy's back. The most precious discovery I made was a stream of water, fresh and sweet, that ran through part of the lower cave and offered us at once guarantee against thirst, and an easy way of disposing of any rubbish. Indeed I saw a precious means of keeping up our health by hollowing a bath down to the bed-rock, while the rush of water when we opened the sandy sluices would clear everything below it.

Hammy was not particularly moved when I told him of my discoveries. He pinned his entire faith to his uncle, and apparently determined to spend the intervening time in making up arrears of sleep. He had been made to get up at half-past three every morning on the island, and felt that his slumbers had got behindhand. So he curled himself up comfortably and went to sleep. He could, he said, wait for his uncle as well in that position as in any other.

Standing near to one particular crack in the rock I could hear pretty far off the surge fretting on the rocks. By that I knew there was a good deal of sea outside. I could fancy, too, the dipping flight of the sea-birds, the sudden swoops of the terns, or sea swallows (always the most beautiful of all birds that fly the water), and the drumming of the bigger rollers on Killantringan Point. From all this I concluded first, that the long traverse which we had been made to perform after our capture was a farce to deceive us.

We were still near the shore, and most likely our

captors had run us round in a circle. Possibly even now we were not far from the place where we had been trapped, mayhap in the immediate confines of the house of Cumberland Bet and her daughter Cecille. I should not have wondered to see her dark eyes and tall figure bending over the hole in the cliff-edge through which our provisions arrived!

Furthermore it was certain that the cave turned - like a capital O, or perhaps more like a capital Q - the tail being the first entrance now barred by the door through which we had been brought. Here we heard nothing, the doors shutting off the sound. But in this rock, perhaps on account of its jointures, there was a resonant quality which enabled me to hear the things I have stated - the clapper-clapper of the little waves near by, the distant tumultuous roar of the cross-tides, and even the cries of the sea-birds. But as to these last I was noways certain.

I judge, however, that there may have been roosting places in some of the breathing holes, or breaks in the roof. For of these there were at least a dozen - but all placed high up out of reach like the first. Only it was certain that we heard cries, as if of young hungry birds and of these there were none in the cave. All the same the air was always sweet and clear, and we were never cold or oppressed with the feeling of dampness common to so many caves, all the while we were there.

We had, of course, only a little quantity of the light of the sun. But by moving about from place to place we could manage pretty well, and during that time I noted many things in my diary connected with this history. Indeed without that period of quiet, I fear that the present book, which is a chronicle of real events (with only the names and dates a little

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changed), could not have been written or published.

We were worst off for books to read, but after a few days, mastering my pride, I put a request for something to read into our empty dinner-basket. Within half-an-hour there was lowered down to us the self-same basket containing a complete *Shakespeare*, Knight's *Pictorial History of England*, a volume of *Chambers' Journal*, and the four battered octavos of the *Newgate Calendar*.

On the whole it was a good selection, and Hammy and I used to sit back to back, each with a book on his knee, shifting round as the sun passed overhead or dipped into the west. Hammy, who had never read anything before of his own free will, took to the *Newgate Calendar* as ducks do to water. And after he had read one of these sordid yarns, he would creep close and re-tell it to me, as the twilight darkened and our sky-lights in the roof became velvety blue.

Sometimes Hammy would let his head fall on my shoulder and sleep there quite quietly, while I sat still and thought. And in these vigils, I declare if I did not actually grow to like the boy! I believe, also, that he began to have a sort of affection for me - quite different from his feeling after I had given him his first lesson in good manners.

It appears (when you first read about it) dreadfully romantic to live in a cave, going exploring, having baskets let down and so on. But after the first day it gets fearfully dull. You ache for sympathy, for the sunshine and outside air. I thought of Myrtle too, and Girlie May, and which of them I wanted most to see. And I'll pledge you my word I could not tell. So it mostly is about my time of life - I mean when it is mostly Youth that one is in

love with and not any particular person. Though as one grows older, a fellow begins to have preferences - like Hammy and the plovers' eggs with white wine.

Once a little fluffy rock pigeon dropped down, and, of course, we made a pet of it, Hammy and I, because of Silvio Pellico. At least he petted it, while I attended to the feeding of the poor thing. For after all it was as much out of its own country as we were. Nevertheless it ate and ate, and drank and drank. It always seemed to have its mouth open even when its eyes were dropping with sleep. And it grew just amazingly, and was, as it seemed, a full-grown bird in no time.

We got very fond of it and as I began to see in it a possible means of liberation, I let it practise flying all about the cave, here and there. But I will admit that my heart was in my mouth every time it went near the holes in the roof through which the light filtered, and the stone crop waggled a fleshly leaf. If it got away, there was no saying how long we might have to stop where we were. So after that, I kept it safe by a string attached to one foot so that I could bring Mr. Pid-Pid to the ground when he began to get too near to light and liberty. As we meant to let him go one day all this was not so cruel as it seemed.

All the time I was eager to finish my plan and set the train off that was to bring us relief. I knew of course, that Mr. Trevor must be in a proper fuss about the disappearance of his nephew. He would be searching everywhere, but he would think – as he had good reason to think, before this idiocy of mine, that I should be able to look after him, and that both of us would turn up smiling when our little run was over.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

## CAESAR AND HIS FORTUNES

I don't think the idea was new. I think I got it out of book in which a castaway, on an island, brought or caught all sorts of wild sea-birds, and then let them loose with messages tied to their legs giving the latitude and longitude of the island. But that was quite easy. For he was free and could catch as many birds as he liked, if the first flight did not answer.

Besides, we did not know the latitude and longitude of the cave where we were, and, of course we had only one pigeon. It might just forget all about us and go to nest-building and family-raising on its own account, without the least compunction as to the message I had stuffed into a quill under its wing.

I would have liked to have attached the paper to its leg like a pennon. But then, as like as not, some Killantringan boy with a gun might shoot the poor thing. So all I could venture to do was to cut away the feathers of its neck in rings and make a fancy cross mark on its breast, which presently came up all fluffy, downy, and yellow.

You see this would not distinguish it from any other wild pigeon in the eyes of the boys with guns about the village, who blow off powder solely for love of the thing. But any game-keeper or other about the woods, who knew Mr. Trevor's love for all sorts of queer outlandish-looking wild things, would gladly spend half-a-day in trying to capture my work

of art.

I wrote the message half-a-dozen times over before I could satisfy myself with it, and even at last it was only so-so.

'To A. Trevor, Esq., Orchard Dean, or wherever he is to be found. Urgent. REWARD CERTAIN !!!

(Knowing Mr. Trevor as I did, and his anxiety as to his nephew I felt I was all right in putting that in.)

'We, the undersigned J. Lauriston and H. Alexander have been taken captive near the house of Bet of Cumberland. We are in a cave, all well and pretty comfortable, with food brought to us every day. Our trials are not great so far, but as the holidays are running on, we should much like to remove the anxieties of sorrowing friends. We are near the cliff edge, and there are holes in the cave roof that you might step into and break your leg. Better bring good dogs. A bit of Hammy's trousers (left side) and the cuff of my jacket plug up the quill at either end. Let the blood-hounds smell these!

J. LAURIESTON.  
HAMILTON ALEXANDER.'

I did not think it needful to say anything about the island. For they would be sure to go there first thing. Nor yet about the boat with the green stripe which belonged to Mr. Trevor. Our captors were certain to have hidden her in some safe nook or cave, perhaps in that very one where we were shut up at that moment.

I had kept the pigeon for two days without anything to eat - only water, and not much of that. I thought, don't you see, that as soon as it got loose it would take a good long spin, and a look-round for

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something extra dainty to eat, instead of lounging about on the cliff edge, which it had not seen since it was a little fluffy yellow ball.

Hammy was all for marking it as 'Game with Care - This Side Up' and foolishness of that kind, so that the finder would take it straight to this uncle. But I knew better. My plan was ever so much more subtle, and anyone who had killed it, directed to 'Mr. Trevor, 'This Side Up - With Care' would have smelt a rat, and found our stuffed quill inside three minutes. Now wanted Mr. Trevor alone to find it, and so that is why I made a perfect ornithological marvel of the rock pigeon, all rings and criss-cross-work, as if poor old Pid-Pid had been tattooed or tassellated or something like that in Papua or New Zealand.

It was a great day when at last we got ready to let him off. I nearly cried over him as we slipped him up to the hole on the longest fishing rod which could be made. We had manufactured it by joining several laths with string and balancing Pid-Pid on a little cross-piece at the end. He did not half like it and fluttered down on my head at least half-a-dozen times before he became accustomed to the glare of the light up there. But I daresay the morning sun striking from the east sort of hypnotized him, for at last, with a wild beating of the wings he went through and was instantly lost to view.

'You carry Caesar and his fortunes!' I exclaimed. But Hammy, who was in a bad temper, said that 'that was a lie' - or words to the identical effect. So I had to wade into him with the last remaining lath. Only the edge of it was any good, so I finished Hammy with the flat of my hand. Such early lessons in politeness are never thrown away, and to this day

Hammy remembers them, and will stop on his way to church to thank me for my kind and firm influence over him in his youth. I answer that it is always a pleasure to do good.

Of course it seemed to us as if the pigeon, after being so carefully coached in the cave, ought to have flown straight to the alpine garden, picked out Mr. Trevor, alighted on his arm, and pointed underneath his right wing with its beak.

But things happened far otherwise. You cannot depend on the best trained of the lower animals - nor on the upper ones either, for that matter.

However, the Pid-pid beast had a sort of sense. For, as now appears, one of the 'Killies' did let go at it with an old flint-lock musket - he had been lying on the cliff waiting for bunnies, and had been surprised at the sudden appearance of the odd-looking bird. But the pigeon flew too fast, going overhead with a wild rush of wings. It was frightened, too, by the sudden burst of glory from the sunlit sea and sky, and the multitude of marvellously bright things all about - so different from the dusk of the cave below, where it had sat on a perch and watched us reading - me *Shakespeare*, and Hammy the *Newgate Calendar*.

Anyhow something on the land scared it - perhaps the crawling boy, perhaps the sudden loud noise of his piece. At any rate Pid-Pid, carrying Caesar and his fortunes (or at least the latter) headed straight over the water in the direction of Rough Island.

If you don't call that instinct - well, be good enough to give it a better name. No, not the 'Little-Word-of-Three-Letters,' two vowels and a long straight consonant It is absolutely true. Perhaps it

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was our wills behind it, or our prayers (at least, mine) or maybe the little piece of Hammy's trousers and my red Garibaldi cuff. However from what happened afterwards and the sworn testimony of the fellows on the island, this is what took place.

I will take FitzGeorge's evidence first - not because (in ordinary circumstances) it could be held best fitted for a court of law. But on the present occasion he had been previously warned, and besides, I really believe he was telling the truth, being fond of queer animals and especially birds - chiefly, of course, that he might draw them, and colour the designs as natural as life with the feathers and all.

Fitz says that all this day the tower had been a place of intolerable wailing. Penley, it seems, would thump a fellow merely for humming a tune - all because I was lost. I never knew Penley was so fond of me before.

But he must have been, for Fitz says that Anthony over the body of Caesar dead and burned to clay, was not a circumstance to Penley. He was ever so much more active, and he never allowed anyone to interrupt. He just told them to shut up, and if they were slack about doing it, he downed them, and so resumed his harangue about my virtues. Hammy did not seem to matter at all.

When I was on the spot Penley could be the stiffest grumbler of the lot. But when I was lost, and (with Hammy and the boat with the green stripe!) had become a prey to the devouring element - water is that, if you think, just as well as fire. You go to Port Patrick and see! When we had been searched for vainly all these days, Penley reconstructed from my coraline bones (*Of his bones are coral made*) a

kind of archangel - with quite Danielian hands and feet it is true, but using them only in the cause of righteousness. How I wish I had had a transcript of those Elegiacs in full. Wouldn't I have quoted them often afterwards to Penley, when he said I was a beast. Alas, they are lost.

But there remain, however, some gems - poor pearls preserved from a strange lapse of memory on the part the Kids.

'He hammered you, did he?' (it was Penley who spake) 'Well, and if he did, was it not for your good? And he didn't do it half hard enough not half often enough -'

'Poll early and often,' murmured Fitz, scratching his, which had been so often clouted 'in the good cause.'

'He could climb like a cat. I have seen him run about the top of Thrieve Castle till it made a fellow go cold to watch him. He could sit on 'the hanging stone' with his feet dangling, and keep first of his class all the time. He shall never -' and here Penley's voice trembled and broke. 'He was my first friend,' he continued, 'and I nearly killed him with a paving stone in the process of making acquaintance!' Dear loyal Penley - though all had given me up, he had not - at least not quite.

'I tell you he will come back all over medals gained in battle or things like that -'

'Prize-fighting - Queensberry rules!' said Fitz softly (Hardhearted little pig, Fitz!)

'He will come back and -'

'The first thing he will do to you will be to kick you all about the island because you have not kept the house clean.'

Then was the countenance of Penley transfigured.

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It shone, like that of the man in the Bible - Moses, I think, who had seen the heavens opened.

He rose to his feet. Some say he jumped, and with his hand held high up, he cried, 'Oh, I wish he would. He could kick me all he wanted to - round and round this island, as if it were a blessed circus!'

'Not me,' said Fitz. 'One time would be ample for me. Do you remember the size of shoe he wore?'

'You are an ungrateful little red-headed skunk!' cried Penley, indignantly, 'and if you pollute this domicile with your presence one second longer, I'll be tempted to do the job myself.'

And it was because of this slight unpleasantness, that Fitz betook himself away to the hinterlands of the orchard-ground, and there at half-past eleven of the morning, as well as he could make out by a valuable watch (which you had to thump against a stone at intervals to make it go), he saw - but wait. Not so quick!

Having escaped from the devouring maw and too vivid toe of Penley (vengeful Mark Anthony that he was!) Fitz proceeded to the place where he cached his colours, water-bottle, pencils and sketching-block. He dared not keep them in the tower, because Penley would have thought it a desecration in such a season of grief - with Mr. Trevor hourly expected, and the impossibility of keeping the loss of her son much longer from Mrs. Alexander of Elshiner, ever present in his mind.

The cache was beneath the flagstone of a half-ruined cottage, already marked for the pick and crowbar. Here Fitz kept his stores - besides half-a-dozen handfuls of dry oatmeal, which he had a mania for eating when at work - to stoke his brain, he said. He had a big butterfly net, and a green case

with a strap for his plants and flowers. I don't think the scientific side of all these pursuits appealed much to Fitz. But he loved colour and all the wild wood life he painted among, and which in the end he finished by making his own.

He scoured, silently as a mole in its burrow, through the outer undergrowth that surrounded the orchard – now desolate and robbed of the smallest strawberry – by means unknown to the idle dwellers within the tower, who had peacefully snored through it all. In a quarter-of-an-hour Fitz gained a kind of lookout station at the head of the wood, from which he could assure himself that no further assaults were to be feared from the direction of Killantringan. He then held every individual brush up to the light, after moistening and pointing it. He had found a pretty glade to paint in, with a kind of shimmer among the leaves as they turned up their undersides to the fresh wind gusts off the Solway.

He was thinking how fine it was to be there, away from the range of Penley's fists and feet, eager and willing to bring him to a sense of the tragedy that hung over the island.

Not that Fitz did not mourn in his own way. But he wanted something to occupy himself withal, and the position of whipping-boy to Penley's grief had, little by little, lost its attractions.

There was an open glade in front of the stance where Fitz pitched his easel. It came into the picture, and Fitz had all the trouble in the world to make it lie flat, and not look like a green wall with white gowan-like spots, which if you squinted a bit was exactly what it did look like. Beyond this there was a silver birch, a favourite of Hammy's, and the most beautiful on the island. It was the high time of

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birches. Professor Veitch had written of them. McWhirter had painted them, and Fitz was enraptured with Our Lady of the Woods. I myself had written some idle verses about it, not altogether so very bad. So it was on this birch, with its white bark and the silken drift of its fine-set leaves streaming out landward, that Fitz had fixed his attention.

'Hello, what the mischief's that?' he exclaimed aloud, with a looseness in the choice of language which cannot be too much reprobated. However, as he was alone it did not matter so much. There was no one to teach him any better - 'no one to caress' as the song says. Penley would gladly have done it. At that moment he was feeling like it. Only Penley was not there to take my place. So 'what the mischief' remained Fitz's uncorrected expression.

And indeed well might he be astonished. I will try to tell all about it as he did himself afterwards. As he never varied or piled it on, I judge it must have been a fairly correct statement - that is, in the main. He said:-

I had just finished dotting in my outlines and was turning my head about and saying to myself that it would come pretty well when I got it finished, when on the birch tree, right in front of my nose I saw the rummest card of a bird. Only that it had two legs, it might have been one of these lambs spotted and ring-straked, that Jacob sucked out of Laban - he was a poor soft thing, no match for a Jew like Jacob. So I lay low in the brushwood and watched. The bird was pretty big - the size maybe of a peewit. But it had rings and yellow markings all round its neck and upon its breast - a regular Maltese Cross like a decoration. I would have given five shillings (if

I had had so much) to paint it from the life. Then I remembered about Mr. Trevor and how keen he was about such things, and I ran over in my mind the bright colours I had in my box – aniline dyes only were any good, of these I had not many, but a canary yellow, with a regular knock-me-down pinky crimson, and a touch of blue here and there, would make the finest bird that was ever laid before a learned society. I knew the way to do the job neatly was to put the colour on carefully, so as not to stain the quills.

'So I hauled out all the raw oatmeal I had saved up, mixed with oatcake and bits of biscuit. There I tossed on to the lawn in front of me. I had left the easel to take care of itself, and climbed a spruce fir with low branches. I lay out on the lowest. The branches above made a green umbrella over me, and I was quite near the place where the crumbs and oatmeal were. I stuck my butterfly-net, a good strong one I had made myself – not the silly things one buys in shops – so that it showed plainly and the bird could get accustomed to it.

It was a good while before the ringstraked bird gathered itself together. The sunshine seemed to bother it somehow. It flew down and got underneath a spruce – unfortunately not that in which I was lying hid.

After that, it ran a little way out and pecked at something or other in the grass, and then ran back again. Evidently the glare frightened it. So I had to wait till a cloud passed over the sun – and for that you have never to wait very long in Galloway. As I saw it coming I made ready, stretching out the butterfly-net and making it waggle quite naturally just as the branch of the tree did itself.

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But the bird continued shy. It would run out and take a peck, and then because of some noise that my ears could not catch, flutter back again in a panic. But at last it got a good piece of the hard biscuit and scuttled into the thickest shrubbery to peck at it. Right under my hand it came, dabbing all the time, so that I did not need really to use my net at all, but simply put down my hand and grabbed it by the neck.

It had been handled before - that was clear. For it stayed quite still, only craning its head round to see what kind of a creature it was that had captured it. And after I had slid to the ground and petted the bird a little, it was not five minutes before I had got it to eat out of my hand.

Of course, it did not take half-an-eye to see that the marks on its neck were not natural. They had been clipped, and I had a kind of suspicion that the sooner I took that bird back to Penley, the better it might be for me. He would certainly want to know. So I tied its feet carefully, and wrapped its wings about with my butterfly-net, which I slipped off the ring for the purpose.

Then I hied me off to Penley. He was moaning away at his eternal Lycidas when I got there. But when I set the bird under his nose, he changed his tune, taking all the credit as usual. However I expected no better luck.

In our society, if Laurieston were there, *he* took all the credit, and Penley could not scratch a match without being cuffed for it. If Penley were chief - just the same. There was no credit for anybody else but the leader. It is, says Laurieston, the same in all armies.

'What did I tell you,' he cried, 'he is not dead. You

had better not say he is. I know better. I have always known it. This is a message from Laurieston - from HIM!

He added the two last words very solemnly, and as if he had a key to all the mystery, he lifted up the bird's wing and there, rolled in its wadded quill, was the message.

'Didn't I tell you?' he cried, triumphantly, as he held it up. Then I was sure that he and Laurieston had been reading the same old yarn about the island castaway, and that that was the way he knew.

But I had a good deal more sense than to say this out loud.

So, leaving Kilpatrick on guard, Penley and I set off in the new boat to find Mr. Trevor. He would have gone by himself, except for the rowing.

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## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### MR. TREVOR THREATENS FIRE AND SWORD

'We found him along with the Colonel,' Fitz went on, 'Old Fuz-Buz was instructing him on what ferns would grow on a rockery. And Mr. Trevor was listening with as much delicate solicitude to this rigmarole, as if it were a lost gospel.'

'Ah, he was a fine gentleman and no mistake, our Mr. Trevor! He, who knew all about Alpine plants and read papers to learned societies - who made discoveries and had big-wigs come from London to see his marvellous collections - there he was, bending over half-a-dozen stone crops, a bit of white heather, and a chance-sown potato as if he was being shown some rare and unique treasure.'

'Came down to me from my grandfather,' said the Colonel, pigeoning out his breast, 'yes, sir. By gravy, but you don't see a collection like that every day. It is the work of centuries - ages, I may say. Old family rockery! Cropped hedges - luxuriant vegetation! The Regent, sir, has sat upon that ivy-clad stone.'

(Here I thought of the Regent's figure and decided that he must have had an uncomfortable seat of it without a cushion.)

'Burns has meditated there - poetised too!' cried the Colonel.

And he declaimed with prodigious energy:

*'Degenerate Douglas, O unworthy Lord!'*

Mr. Trevor, of course, never moved a muscle. He stood as if listening to a course of history. But I was not 'thoroughbred' like him, and I could not for the life of me help saying, 'But, sir, I thought your family was Buzby!'

'Why, of course it is,' said the Colonel with a swift glance of scorn in my direction, 'Douglas Buzby - came to us through the female line, and at any rate we are not 'degenerate Douglasses.' But - I beg your pardon, Trevor, my boy - you are one yourself, I believe. We are related. Your hand, my boy!'

Mr. Trevor bowed with his hands behind him, and said very quietly:

'Oh, I am very distantly related to the old Douglasses - my first name is Arnold!'

But even this did not dismount the Colonel from his high horse.

'We are of the same famous old blood,' he cried, elevating his arm in the air with the gesture of an officer cheering on his men to desperate enterprise, 'Think of

Bannockburn, sir - the Battle of the Standard, sir - of Otterburn, sir, where 'a dead man won a fight' - ah, but he was a true Douglas! Think - '

Apparently Mr. Trevor was thinking, for to the eye of the observer, he was lost in abstraction.

Then I nudged Penley, and, with the letter in his hand still in its quill, with the original wadding of Hammy's trousers and Laurieston's red Garibaldi, we approached Mr. Trevor.

'Ah,' he said, with a new interest, 'you have news for me? Let me see. Excuse me a moment, Colonel!'

The Colonel bowed with severe grace. Nothing could possibly be to him of so great interest as his reminiscences of the imaginary grandeurs of his family. He felt the interruption and resented it. But still Mr. Trevor - was Mr. Trevor. There were certain reasons, not unconnected with receipts for money advanced 'on personal security, sir,' 'on my word as a gentleman, sir' - which, while good enough for Mr..

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Trevor, would have made a lawyer stare at the slenderness of the security.

Yet not his most severe critic doubted for a moment that the Colonel's intentions were honourable - indeed, of the most honourable description.

Mr. Trevor pulled out the letter, and for the first time a kind of rose-maddery flush came upon his pale face. It was obviously an immense relief to him to have news of Hammy. He had been dreading the interview with Hammy's mother more than he cared to mention to anyone. Indeed he was not liberal of confidences, this pale, quiet Mr. Trevor - whom Laurieston and indeed all of us held in such reverence.

He meditated a moment as to whether he ought to take the Colonel into his secret. He was a great gossip, a chatterer, but he was a gentleman.

'Colonel Busby,' said Mr. Trevor, 'these boys have just brought me a letter from my lost nephew and his companions -'

'Young rascals,' cried the Colonel, 'they have been running a rig somewhere - give them both a good hiding, But, hang it - after all, they are lads of spirit. I was of the same kidney myself when I was young! After all, Mr. Trevor, I would let them off! Ha, ha, just for this once!'

'It is not a question of that, Colonel,' said Mr. Trevor, with great deliberation, 'the two lads appear to have been caught by some of the village rascals over Killantringan way, and shut up in a cave. These same boys then plundered the orchard on Rough Island in the absence of its protectors -'

The Colonel looked very funny for a moment.

'Sir,' he said at last, 'I was consulted as to this

before - by the young gentlemen themselves. It was a matter of fortifications. I gave them certain advice - which I presume they had not time to carry out, having been taken prisoners themselves that very night -'

'The tarry young rascals!' said Mr. Trevor, 'giving us all this trouble and anxiety.'

I knew that he was thinking of his sister, Mrs. Hamilton Alexander, of Elshiner.

'On the contrary,' said the Colonel, 'I cannot see more in it than an operation of legitimate warfare, adroitly carried out, after due and proper exchange of warlike declarations on both sides!'

'I'll 'warlike' them!' said Mr. Trevor, grimly, and bidding good-bye to the colonel, he motioned us to come with him instantly to Killantringan.

'There's that old yacht of mine,' the Colonel called after us, 'she has a three pounder on board. If there is difficulty, we will bombard the town.'

'Thank you, sir,' said Mr. Trevor, 'but the town belongs to me. But in any case there will be no trouble.'

'Well, consider me at your service,' was the Colonel's farewell, 'I'm an old fellow, but if it comes to the clean metal, remember that my old bit of steel, the same that led the charge at the Redan is at your service!'

'Thank you, Colonel,' said Mr. Trevor, 'but we will have them set free at a cheaper price than that!'

And waving his hand we went down through a thicket to the little boat-house, with the padlocked door, which had been the last and best gift of Mr. Trevor to us on the island. On a small brass plate over the door were the words:

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'THE PROPERTY OF A. TREVOR, ESQ., OF ORCHARD DEAN.'

Each of us produced a key. There was a rush to be the first. The boat was dragged down on rollers, and we were soon afloat, skimming in the direction of Killantringan. We could see Kilpatrick mournfully watching us from his watch-tower. He was all alone on the island that day, and I will wager he would have retreated towerwards without standing on the order of his going, if he had seen a first expedition of the enemy coming toward the orchard.

Mr. Trevor steered us right into the little Fishers' Harbour, and up to the jetty. A big fellow of nineteen or twenty was lounging about on the quay.

'Here,' called out Mr. Trevor, 'take hold of this rope. Now, give a hand! Now, what's your name? Jim Davison - good, well Jim, take care of our boat till I come back, and see that she is well bailed and cleaned up!'

'Yessir!' said the stalwart Jim, greatly to our surprise. If we had done the like without Mr. Trevor, there would have been a fight between Jim and Laurieston to a certainty. Jim Davison would have called it cheek. But he was as meek as so much cold mutton fat before Mr. Trevor.

Then with his hands easily in the pockets of his light grey jacket Mr. Trevor led the way up the street of the village. Here and there some well-to-do fisherman or small shopkeeper came to his door to bow his respects. Good wives curtsied at corners, and urchins ran on ahead to give warning. But Mr. Trevor did not relax his rapid walk, and the nods which he returned were very slight and cold. It is not far from the goat-track along the shore which leads

to Cumberland Bet's. Behind rise the purple hills, heather-clad to the very cliff verge, under which I knew Hammy and Laurieston must be waiting at this moment, wondering as to the fate of their message and winged messenger.

We saw on the brae above us a herd boy who ran. 'Catch him!' called out Mr. Trevor, 'he is too fast for me.'

So we two ran him down. I it was who turned him, and Penley who laid him by the heels. He was doubtless on his way to give the alarm of our coming at the house of Cumberland Bet. The way down to it was nugget with boulders, each as big as a cottage, all covered with lichen and sea pinks springing from every crevice.

Before he had tapped at the door, the big, peaceable figure of Baptiste Garnier lounged out of the kitchen behind, a long darksome alley lighted only by a skylight led into the right side of the boat near the sternpost. He came smiling and bowing, his white blouse coming below the knees and his square linen cap on his head. Behind him was Cumberland Bet, a-grin with pleasure over her sonsy face.

I do not know what Mr. Trevor expected, but it was clear that he was disappointed. An obvious innocence, a placid joy at his appearance almost kept both of them from speech. The big, ruddy-cheeked Baptiste drew him inside and made him sit down before a bottle of Chateau-Neuf-du-Pape of which he smelt the cork and pronounced of the year 1864.

We eclipsed ourselves till we should be wanted. Cumberland Bet served us with goats' milk and home-bread, with abundant butter and jam. While over their bottle Mr. Trevor and Big Baptiste talked

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imperturbably in French. It was not long, however, before a change came over the face of the big Frenchman, a troubled expression, involving pain and mental uncertainty.

He called his wife, and began gesticulating and gabbling very fast to her in that French which was not French but instead a *lingua franca* understood only by them two. As I watched, tears glittered suddenly in the eyes of Cumberland Bet. She went up to Mr. Trevor, for whom she had, as it appeared, an extraordinary affection.

She actually laid her hand upon his shoulder, a liberty which she had never taken before and of which, even at that moment, she seemed to be wholly unconscious.

'Ye donna think it,' she cried, 'that we would hide your boys - the twa poor laddies. Baptiste there wad cut aff his right hand, and I wad gie my life rather than do such a like thing!'

'I do not indeed think it!' said Mr. Trevor, shaking her warmly by the hand, 'but it is quite evident that the boys are hidden away - not to do them any great harm, but out of sheer mischief - not far from your house.'

And he showed her the letter, with its enclosing quill and testifying strips of rag.

At this Bet shook her head, and, muttering something which Mr. Trevor could not make out, she made a dash for the part of the house that was cut out of the rock. She pushed aside the curtain of Cecille's room, but after staying a moment within, came forth discomfited.

'I could have sworn,' she said, 'that I saw Cecille run in there when Baptiste called out that he saw you through the window.'

It was certainly a curious thing that Cecille should be absent at the moment when Mr. Trevor came to obtain news of the fisher lads of Killantringan. For, as her mother remarked, Cecille knew much more about their doings than did her father and mother together.

'Well,' said Mr. Trevor, speaking very quietly, but with a sternness I had never known nor suspected in him, 'I bid you tell the fisher-folk that the matter lies with them. The secret of where my nephew is, and his comrade Laurieston, is known to the fisher-lads who stole my strawberries on Rough Island. About these I care nothing, but the two lost boys I must account for. They were placed by me on the island. One of them is my sister's only son. I have never yet dared to hint to Mrs. Alexander that anything was wrong. But you, Baptiste and you Bet, must warn the heads of houses on my lands that if the boys are not returned safe and sound by this time tomorrow, I will give each one of them notice to quit, even though I leave not a warm hearthstone nor a sea-going boat in all Killantringan and the upper shore.'

'Then, sir,' cried Cumberland Bet, dabbing her eyes with her apron, 'you will make sore many an innocent heart, and bring desolation on many a poor family in Killantringan. This is a waeful message to be the bearer of!'

'It is my last word,' said Mr. Trevor, gravely, 'if they will not look after their families, I must do my duty by mine!'

And he rose as if to take his departure. Baptiste, who had not understood, looked amazed to see his

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fine,      ruby-coloured,      Chateau-Neuf-du-Pape abandoned ere half of it was drunk. He looked inquiringly from one to the other. He had lived long in this strange land, but, like Victor Hugo, he was too good a Frenchman ever to learn a word of its language. He communicated only with Cumberland Bet by means of their *lingua franca* - also with all the world by infinite gesture and many wreathed smiles.

But now his face took on a look of wonder and alarm when his wife expounded to him the stern order for the repatriation of the boys, and the desperate alternative if they were not found and returned.

It was apparently impossible for Baptiste to grasp at once the meaning of the words he listened to. His French blood did not allow him to think that this quiet, easy-going young man, who spoke so charmingly the language of his native country could really be resolved to carry into effect the rude threat of rendering houseless all this long street of fishermen's houses, and to drive three hundred men and the women to the most distant parts of the earth.

Then Mr. Trevor explained to him in French and instantly his face, though still anxious, calmed itself a little. But to Bet Mr. Trevor still spoke sternly, 'Listen, this is my last word. My nephew has been kidnapped, probably in jest. But the jest has gone on too long. I want my boys back. If this is done quietly, nothing will be said about it. But in order that there shall be no delay, I want you to tell each head of a family to summon before him all his sons over the age of ten and - induce them to confess where the boys are! They know, because they have

fed them. This is the last word I have to say - The boys - or notice to quit!

'I will tell them,' said Cumberland Bet. 'But I am sorry, too, for the poor fisher-lads. Some of the fishermen, like Tom McQueen, are very violent men, and they all wear leather belts.'

Mr. Trevor shrugged his shoulders.

'I am sorry, too,' he said, 'but I would be still more sorry if my sister were to hear that her only son has been imprisoned by bad boys in a sea cave!'

At that very moment the light which fell through the open door of the boat-cottage, was blocked up.

A voice said cheerfully, 'Hello, Uncle!' And there in the background was Laurieston taking off his hat with as close an imitation of Mr. Trevor's serene indifference as he could achieve.

'I thought so!' said Mr. Trevor, sitting down again, without taking the least notice of the returned captives, 'now let us finish that Chateau-Neuf. It will bring back some of the colour to your cheeks, my good Baptiste!'

## CHAPTER TWENTY

### THE REASON WHY

Now I, J. Laurieston, take up the tale again. Indeed I will not deny that I have looked over the bits that Fitz wrote, and cut out a lot of his idiocies - awful idiot, Fitz, when he starts in to try. Also I smacked him for some disrespectful words used of Penley, who was his senior and my second in command. He said that if he had known he was to be used like that, he would never have caught my old pigeon, adding that he would go straight and wring its neck now! (But of course he knew better - oh, a great, great deal better than to dream of doing it really.)

You should just have seen how I worked them up. They were bubbling over with curiosity to know how it all happened. But I was not going to show more interest than Mr. Trevor did. He was still discussing his cobwebby bottle with Baptiste, and from what I could make out they were talking politics. Frenchmen always do talk politics and always their own. So Baptiste was telling over again to Mr. Trevor all the crimes of the late Emperor, and he called him *Homme de Decembre* and other things which I could not understand.

But I knew very well that there was a reason why Mr. Trevor did not wish for any explanations before Baptiste and his wife, Cumberland Bet. So I took my cue from him, and in a low voice ordered Hammy to shut up and keep so.

'Don't say a word about anything till we are by ourselves. Now mind that - or else - !'

'Oh,' said Hammy, who had been learning, 'don't

think I'll spoil your little show. It will afford me great interest to see how you will get out of your explanation. You remember your promises?’

‘I am not likely to forget!’ I said with chilly dignity. ‘Signed - and sealed they were!’ continued Hammy, provokingly.

‘The promise was as much yours as mine!’ I said sharply.

‘Yes,’ he muttered nonchalantly, ‘but it is not I, who will be called on to tell the - the lies!’

‘I will tell no lies!’ I called out indignantly.

‘Well, the yarn, then!’ he retorted. And began to hum, ‘Their groves of sweet ‘Myrtle’ let foreign lands reckon!’

I could not tell what he meant exactly by that. However, I kicked him on chance, and it must have been all right, for he did not object, though he said the words were by Burns. Then he sang to a tune of his own ‘I’m to be Queen of the May, Johnny, I’m to be Queen of the May!’

This was obvious cheek. For I now saw that he meant Myrtle Causland and Girlie May over at the Knock. So to preserve his reason I ran him out to the pump and the other two gladly pumped on him, till he was saved by Cecille, the daughter of our hosts.

But now I have got to tell all about how we got away, and arrived just as the very moment when Hammy’s uncle was dealing out threatenings and slaughter - just as Hammy said he would.

Well, that afternoon I had been teaching Hammy draughts, which is a good game to pass the time. We had made a draught-board by scratching the sand, criss-crossing the black squares and leaving the white ones plain. Then we played with black and

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white pebbles, of which there were lots of all shapes and sizes in the cave. I had given Hammy a handicap of four men, playing him with eight against his twelve, which made a rather decent game. For Hammy picked up the moves pretty quickly, as he had learned chess with his mother, though he sometimes thought so long that I had to wake him up with my toe.

Still it wasn't at all a bad game and Hammy was doing his very best, with two 'crowned me' to my one, to corner me, when all of a sudden the door that had always been locked and double-locked ever since we came there, was opened, and so that particular game of draughts was never finished.

Now in spite of Hammy's sneers I mean to tell the truth. He is a great deal younger than I am, and of course does not understand about these things - about what you have got to do sometimes to please girls and so forth. But Solomon knew, who was a much wiser man, for among the things he had found most mysterious he writes down, 'The way of a man with a maid.'

And I bet he meant the difficulty you get into about keeping your word after they have made you promise things - specially if, like Solomon, you have a whole wad of them tagging after you all the time.

Anyway, I need not conceal it any longer, that it was Cecille who came to let us out. But she had her conditions first. And they had got to be sworn to, and subscribed to, in our heart's blood - taken from our arms well up near the elbow. She jabbed us, but would not let us do the same for her, though we offered. She said she would sign in *my* blood. It would be a bond between us and make it more sacred. So we made out a paper, declaring that we

would never tell without her consent. She kept the paper, and I had to write after Cecille Garnier's signature an affidavit that her name was really written in my blood - which was a most give-away thing if ever Myrtle Causland or Girlie May came to hear it. They would send me packing about the quickest, I can tell you.

This was why Cecille did it. She was a minx of a girl, but tall, nice looking, curly headed, and with eyes that glittered under her long, dark lashes. She wanted dreadfully to be a boy. Except sometimes, when she was quite content to be a girl.

This was one of the times. You see she had to convince us, and make us promise not to give her away. I could imagine a boy trying to do that. Why, we would have smitten him - not feebly either, but with considerable force and precision.

But of course you can't slay a girl like that, even if she is tall and looks like Claude Duval in the 'tuppens-coloured,' pictures of which the 'Great-Man-Who-Wrote-Treasure-Island' was so fond. A girl is made more breakable than a boy, on purpose that you can't bounce her about the same way. It is a great pity, at least so we thought at the time. For if ever any girl deserved a good hiding it was that same Cecille. My grandfather and the wood-shed would about have met the case.

Do you know what was the first thing she did when she got the paper about never revealing anything about our capture till we had her permission, into her hands? No - of course it is quite impossible to guess. Well, she took out a tin box, pretty thin and oblong, like the ones you get with flat mustard plasters out of the chemist's, and opening it before our eyes, dabbed her palm and

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fingers into it. Then quite coolly she printed her hand neatly on the agreement under the signatures written in our blood!

And this done she scrawled all about!

'SIGN AND SEAL OF CHIEF THOMAS OF THE BLACK HAND.'

She did - Fact! She it was who had had the cheek to imprison us - with, of course, the help of a lot of the big fellows of Killantringan. *She* had sent the second insulting message to make us mad. She had plundered the orchard while the lazy sweeps Penley and Kilpatrick slept in the Tower - the sleep of the Unjust. Kit the Crowl had been awake and had duly given the alarm, but Penley had called out, 'Go and slay them yourself, if you are so keen. As for us we are not going to have our skins broken for a handful of old strawberries!'

And for this, also, I should have to reckon with Penley when next I saw him.

'No,' said Cecille Garnier, with irritating calmness, 'It was not very difficult to get over you fellows. You were so soft, so trustful. We could have had you a dozen times - with your keeping watches and sallying out at night, lantern in hand, to stick things in the split stick - aye, even when there was a moon!'

That is what she called 'The Glimmering Wand' - *a split stick!*

'And then you were always monkeying about, measuring with chains and rubbing paint on maps, as if that would do you any good when it came to a dark night and the enemy upon you before you knew.'

'Then why,' said I, 'did you take us prisoners at all?'

This question seemed to bother Cecille a bit, but at last she made up her mind to answer. And she did so with a slight blush.

'You see,' she said at last, 'I could not let you go back to the Island from my father's house - for I knew the 'boys' were going to be in the orchard there. You would have got fighting with them -'

'And licked them!' I cried.

'Jolly well!' affirmed Hammy.

'You would have tried, I do not doubt,' said Cecille, with a kind of pitying glance, 'but the 'Killies' would simply have trampled on you with their sea-boots, or tossed you up into the tree-tops. They were four times your number, twice your age, and you would have had no chance against them at all!'

'We could have tried!' I said.

'I know,' said Cecille, a little crossly, 'and that is the reason why I made you stop here till it was over.'

'Well, but it was over the very next morning, and why did you keep us here all this time, till you had wild landlords coming to your house with threats of fire and sword?'

She hesitated still more and her long-lidded eyes sought the ground with something in them at once wild and shy.

'Well,' she continued after a pause, 'I will tell you the truth and you need not be angry with me! I had been over at Colline - with three dozen eggs. There I saw Myrtle Causland, the schoolmaster's daughter going about like a lost dog - that is, the first time. The second she was playing tennis on the lawn and shouting. I would not worry about her, if I were you.'

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She is easily consoled.'

'I don't believe a word of it!' I affirmed stoutly.

'Then ask Mr. Trevor, afterwards, when you see him. He was there!'

And she laughed again, mockingly.

Then I went over to the Knock to get some butter and saw May who keeps the dairy. She was sad, and so I went to see if it would last any longer with her than with the dominie's lass. On the third day I went back and - but you will not believe me if I tell you. She was down on her knees, teaching your friend Penley how to make daisy-chains, and the two of them had their heads as close as One-o'-Clock and Two-o'-Clock on the dial of a grandfather's clock.  
*And I think it was two o'clock that struck!*

'I don't want to ruin your faith in humanity,' she laughed, 'which appears to be about as simple and innocent as your war tactics. But, perhaps, you will believe that I know girls better than you!'

Now this is a thing that no man of spirit will admit, so I said bluntly: 'You say you do - because you judge them by yourself.'

I could see her fingers grip and clench in her palm, and I daresay I never was so near to getting a box on the ear before or since - without getting it, that is. But she only answered, with more good-nature than I could have anticipated, 'You would not say so, if you knew me better!'

'And this Black Hand crew over which you are the Captain?' I demanded.

'Oh, they have nothing to do but to obey me. I say nothing to them except to make them obey orders - and they do. Otherwise, I do not speak a dozen words to all of them in a year!'

But for all this, I could see she was not answering

my questions *why* she had kept us so long in captivity.

'I do not exactly know,' she said, when I pressed it a second time, 'perhaps for the pleasure of your society!'

I knew very well that she was sneering, but there was something attractive about her confusion too. She had some reason. Then it came out that, before she would give us our liberty, we were each of us to give her a kiss as ransom, along with a written statement, saying that we did it of our own accord.

Of course then I saw clearly enough what she was after. She did not mind a bit about Hammy, but she wanted badly to queer me with Myrtle and Girlie May. However I always had great faith in my powers of persuasion with girls, and I thought that I could explain away even such a damaging instrument as that.

Cecille's opinion was that I could not. So it was upon this point that the duel engaged. Well, we did it, Hammy and I, as per agreement - pretty bravely and without any making of wry faces. Indeed, Hammy confessed that he had a better opinion of the French ever after that, and rather wished he had been a soldier in the time of the Black Prince. Which was all very well for him, as he had only his uncle to consider, and no Myrtle Causland or Girlie May to face afterwards, with the flush of conscious depravity on his brow. Besides, having been brought up indoors and on sweets, he had a skin like a banana just going bad. He couldn't blush if he tried. The only thing was to keep him up to his promise of secrecy, and some of the threats I used on that occasion, I don't believe were ever surpassed for creepy horror - I mean what I promised to do to him

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if he ever let out one word. At present I can tell. I have permission to be freed from my oath, and for the others it does not matter.

So without more ado, Cecille Garnier let us out, and followed us into the house a quarter-of-an-hour afterwards as demure as pussy when she has just been stowing away a saucerful of cream. Cecille took up her knitting and worked away with her eyes on the ground. Nobody took the least notice of her. No more did we, being bound by our oaths. Really a remarkable girl, I began to think.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

### 'THE DOOM OF TRAITORS!'

Yet surely the behaviour of Cecille, daughter of Baptiste and Cumberland Bet was not one whit more remarkable than that of Mr. Trevor, uncle of Hammy, and lord and master of Killantringan - not to mention Orchard Dean, Palnackie, and our own little eyot of Rough Island.

Every minute we were expecting to be questioned by him. All the way home we had the answering words ready on our lips, but the question never came. He talked of everything, except of how we were caught, where we had been, and how by what strange means restored. It almost seemed as if he knew all about it, straight off his own bat, and was determined to save us the difficulty of invention.

Yet very certainly he could not have known about the papers written in blood, the intervention of a Chief Thomas in long dark eyelashes, and short petticoats, or any of the wonders of our stay in the old smuggling stronghold.

He talked easily, carelessly, and did not even suggest taking Hammy home with him, but put us all into a boat - the same that had been tied up to the quay of Killantringan, Fitz in the stern-sheets with the rudder in his hand, and Penley doing all the heavy work.

Now if Mr. Trevor did not ask anything, Fitz made up for it. But there was no need for the practice of extra politeness with him. We simply told him (or rather I told him, for he could lick Hammy) that his best plan would be to attend to his steering, and for

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the rest it would be healthier for him to ask no questions, in which case he would be told no lies - a retort which has been used from time immemorial by the most truthful boys. This, together with 'Oh, go and boil your head in cold water!' 'Ask my big toe!' 'Dicht your neb and flee up!' and others of a similar high quality of wit, are the standing discouragers to inquisitiveness from seniors to juniors. Every boy knows them. He has had them said to him a hundred times - especially in Scotland, which is a real republic so far as youth is concerned.

There are no 'little Master Edwards there' nor 'sons of the house.' If one boy calls another 'Master Thomas' it is an insult to be wiped out with prompt and immediate knuckles. So we carefully discouraged Fitz (as an example), and it was good for Fitz, but better still for the heir of all the Elshiners. Indeed, he actually discovered a new taunt to use against him. It was not very good, but still it showed that the spirit was working within him.

He said to Fitz: 'Take a pebble in your mouth and dry up!'

No, it certainly was not good, because Fitz would at that moment have to dive something like twenty fathoms for a pebble, and then after all it would not be dry. But the intention was excellent, and I suppose it was for that that Fitz afterwards licked him - which also was as it should be. Oh, we were making a man out of Hammy. For that, there is nothing like a well-governed Boy Republic - with, of course, a Dictator at the head of it. I had to be Dictator - there being no other. But I mingled Justice with Mercy - except, that is, for intentional cheek, which no Dictator can put up with - no, nor ought to!

So we all came back to Rough Island that night, all the four of us in the new boat. Penley was dimly conscious that he was being left out in the cold shades of unpopularity. So he was silent and bent to his oar. I don't think that he guessed anything about Cecille giving him away. No, I will say that for him. I think that if conscious innocence did not quite mantle his ingenious brow - it was too dark to see anyway - he had no idea of our Duval in petticoats having spied upon his little recreations on the daisy-spangled meads of the Knock.

(Wait a while, my gay Penley, and I will spangle you!)

So the more jocund we were and the more we snubbed Fitz, the more severely we left Penley to himself. And as he had always been my trusted lieutenant, you had better believe that he felt the neglect. So much so, that he never spoke a single word, neither of good nor bad till the boat was rolled up within the new boat-house, and we were entering the door of the Tower with such a bang as nearly to squash Kilpatrick behind it. Then he asked in a meek voice, very unlike the Penley of other years, what we would have for supper.

'Daisy-chains, if you want to know!' says I. And if I had knocked him down with the fire-shovel he could not have been more surprised. He gave one glance in the direction of Kilpatrick, which showed that that youth had been in it also. But of him he could make nothing. For it was obvious that Kilpatrick, having just come down from his bedroom in the most aerial apparel of the night, could by no means have given him away. Indeed he had never been out of Penley's presence since our tumultuous entry into the Tower.

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So after this we left Penley and Kilpatrick to one side with considerable ostentation, and proceeded with the help of the now joyous Fitz to cook a little supper of cold potatoes sliced and fried in the pan with eggs and bacon, a nice light repast for that hour of the night. We had also some sausage, a chunk or two of cold ham, a great deal of hard oatmeal cake, all washed down with water from the well on the island, which we went in relays and fetched ourselves.

I could see Penley and his cousin Kilpatrick trying to withdraw, in order to talk over the matter by themselves. I think the single word '*Daisy-chains*' knocked them silly. They went upstairs and whispered late together into the night. Then when all was still, I crept up, and with some red chalk belonging to Fitz, I did a couple of pretty striking Death's Heads and ditto Cross-bones on their doors (Fitz admitted as much himself). And underneath I printed very large the words: 'THE DOOM OF TRAITORS.'

Fitz and Hammy were in great spirits, as most cubs are when their elders are in disgrace. They even exceeded themselves. They wanted to take a lot of empty old tin cans, and stand beneath the windows of Penley and of his ally Kilpatrick in order to rattle stones in them and jeer at the culprits. But I ordered them in no measured terms to desist. The fearful sign of the Traitor's Doom which they would see upon their doors on the morrow's morn when they should come out, would scare them stiff enough. There was no need for more. But my present belief is that Penley at least heard my manoeuvring outside his room, but had no desire to argue the question as to what I meant by '*Daisy-*

*chains,' especially in such light attire.* Both culprits slept the night with doors carefully barred, and I fancy from the sounds of dragging on the floors above, with all their moveable furniture piled up on the inner side by way of precaution.

They were fools, for of course they might have known that nothing would be done till after trial and conviction. The first thing was to detach the one from the other. It was evident that Penley was the greater criminal - of course he was, for had he not been in charge during my absence? Had he not been my trusted confident? His crimes, therefore, were beyond all pardon, and the only attenuating circumstances I could find was that all the knives, forks and spoons in the house belonged to his mother at Sea Cliff Cottage.

Hammy, after all that he had 'gone through' that was the word he used - wanted an exemplary punishment dealt out to Penley, so that he might have his office of second in command, a rank for which he would not be fit for a long time. Why, Penley would simply have made hay of Hammy every time he caught him out of my sight. I told him this, without however, succeeding in convincing him. He was an obstinate beggar, Hammy, and when he got an idea in his head, there was really only one method of argument with him. But to that he soon learned to be amenable. He was a pretty square boy - when made to be one. I did not mind the trouble, having been placed, by plain decree of his Uncle Trevor, *in loco parentis*. Indeed I worked it much better for the good of Hammy's soul than any number of parents. Well, the next morning the pair came down with very scared faces - pretty chalky about the gills - only in Penley's case, owing to local

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difficulties, it was rather sort of green mahogany - not that there is such a colour, but it conveys what I mean.

Penley tried to laugh about the message on his door but not real heartily. He said that he could hear Fitz all the time. Which was not true. First, because Fitz could draw ever so much better and Penley knew it, and secondly, if he *had* thought it was Fitz he would have been out in two ticks with a pair of boots to shy at his head.

No, Penley dear, your merriment was as the crackling thorns under a pot. It was the laughter of fools, as the Book says - I have had too many through my hands not to know.

Then after this I set Penley to clean up and repaint of the boat. He accepted the job with alacrity. It seemed to restore him in some measure to the fellowship of his brethren. He began to think it would blow over. Still, none of them except Kilpatrick would speak to him. They had received their orders. Then Hammy and Fitz took Kilpatrick for a long walk to try and induce him to turn King's Evidence. I arranged to meet them half-way and learn how they had succeeded.

Above, on the cliffs, Kit the Crowl was to keep watch and ward over Penley, and prevent him from sculling away merrily to the refuge of his mother's house at Sea Cliff. I don't think that in any case he would have done this, because after all Penley had a sense of honour - and moreover, suppose he hadn't, I had hidden the oars.

But the presence of Kit the Crowl up there, alone with the goats and the Spectral Cow, had a calming effect on Penley. And to tell the truth he worked quite decently - better than you would have expected

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of a chap with the sword of Damocles hanging over his neck - suspended there by a single daisy-chain.

# ROGUES ISLAND

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

### THE COURT-MARTIAL OF PENLEY

It is an awful thing, a court-martial. At least it was on our island. As nobody had any uniform we made the poor wretch of a prisoner take off his clothes (the top ones I mean) and put on the old blanket and the Panama hat with the hole in the crown. Penley had thought it as fearfully funny when it was Hammy who was endued with that rig-out. But now the humour seemed to have died down entirely - like telling a joke for the second time, I suppose.

It was a hot day and so we had the court outside, under the shade of the biggest tree in the orchard - of course, one without any fruit, either ripe or unripe. For it was, as I have said, a solemn affair and a court-martial suffering from the colic owing to eating green plums, would not have been a befitting spectacle - highly contrariwise, indeed.

Do you know I have a confession to make in this place. I think most boys, nearly all indeed of about our age, have less sympathy and more original sin to the square inch than the young of any other animal. There is a vein of aboriginal cruelty in a boy - most boys, that is—till some nice girl takes him in hand, tramples on him, makes him run and fetch and carry, generally wipes her feet upon him - and then - and not till then - sends him about his business, telling him what a fool he is! This is rough treatment, and at the time the fellow thinks his heart is broken. Nothing of the kind! It is the making of him, if well and conscientiously done by somebody a good bit older than himself. But we had

not got that far - at least, not all of us. As for me, I had had my heart trampled on so often that I was not sure whether or not it was made of india rubber. Then I rather thought it might be. However I have learned different since. But I must hurry up and tell about the court-martialing of Penley. He was brought up under escort and tied to the Death Tree. His hands were fettered in front of him and his feet heavily haltered. Then a broad belt was passed round his waist and another about the tree. These two were buckled and drawn tight. His handcuffs were sewn to the blanket, so as to keep his hands to his sides. Prisoners are not permitted to assault witnesses in any well-regulated tribunal. I kept a big stick by me on purpose.

For a similar reason great care was taken to prevent Penley from getting loose and skimming off, because though the first guard was sufficient and well armed, most of them would be required for witnesses in their turn, and so of course could not remain on guard at the moment of giving their sworn testimony.

I found Hammy and Fitz in the woods still arguing with Kilpatrick. I added a few convincing arguments to induce the latter to turn King's Evidence. This he agreed to do, when the alternative was put before him of standing in the dock with the prisoner. Accordingly we had a bench brought from the interior of the tower. This was for the members of the court, also an armchair for me as President. I was to sit all the time, and was the only one not fit to give evidence, being in a sort of way a party to the case. It is true that sentence remained in my hands, but we agreed that that should be strictly in accordance with the finding of the court.

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Hammy, who could write quickly and well, was appointed assessor and clerk. Brevet-Captain FitzGeorge was named public prosecutor, and Kilpatrick, owing to his kinship with Penley, and also to his intimate knowledge of the affair, was set down as counsel for the prisoner - that is, in addition to being King's Evidence.

All this suited very well. Kit the Crowl was presented with a great wooden halberd, with which he was instructed to brain the prisoner if he attempted to escape.

This order, however, had to be modified, and the court-officer's attention directed to an equally impressionable, but less dangerous part of the prisoner's anatomy.

This we did in the most pressing interests of Penley, for if Kit the Crowl had been ordered to knock him over the head, there is not the least doubt that he would have done it.

We did not know, exactly (nor at all) how the business of a court of martial justice ought to be carried on. However Hammy cried 'Oyez and Terminer' because he had read these words (or something like them) in the *Newgate Calendar*. He continued howling, till with a ruler, I bade him attend to his duties as Clerk of Court, and Fitz was called as the first witness.

He told all about what had happened on the island during our absence. But with his usual cunning he made a perfect little tragedy out of Penley's devotion to me - his wailing over me like Rachael mourning over her children - how he refused either to be comforted himself or to let anybody else be.

This touched me pretty close. It is hard to court-

martial a fellow who has shown so much affection when he had nothing to gain by it. And when Fitz (who had the whole affair up his sleeve, like a pack of cards) told us next how he, that is, Penley, had smacked the other chaps for singing, how he had forbidden all games on the island, and (most of all) how he had extolled my character and other qualities - nay, even the hidings I had given him and the others - why, I declare I could keep my seat no longer, but jumped up and wrung Penley by the hand till (he owned it afterwards) I 'nearly made the bones scrunch!'

'It doesn't matter if you did make daisy-chains with ten hundred dozen girls, Penley - I would forgive you!'

And Penley said that was just the way he had felt about it, too.

After that there was not much more to be said, except to find somebody else to try. For it would have been a dead shame to throw away such a solemn apparatus of Justice - with a capital J - as we had devised. So, as a last resort we decided to try Kilpatrick.

Really, of course, he had nothing to do with the affair. But as he was the only person available, all the rest being occupied upon their various offices as witnesses, guards of honour, and members of the court, he ought to have seen the necessity of devoting himself to his country's good. In fact we let off the culprit and tried his counsel - a proceeding, which, if adopted in every case, would constitute a great legal reform, cheering everybody up and keeping even the judges from going to sleep.

We found that Kilpatrick was guilty on the following heads: 1. He was a cousin germain of the

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late prisoner. We did not know what that was, but anyway he *was* a cousin French, German, or after the mode of Brittany. It was impossible that he could clear himself on this head - a cousin he was and must suffer the penalty.

2. He had acted as counsel for the defence. It was true that he had been appointed by the court so to act. But - he had showed no signs of repugnance when Penley was a criminal outside the law, nor any signs of sorrow when he was forgiven. This evinced Kilpatrick's innately bad nature. Penley said so himself, and voted for the sternest measures with so hardened a ruffian.

It is no use telling at length how the evidence was led, nor recounting all the impressive ceremonial of the court. Because before ever we had started, it was arranged that the penalty was to be 'Running the Gauntlet.' Penley had even got his handkerchief, a big red bandanna one, specially knotted during the reading of the indictment. This I call pretty mean, even for a cousin of the male sex. Besides being ungrateful.

However, so it was. There had been no chance of playing 'Run the Gauntlet' on the island for a good long while. This was a heaven-sent opportunity. So the counsel for the prisoner (Penley) summed up dead against his own cousin, and in spite of the more kindly arguments of the Public Prosecutor (Fitz) Kilpatrick was unanimously declared guilty of high treason in the first degree, coupled with a recommendation to No Mercy. This last was superfluous, for he was not going to get any anyway.

We even took away his own handkerchief according to prison custom, lest he might do himself a harm with it - also because it was a good one, and

made up into fine herd welty knots.

Then we arranged ourselves in two lines, while Kilpatrick was stripped to a pair of bathing drawers. The Rogue's' Hole was 'home.' Once he could reach that he was safe. One bound into its depths - *swash* - and his sufferings were over for this world. He was cleansed of his condemnation, also of any dirt that happened to have stuck to him - the blue marks made by the knotted handkerchiefs only remaining.

Accordingly the prisoner was brought to the place of punishment by the halberdier of the court, Kit the Crowl.

But just as the classical 'One, Two, Three' were being sung out by Hammy, Kit the Crowl dropped his halberd, got it somehow twisted between his legs, and the prisoner, instead of being driven fairly between the two lines of knotted handkerchiefs, turned sharply about, and showed a remarkable pair of clean heels in the opposite direction.

It was afterwards surmised that Kit the Crowl, who had been chivvied a good many times himself, took the little ceremony of Kilpatrick's running the gauntlet a great deal to heart. Also that he tangled himself intentionally up with his halberd. But nothing was ever actually proven against him. Nor did I let them try. For after all it was a pretty decent thing to do - to give a fellow a chance like that.

But I must tell you about Kilpatrick. Most times he was not a particularly good runner, being rather long and loosely made. We thought he would be easily winded. But this time he went like steam, and his light and practical running costume gave him a fearful advantage against us fellows who had to sprint in the ordinary warm clothing demanded by the island, with its chilly winds and westerly rains.

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We headed him off, of course, but Kilpatrick made us laugh so much, his white 'Glimmering-wand' of a figure cut across in the middle by ink-black bathing shorts, as he went jumping and giggoting among the boulders. Then he got to the Rogue's Hole, touched his fingers together in front of his face - first in an inelegant gesture at us, his pursuers, and the moment afterwards, changing into the beautiful curve of the diver, he bent his body slightly, and lo! down he went like an arrow.

*Swash! Home!*

Then he came up, sculling round and round with one hand and kissing the other to us, smiling broad smiles from which the salt water flowed away in sparkling diamonds into the depths of the Rogue's Hole.

Well we knew when a thing was well done. So we stood on the bank and gave him three cheers for his smartness. Kilpatrick was fully restored to us as a man and a brother. Even Penley forgave him, and was proud of the relationship for at least half-an-hour.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

'SHE CAME! SHE SAW! BUT SHE DIDN'T  
CONQUER!'

It was morning. The wind that came blustering down over Scree and Ben Gairn had a coldish nip in it - a nip that the salt in the air, together with the smell of rank sea-weed and deceased crabs, certainly did not take the edge off. Hammy and I had had a long cold morning of it on the flats, where we had been tramping flounders in the rear of the retreating tide. I had got my sand-shoes on, Hammy another pair - and though there were cold shivers skipping up and down our backs, we were not by any means in a bad humour. Far from it, indeed. We had made a ripping catch - chiefly by the hazard of the tides and our chancing on a 'sand pocket.' But of course we put the fullness of the baskets we carried (nobbled from Mr. Trevor's stake fishings) to the cleverness which had marked us both from our earliest infancy. I said this, I know, aloud for myself, and I had not the smallest doubt that Hammy thought the same of himself. But he was growing, if not a meek, at least a wary youth. So he uttered not the sentiment aloud.

Now I must tell you what a 'pocket of flounders' is. Unless you have been brought up on the shores of the Solway, or some big estuary with a great deal of sand to cover, you would hardly believe how quickly the salt water comes and goes.

The flats look like endless sheeny, glistening expanses of sand and mud. From the shore they seem altogether flat as far as you can see. But when you get out among them (and you've got to know the

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way first) you find hills and hollows - always pretty flat, of course - very much as if you put your hand easily on the table. If the sand is hoved up in the middle, *like your hand with the back up*, with little trickles of salt water running down the finger ribs, and blobs of scummy froth turning moodily over, go away from there. There are no flounders, and as like as not you will go in up to the chin. But if, on the contrary you find a 'sand-scoop' - like your hand laid *back down, palm up on the table* (now mind me, this is worth gold!) and the bottom of that scoop is still full of water, with the sand clean with rippy-wet curves all about, like a girl's hair when she flings her chin up to shake it out after a bath - then you go ahead! No quicksands there, sonny! But lots of fish, the best kind too, big fat flounders, flaky with fat almost like salmon, lolloping lazily round the edge of the salt-water basin as if they had a faint hope that they could still slop over into the retiring tide.

That's the place to fill your baskets - aye, and wish that you had bigger ones too.

'I'm jolly glad,' Hammy had said more than once, 'that you made me get up this morning.'

'Was there the least question about it, my son?' I inquired of him, pointedly. He said there was not and never could be. Hammy's heart was changed. Instead of being set on self, it had become a 'place full of pleasant stirs, a tumultuous city, a joyous city.' He thought for others a good deal now, especially when I was around. He never had the grumps any more, but his hungers were something appalling. He broadened out at the shoulders daily, and at the same time tightened his waist-belt, which he wore now of broad black leather like the rest of

us - and indeed like all shore folk - both as a convenience at times of hunger, when you could take up a hole or two, and also because, you were always armed in case of any felonious assault from behind, such as often happened on the island if some traitor, creeping silently up, caught a fellow bending to pick up something.

But this morning Hammy's heart was full of happiness. How he would triumph over the other fellows! Our 'pocket' had been one of the biggest kind, and we had some twenty pounds apiece of the finest flounders past caught, together with a sea-trout, which I had gone over my middle to catch in the deep water - a royal feed.

For once the flounder-flats had neither been cold or chill. The sun had been warm, from his first red slanting right in our eyes, to his clear shining two spans length up in the sky, which was the position which he had at present scrambled.

Hammy sang, and though he was as the beasts that perish as to the execution of music, he made gay if unmelodious sounds:—

*'Oatmeal and flounders in the pan,  
That's the stuff to make a man!  
Flip flap!  
Hear them tap,  
Heads and tails in the frying pan!'*

This was Hammy's own composition. Nobody will try to take away the credit from him. I would give also the tune, only there wasn't any. But you can sing it as Hammy did, to anything that comes into your head.

To shout very loud is the main thing. There is no

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charge for use at concerts - unless that is, the neighbours object.

But there was nobody on Rough Island *to* object.

Hammy and I were uplifted quite above our game, by the beauty and the jollity of the summer morning. There was never a rasp in our happiness, except perhaps, the growing weight of our back-loads. We had estimated the catch at about twenty pounds apiece - that is, including my private capture of the salmon trout. Now we seemed to be carrying the very Old Man of the Sea on each of our backs.

Still there was happiness in feeling the drip of the fish striking through our Garibaldis and knowing that the next minute the crown of the island would be reached, where below us would be the orchard, green and cool, with the plums a kind of holy purple - or so they seemed to our salt-parched throats - and in the corner all complete with its well-house, in-yards and out-yards, the old tower of Orchard Dean, that had seen a hundred generations. It too, smiled that summer morning, with its grey-creamy stone pock-marked with the weather, and the greenish velvety moss, and the curious loby fern they call 'ceterach' peeping from all the cracks and jointures.

Beneath was the heathery isle and the sheep grazing. Above the Spectre Cow (whom no man could tame) standing sniffing up the east wind (or anything else she could find) on the point of Hammy's Folly. But as we approached, suddenly something infinitely more spectral and appalling burst out of the orchard - a lady, tall, rustling, imposing of presence, clad (as it seemed) in purple and fine gold, with outches and pouches and

satchels, and ear and nose jewels - I give only the general effect -

'*Ham—Hamilton, my son!*' she called out, and took one look at '*Ham—Hamilton, my son*' and went 'flop!'

And I don't wonder now.

He had left her and his noble ancestral mansion of Elshiner, as one might say, like a bridegroom adorned for the bride - or perhaps, because bridegrooms don't dress up any more - like a girl going to her first ball. And this is the spectacle that met her eyes, the hen-and-chickeny eyes of the justly alarmed Mother Hamilton Alexander.

To describe Hammy we will begin at the top. He wore the famous scarecrow hat - but now with pride. It smelt of nice, ancient, sea-sidy things, and though it had only part of the brim left, that was all the more convenient, for Hammy could arrange it so that it drooped down just where the sun was hitting him. He wore it at that moment over his right eye. He had on a torn Jersey of a colour which had once been red, but was now too overlaid with fish-slime, scales, dirt, sand and general sea-weedy clabber to act as a danger signal on the slowest of tram-lines.

Then he had his belt girt about him, a leatherne strap which was shiny as that of the oldest of mariners. Hammy took a pride in this. On his back was the heavy exuding basket which had wetted him down to his heels. His hair was uncut, and from the twine-tied lid of the fishing-osier, a big crab, wrapped in a part of the lining lately appertaining to his breeches, had protruded a long and vast claw and was reaching up for his salt and dripping locks.

Beneath the belt, the condition of his knickers was (I can see now) such as to render utter collapse

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compulsory on a fastidious mother. They were not merely in rags, or in tatters - but in rags of tatters. And though perfectly well adapted for all shore-fishing purposes, there was doubtless something left to desire before even glimpses of their occupant could be admitted in a well-organized drawing-room.

Underneath the fringe of forked rag-carpet which covered the upper portion of Hammy's legs, his knees appeared with more than Highland insolence. They were, as must always be the case in such expeditions, a bit scratched and scraped. But that is nothing, really. The salt water and the air made everything right by next tide. Beneath that again and extending to his sandshoes, were a pair of brown and bony shanks, burned to brick red, and (like his face and hands) covered so thick with freckles that the result was a flat tint like that of the egg of a Brahma fowl.

Such was Hammy as his mother saw him, and she dropped as if shot.

I don't blame her. There are those who do. But not me! Mr. Trevor knew nothing of her coming. So you see, her mind was in no ways prepared for Hammy's condition, and how was the poor woman to know that this dilapidated scarecrow array overlaid the New Man.

'Oh, my Hammy,' she cried out piteously as soon as she could speak, 'what have they done to you? You who were so accustomed to be cared for! I took the temperature of your bath myself every night and morning for all these years, and I don't believe there is even one in this rude, horrid place!'

Right was the lady! Hammy knew the temperature of his bath after he had taken a header into it. But during the few short weeks he had spent without a

thermometer he had altered and altered, till he was twice the fellow he had been when he came.

'All right, mother,' he said, 'we've had a ripping morning. If you will stop a jiffey, you will have some of the best fish to breakfast you have ever eaten. I am going to gut them now!'

This was piling it on a bit, and Hammy did it for 'side'! For of course the fellows who did the fishing had nothing to do with the preparation of the breakfast afterwards - as was only right and proper. But Hammy was feeding it up to his mother - but, of course, that was his business and not mine.

'Poor, poor darling, and I to find you in such a state! What was your uncle thinking about?' she cried, quite unable to take the least notice of us, or even to remove her eyes from the ruffianly get-up of her only son, heir of all the Alexanders of Elshiner that ever were and progenitor of all that should ever be in the future.

'You are really - yes, really *dirty* - oh, my child!' she cried, with tears in her eyes, 'you who were always so spotlessly clean, changing your shirt twice a day - at least a fresh linen one, put out by Betty with your favourite pearl studs for the evening and a nice silk variegated one with turn-down collar and cuffs in the morning, with that opal clasp you are so fond of. I have it in my pocket now! Oh Hammy!'

And with one accord we turned away, shaking our heads pretending to shed tears, and muttering so that only the young martyr could hear us, 'Oh, Hammy!'

You have no idea how this stung him up, and indeed it was trying him pretty high. The next moment there was a smart smack. Hammy had taken up one of the biggest fish and fetched it hard

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across the nearest jester's face - which was Fitz's. I can tell you it shut up his mouth which had been indulging, as if of its own accord, in the silent pantomime of a clown's laugh, same as you see in a circus.

'Oh, Hammy!' repeated his mother, greatly to that young man's annoyance, 'I declare you have become like these other common boys, so rough and so rude - handling horrid slimy fish like that, and you who used to hand tea so nicely in our drawing-room! All the ladies liked to have you sit by them and stroke your hair! You remember? Don't you, dear?'

I bet you Hammy remembered, but that was not what worried him. It was knowing that WE would remember.

*That* got home where he lived, and bit him like a rat in a trap. It made him nasty, I can tell you. There isn't anything a boy hates so much as his people giving him away, and letting out home things that he knows will be chucked up at him ten times a day, till he grows big enough to hammer the casters-up.

Really this is a great lesson to parents to study the feelings of their children. But on Rough Island we had waked a new Hammy, and there was politeness in his reply to his mother - which there had certainly not been in the way he had drawn the flounder across Fitz's jaw.

'I am sorry, mother' he said, 'but that chap is a capital artist. He can draw like anything. Only he is afflicted by a kind of lock-jaw sometimes. He gets gaping twitching and then he can't get on without somebody giving him a smart slap with a piece of fresh fish. There must be a sort of electricity in it - or magnetism, or something. Just notice how different he is already. He is taking interest and

quite himself again.'

This was true, but not the whole truth. Fitz, of course, was dancing round like a hen on a hot girdle waiting to get one in at Hammy with the tail of the salmon-trout, which he held walloping behind his back. But he could not, on account of Mrs. Hamilton Alexander being there, and never taking her eyes off her son for a second. This was hard on Fitz and spoiled a neat scrimmage.

All of a sudden she gave a scream, and Hammy said, 'Oh, mother, I wish you would not - what is the matter now?'

'Where is your chest-protector, my poor, unfortunate, neglected boy?'

And she showed strong symptoms of having a fit - paralytics or hystericals or whatever they call them - *our* sort of girls don't have them, but you can read all about them in books. And accordingly we all wailed in chorus, 'Oh Hammy, where IS your chest-protector?'

But though we all started to look for it, he was not in the least grateful for our tender care, but muttered words that had been better left unsaid - that is, if we understood the bearing and purport of them correctly, as I *rayther* think we did!

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

'SEE THE CONQUERING HERO COMES!'

'You must come away with me at once, my son,' said Mrs. Hamilton Alexander as soon as she had got the better of her attempt at serious fussing. (I think she saw me standing over her with a half-gallon tin which had held paraffin in its day, but now squirted water ably when you jerked it - almost as good as a fire engine).

But Hammy, who was excited, resented (rather undutifully) the efforts of his mother to lead him away. And I really do not know what would have been the result if at that moment Mr. Trevor and the Colonel had not turned up. The Colonel was on his highest of high horses, pigeoning his chest, and nearly 'roo-cooing' as he strutted along with his gold-headed cane held quite three-quarters of a yard before him, so that nobody could miss seeing it.

Mr. Trevor was as calm as ever, and if he knew that there was a crisis forward, I'll be blowed if ever you could have told it on him

Oh, he was a one-er, our Mr. Trevor. It was worth while being alive just to watch him.

'Ah, Maria,' he said, gently inclining his face (but averting his body) whilst Mrs. Hamilton Alexander pecked at him on both cheeks, 'it is a pity I was away when you passed!'

'I did not want you,' she cried, 'all my thoughts were on this poor, poor boy there. As soon as ever I knew that he was here on this uninhabited island with these-these-these—'

I felt in my bones that she was going to say 'common boys'! - And what would have happened then, Heaven only knows - that is, if Heaven is not too much occupied with siderial mathematics to speculate on such things. But I think that Mr. Trevor spied the danger at about the same time, or maybe a little earlier.

'Allow me,' he said, quietly, 'to introduce to you my friends and valued tenants of this island - my sister, Mrs. Hamilton Alexander, Mr. Laurieston, Mr. FitzGeorge, Mr. Penley' - and so he went right through the whole dollop of us, not even forgetting Kit the Crowl. And Kit with his instinct of imitation, made as good a bow as any of us, and looked infinitely more gentlemanly, because he had on a suit of Mr. Trevor's old clothes which fitted his long limbs as if made for them.

There was, after this, no more to be said. It is true that the recognition bestowed upon us by the lady of Elshiner was of the slightest description, and even the solemn certificate given to our merits by Colonel Busby fell somewhat flat.

'I can answer for these young gentlemen,' he said, pompously, 'I have known their parents from childhood - indeed, I may say that I am seriously indebted to some of them!'

'That's the two hundred quid my father never can get out of Old Fuz-Buz' whispered Penley over my shoulder.

'Maria, would you care to see the household arrangements?' said Mr. Trevor imperturbably. And without giving her time to answer 'yea' or 'nay,' he led the way into the Tower of Orchard Dean.

Hammy would have followed to plead his cause, but I knew enough of Mr. Trevor's methods to order

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Hammy to stay where he was and let his uncle talk the matter over with his sister - that is to say, with Hammy's mother.

There ensued a pause, during which we took the Colonel sadly over the abandoned positions, and received his *post mortem* consolations, 'Ah, if only you had attended to what I had said, this would never have happened!'

He did not mean to nag, but as a matter of fact he did, and all of us, with one eye and both ears on the round tower (where the fate of Hammy was being discussed), paid but little attention to old Fuz-Buz and his yarning.

All the same he showed us how, with a little fore-thought, and having no longer the extended line of the orchard to defend, we could fall upon the enemy and take him in the flank - 'driving him into the sea,' as he said.

Which would undoubtedly have been an awfully fine thing to do, but when I thought of the muscles of these Killantringan chaps, it did not seem at all out of the range of possibility that, even after we had taken them in flank, they might have reversed the position and - taken us in the rear. Besides they wore sea-boots, which in such a formation would have been serious.

But we made a move for the Tower, as soon as ever we saw Mr. Trevor and his sister coming out. Evidently she had been shedding tears, for her nose was red.

Hammy brought himself up with a jerk.

'It's all over,' he said, 'the mater's been brimming over again. She always does that when she wants her way. Learnt the trick by playing the fountain to fetch father, I think!'

I told him that that was certainly not the way to speak his mother, and threatened to dowse him in Rogue's Hole.

He looked up at me with a ghastly expression, and said gravely, 'you don't for a moment think, Laurieston, that anything I can get from you won't be candy and apple-dumpling to what I've been going through ever since Mother began to let out to you fellows what a Molly I have been at home?'

Now that was pretty plucky of a chap to call himself a Molly-coddle, and I tell you there are precious few who would have done it. I said as much to Hammy, and he flushed so that I could see he was pleased. And at the very next words we heard from his mother, I was glad I had said that. For what do you think were the proposals of Mrs. Hamilton Alexander for the health and comfort of her darling son, if he were to stay a day longer upon Rough Island.

'I will send over my maid Bella, this afternoon,' she said, 'to look after Hamilton and air his things. She is quite accustomed to his ways, having been his nurse, ever since he was a little baby! She will also see to his bath!'

And when I looked at Hammy, tears of shame stood in his eyes. I don't wonder! Do you? But ever after that I liked Hammy pretty well, and would not let the other fellows guy him about what he could not help. It would have been pretty mean if I had done anything else - so it is no credit to say so.

But Mr. Trevor made a little sign to me - if you could call that a sign which was only a kind of frowning lift of one eyebrow, which after all may have been natural to him. But I took it to mean that we were to keep on thinking a lot and saying little,

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same as himself.

So I made the fellows understand what was expected of them at headquarters and they all stood to attention - even Hammy, who, having the biggest stake in the venture, was naturally most anxious.

Now Mr. Trevor never said that it would be impossible or even awkward to have Hammy's nurse on the island. He only sent us off to get breakfast and make ourselves look decent. What did he say? Why, nothing. Mr. Trevor did not need to *say* anything. That was the beauty of his method - at least with me. I somehow knew by the slightest side-long way of holding his head, and a half-nervous twiddling with his neck-tie what he meant. So of course I conveyed orders to the crowd who hurried to carry out instructions for all they were worth and not a slacker among the push!

Better let me catch one of them at it, that's all!

We were a different spectacle when we sat down to breakfast, I can tell you. Even Hammy, who wanted to wear island costume by way of protest and for the principle of the thing, yielded to my arguments and donned his smartest suit - *and* a fairly clean shirt, the same one in which he had welcomed the girls the first time Hilda and Myrtle Causland had come across with their father, the Doctor.

I had on my Sunday togs, and a white shirt also, which for lack of merino underpinnings made me feel fearfully scrappy and tickly all over. I'd have given - I can't say how much, for one good lingering comprehensive scratch - the kind you want to do in church when there are fourteen boarding-school girls in the pew behind, all on the giggle already.

It was Hammy's turn to say grace (for I

remembered my promise to my grandfather), so Hammy bowed his head and said 'For what we are about to receive' like a little man, and as quietly as if it had been his uncle. We waited in relays, according to the rule I had made, and the changing of plates was done with some smart conjuring work, I can tell you. Fancy waiting it was, and no mistake. Everything went on greased wheels, and as her morning's journey had made Mrs. Alexander rather sharp-set, she enjoyed everything, even saying that the tea was good. Kit the Crowl had made it. Hammy, on account of his name, had fried the bacon, and I had made the omelette, having the hand for it - while the fish was of course the most hyper-super-ultra of all perfections. Hammy's mother had four helpings and then said that, after all, she could not avoid noticing that there was something in the air of the place which gave people an appetite! At which point Mr. Trevor struck in, and said that he had been seriously troubled about his nephew's pallor when he first saw him, but that the tonic atmosphere of Rough Island, together with the out-of-door life, had laid up for him a noble foundation of health and self-reliance.

'When I was a student of medicine,' he went on as calmly as a clock ticking, 'I used to take a run down to Granton pier every morning, summer and winter, dive in, swim out for five minutes, in for other five, rub myself down, and then be off at a round trot to the Botanical Gardens! I look back on that as having laid the foundation of my habitual good health!'

'Ah, but then you were always strong as a boy,' said his sister, sighing 'very different from poor Hammy!'

'I'll take another helping of the flounder,' that

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youth interrupted, opportunely, 'I want to lay the foundation of some more good health.'

His mother told him not to jest about so serious a subject, but Mr. Trevor pointed out that the manner in which Hammy was wolfig the good provisions was no jesting matter. He would be obliged to send for more to Dumfries - and - he had not yet paid the bill for the last!

Little by little, Mr. Trevor sapping the edifice, and the rest of us in support - Mrs. Hamilton Alexander began to think that, under proper conditions (such as a villa residence with hot and cold water on all the floors), a stay on Rough Island might have its advantages. She even spoke of pulling down the old tower and building such a house - a proposition which gave us all the cold shivers. It was like treading by accident on the tail of an eel and knowing that the next moment the brute would as like as not curl up your leg and see if he liked you.

But Mr. Trevor said that he was much indebted to his present tenants, that is, to ourselves, our parents and guardians, and that he could not think of interfering with the present arrangement, especially as it had, in the mercy of an all-wise Providence, been the means of stopping the ravages of disease in his much-cherished nephew and making him strong and healthy!

I thought this was pretty good for Mr. Trevor, and wondered how long he had taken to get it off. For, to tell the truth, I had never heard any but ministers talk that way before, and it rather laid me out, not expecting such-like from Mr. Trevor. But there is no doubt that he knew what he was about, for Mrs. Hamilton Alexander calmed down instantly, and laid an affectionate hand on her brother's arm, thanked

him for the happy thought he had had in sending her darling to run about 'like wild kid' - on the heather of Rough Island.

That is why Hammy, for quite a long while, was called 'The Wild Kid' and 'The Darling' - at least by those who were stronger than himself even in moments of excitement and agitation. Only Kit the Crowl never called him any names - nor indeed anybody.

Before she went away, Hammy's mother promised to send us boxes and boxes of stuff from 'the Stores' - her earthly Paradise, junior Providence and fairy god-mother all in one.

At this point Hammy interrupted his mother.

'Oh, yes, do,' he cried, not sweet and low but contrariwise, 'but - please, mother, let *Laurieston make out the lists!*'

The which, with the greatest pleasure in life, I did.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

## I AM TOO POPULAR

The day after the visit of Hammy's mother, we had a glorious 'clean-up' - all hands assisting, as volunteers or pressed men. In our absence, cleanliness may have continued to be next to godliness. But both, I fear, had been somewhat neglected. This, at all hazards, had to be put right. So all hands manned the scrubbing brush, the dust-scoop, the rake, the hoe, and yet other more rude instruments of righteousness.

At an early stage, as happened on the occasion of every sincere clean-up, Fitz's back gave out. But I was all primed and ready for that. So with a broom-handle (made a-purpose, and detachable from its virgin stem, as it were) I proceeded forthwith to make his back so much sorer than any house-cleaning would have done, that our Lazy Little Willie chose the better part, and wiped up the floor like a good one!

Otherwise he knew very well that I should have wiped up the floor with him!

Never was there so clean a round tower, not since the latest Chief Druid finished cutting the sacred mistletoe for the last time - and when, as a place of residence the Tower began to be reviewed, corrected and considerably augmented, under the predecessors of the Douglases of the Black and Red.

Now Fitz did not like work at any time, and if he had been left to the freedom of his own will, he

would have said, 'Why derange the dirt? It is not doing *you* any harm!' But I was not going to stand that. So he had to pile in with the rest, until, at the last we made the last spider quit, burned all unnecessary papers and rubbish, and scattered the ashes into the sea from the point of Hammy's Folly.

Hammy was so set up with his success of yesterday that he made by far the best worker among all the band. I could not have wished for a better third man, and even Fitz did not 'larry' - not, that is, any more than was just and natural to him.

It was a splendid morning and after we had done out the house we lay off a bit, bathing and running races, in the lightest and drippiest of costumes, on the thick short grass. We were really waiting for dinner, which Kit the Crowl was getting ready. We had plenty of fish left over from yesterday, still alive and flip-flapping. You see we knew of a salt pool in a cave where we could keep any quantity till you wanted them.

Now though the boxes had not yet come from the Stores, Mr. Trevor had sent us enough to keep us going for some time. And it is really wonderful how well everything will go together in a pan, with bacon-fat, eggs, and scraps, all banked up with cold potatoes fried over again. My, the mariners of Old England trimming their coal bunkers, far out at sea, must have sniffed that particular breeze and wished they were where that came from.

At any rate it made us feel ravenous. In this peaceful Adamic costume, with never the shadow of an Eve to bother us in our apple-orchard, we raced and ran - as doubtless our first parent would have done if he had had another fellow to race with - in that ripping Orchard Dean, all pools and waters and

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gardens and fruit-trees.

It was a beast of a pity that ever he let himself be led away by a woman coming tagging after him to have a bite of her apple. It wasn't natural anyway. But I suppose after all there must have been Some Good End intended or women would not have been made. There is always a fellow's mother, you know, even if (like me) he does not remember much about her. That makes one continual warm place. But if he is lucky, as I was, there is his grandmother with a warm heart and a warmer hand - when she gets it on the right spot!

So we will say no more about Eve. She had to be, I suppose. But ever since that unpleasantness about the apple, it appears to me that there has been a kind of conspiracy to make far too great a fuss about girls - women too, for that matter - but more especially girls. Why, nearly every book you read (unless you take a quick sniff through it first), lands you among a lot of girls and love-making rot, before you know it. There is only Stevenson upon whom a fellow can depend - such as *Treasure Island* and *Allan*. Yet even he began to fall away and have girls prowling through his books towards the last. And if ever any writer could do without the petticoats, *he* could.

Well, just when I was thinking all this, and of how for the future we were going to be - not Good Templars exactly, because the adjective jarred on our sense of fitness - but Fair-to-Middling Templars, with Fitz in his due place as, *par excellence*, the 'Bad' Templar (I had, I say, just promoted Fitz to this bad eminence) when Kilpatrick, who as sentinel was being very circumspect, spied out from Hammy's Folly two boats putting out from the mainland and

heading towards the island!

One, a sail-boat, came from a little harbour east of Killantringan, and that set all our bee-hive in a buzz. For, of course, we thought it was a second descent upon our coasts in search of plunder. But I bade Penley fetch the spy-glass, and with it I made out that it only contained a man and two women, of whom one was dressed in white - apron, gown or whatnot - I could not tell.

The second boat was more deeply laden, and we knew that it was bound to be the Causlands. We had not seen them for a good long while, and as soon as the glass was on the boat, I saw the Doctor stroking, with Mr. Trevor at bow, and - the Colonel steering. Girls were dibbled in here and there generally, just where they would go.

Here was a sweet fix. But there was worse to come.

From the point of Hammy's Folly, our look-out man could not see to the west where lay the farm-town of the Knock. And may I never write another line, but, on looking over in that direction - there, as plain as paint, was a third boat-load, with more girls coming across, rowed with that long steady mill-wheel stroke which tells of sea-practice.

'Well - my son,' said I to Penley, confidentially, 'this promises to be a warm day!'

And he said (says he), 'Let's go and hide!' Which was Penley all over - I daresay he was thinking of daisy-chains.

But this I would not do. For I thought then that it is all right of a chap to be awkward and feel scared of *one* girl - because often you never can tell what to say to her alone.

But when girls come in bands and armies and

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commandos, they are sure to link arms and run whooping about, giggling and making private jests, but really doing great harm, except making donkeys of themselves.

But, oh - I was young. I had much to learn. I had not so much as smelt the fire. I am somewhat wiser now. Were such a thing to happen today - which it couldn't, I should hide myself in the deepest depth of Rough Island's cave-indented shore. I should get into the water among the pollywogs, and lie with only my nostrils showing. Even these I should black with ink, though I had to open my stylograph to do it. (For though a stylo variably inks your pocket of its own accord - when you want a supply of ink out of it for any reasonable purpose such as tattooing or disguising yourself, not rascally drop will flow. But enough of this.)

Anyway, here were three girls coming to see me, all imagining that I was dead anxious to see *them*, when, on the contrary I would gladly have sacrificed a cock to Aesculapius if only they had kept away. I began to see that Penley had the right pig by the ear. I ought to have scooted - straight. And now - but it was no use. It just was to be. Kismet! Alas, even the sound of the word is fatalistic!

And then, if you please, Penley chose that particular moment to sermonize me.

He said that if I went about yarning to girls and letting on that I was sweet on them (what a rude, common way Penley has of expressing himself!) what could I expect? 'Look at me!' he said, with a self-righteous air.

So I looked at him, and the reason for his immunity was plain. He was not catching! I explained this to him, and inquired if he had ever

looked in a looking-glass. That would put the matter in a new light, if he had not. But he did not shut up even for that.

He went on, which shows how serious he was to do something for my good.

'Of course, you can make fun, and I know I am dark - ' he began.

'Black but uncomely - like the minister's old tent,' I retorted. 'So to Leith for repairs, Penley! Come back next year!' Still he did not mind.

'Oh, yes, you can laugh,' he said, 'but in a little it will be my turn. Why a fellow of your sense (he put this in to get over me) should go writing poems and signing declarations in blood when he can get poetry books chock full out of the Mechanics' Library, and a bottle of red ink costs only a penny!'

There was sound sense in this, I can see now. But as neither of these was to be had on Rough Island nor at Killantringan - I ought, certainly, to have made provision earlier.

'But,' he went on, 'here you are in for it now, and I'll do my best for you, Laurieston, though you have been the biggest kind of a fool!'

I was about to knock his head, as a means of teaching him his place, when I thought of the way he had stuck up for me, and mourned like the Dead March in Saul - or any other Dead March - all the time in the cave when he thought I was a goner!

A good sort was Penley, only a croaker, and always wading into other people for the sins to which nature had not inclined him! However, you can't have everything, and in that terrible moment with the fire of three pieces (of course I use the word 'piece' strictly in a military sense, though I might, perhaps, have used it of some of my visitors in a

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more common acceptation) concentrating on me from North, East and West, I was grateful for his support, if not sympathy.

In any case, however, I had made my choice. I ordered the fellows to tidy up generally - to prepare to receive ladies - and certainly I, the chief, the dictator of our Free Republic of Rough Island, must stop and face the music. Whoever shinned out for the caves, I must stop!

The first of the boats to arrive was the Killantringan one. It had the farthest to come, but the sail was excellently managed, and the wind from that quarter fresh and good. Big Baptiste busied himself in hauling out boxes of sausages. Then came what he called 'patties,' rum things that tasted good, though with little bits of old shoe leather stuck all over them. Then came Cumberland Bet herself, smiling from ear to ear, and embracing us, particularly and generally, whenever she could. She had such a lot of comprehensive maternity about her that I believe she would have embraced the whole island if she could.

Last of all, and by many a sea mile the most important, came Cecille Garnier. Now before I go further, I think I had better, for the clearing of my conscience, own up that I let on to her, both in the cave and in her mother's house, that I considered her a pretty nice girl. And if you reverse the adjectives, you may even get a trifle nearer the sense that she took out of my words. So you see I really *was* in a hole, and anybody but Penley would have pitied me, instead of slanging me all round the shop as he did. For, first of all, I was born that way - such proceedings having 'descended to me by ordinary generation,' as the Catechism says, and when nice

girls were about I really could not help it. But there was nothing more in it than that.

Secondly if I had not put in a bit of sugar-candy and talked soft, we might not have got out of the cave so easy. For Cecille was not so afraid of Mr. Trevor as all that - not nearly so much as Hammy pictured to himself. She was not a girl easy to frighten at any time, being accustomed to rule over a lot of big fisher-louts, and yet, owing to her position, she had perforce to keep herself quite apart from them. She set them one against the other, and her motto was the old Roman one, 'Divide, and you can be as 'imperent' as you like!' Which is good sense, if not an A1 translation.

Cecille did this, but somehow, with my hopeless faculty for putting my foot in it, she did not feel quite the same about me. So especially, when I got her to change our books, having nothing else to do in the cave, I began to put a little bit of scribble in the basket - saying how much I liked the book and so on. And then, all improviso, as if I never for a moment suspected that she, Cecille, had anything to do with our imprisonment, I slid in nice things about Cumberland Bet and her father, and about her own eyelashes - like the gawk I was.

It all helped at the time, I daresay, but now I was going to reap a small instalment of the crop I had so thoughtlessly sown. Of course she had kept them all, the poetry trash, and all that I used to scribble on flyleaves (good name!) and make into cocked hats to put in the among the empty dishes, which we washed clean in the running stream. The poems were pretty much the same as I had given to Myrtle and Girlie May, but, as most poets know, the same effort can, with a little adjustment as to colour of

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eyes and hair, be made to answer for most any girl.

This I do not say in the least by way of information, still less to induce the rising generation of verse-makers to try it on. The rising generation is perfectly able to find out its own little dodges, though I have always noticed that nothing interests it more than to be told of the frailties of its seniors and how in their day they managed to get out of scrapes.

For of course, a fellow *will* get into scrapes. But if his heart be sound and he has a good stiff determination to do the square thing concealed about his person, he will come out right side up - and without very much harm either. Well, Cecille had put on a very pretty white dress. She had made it herself, I was sure of that. For it had a little string of pale blue silk cord that ran twiggly about the edges, and sprawled across the front of the blouse in what, I believe are called 'Brandenburgs.' However, if that isn't right, 'Bandeburgs' will convey the idea just as well, for that is the exact sort of thing that German bands wear across their chests when they play in parks. I'm not proud, and if I don't know a word - why, I invent one - same as Carlyle and Shakespeare and these chaps.

Anyway the dress was pretty. So was Cecille, and what was the worst of the thing, she kept looking at me from underneath her long black lashes as if the whole show had been got up for her own special use and behoof. Not a thing to quarrel with, certainly - that is, if it had not been for the other two boat-loads of girls at that moment being rowed across to Rough Island as quickly as wind and tide would allow.

Oh, how I wished wind and tide would not have

allowed such a disaster at all!

So there was really nothing to do but to call upon the ashes of my fathers - some of whom, if all tales be true, could have given me good Cameronian advice in the present crisis.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

THE GREATEST GOOD OF THE GREATEST  
NUMBER

Perhaps on the whole I did what was best - at least to the limit of my ability. Under the plea of general politeness, I discharged myself in all directions. I received Mr. Trevor, who disembarked the two Causland girls - the big ones, I mean - for the others hopped out of their own accord, glad of a chance to get wet unreproved.

I think Myrtle was disappointed, but perhaps that was just my silly vanity. However, Mr. Trevor was not in the habit of taking 'No' from anybody, so he helped her, out after her sister. At which I regularly hymned for joy, and galloped off in the direction of Girlie May's boat. She ordered me to the far side to help draw it up. Then, bending far over she frowned, and asked under her breath as she took grips to haul, 'Who are all these people?'

I mumbled something incoherent, whereupon she spoke to me and to her own sisters as if we were crows that had settled among the corn. Then she stood erect, and - putting her palm level with her eyes, and looking under it at Cecille, 'Why,' she said, 'that is never the French girl from Cumberland Bet's?'

'Which? Who?' said I, as if I had had my attention called to the phenomenon for the first time, though I still felt Cecille's clutch on my arm - on the soft underside where it hurts.

'That great tall thing there,' she hissed, 'in the white dress with the blue basting threads which she has forgotten to pick out!'

Girls can say the nicest things about each other.

So I replied demurely that that was Monsieur Garnier's daughter - his only daughter! Then Girlie May laughed a little.

'Monsheer-' she said, contemptuously, 'Why, he's a smuggler, that's what he is, and his daughter runs wild with all the rascaldom of the shore-side! Mind you,' she added, taking me by the elbow, 'don't let me see you speaking to the like of her, all fagotted out like that! She ought to be ashamed of herself.'

Ah, it was sweetly pretty. She punched me till she made my funny-bone tingle. She did that with the butt of the oar, and of course unintentionally. But it happens like that nearly always when girls get properly mad - those sort of accidents, I mean.

After this I can tell you I went round so fast that I fairly hummed like a bee, or a pair of old-fashioned farm-fanners for winnowing corn. But for all my haste, and my running to and fro, I knew that Myrtle Causland had her eye upon me, a chill and still eye, never lifting a single moment to give a fellow a rest. Oh why - *why* could they not have come on different days? Then I could have served up all my pretty speeches with different sauces, and there would not have been any need for all this fuss and rattlebang! Six comfortable Adams on an Eveless island! *Why* couldn't they leave well alone?

After all, I had not done any harm - only just wanting to be nice to as many girls as possible. For, you see, I had been reading John Stuart Mill and so I was chock full of the celebrated formula - 'The Greatest Good of the Greatest Number!'

Nothing more than that! And then for all of them to come tumbling all in a heap on a fellow like that - like so many bags of coal clattering through a chute.

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At last it had to come - the fateful moment. I had seen Kit the Crowl, and nearly driven him out of his wits by telling him the number of guests he would have to provide something for. I was so put about that I did not even stop to think that of course all these people (and especially Mr. Trevor and Big Baptiste) would be certain to have brought their own things with them - Baptiste because he was a cook, and Mr. Trevor because he was Mr. Trevor.

All the time I was doing my best, and Penley, recovered from his sermonizing vein, was seconding me as well as he could. I was carrying everything I could up to the house - Myrtle's wraps, Girlie May's knitting work-bag and Cecille's father's materials for making *bouillabaisse*. But any *bouillabaisse* he might make, was not a circumstance to the pretty kettle of fish in the midst of which I presently found myself.

I did not know then, that it was not so much that the girls cared about me as because they hated one another.

And if you will believe me (which you have got to), Mr. Trevor actually smiled at my misery! I could not make out at the time how it was that he came to know anything about it. But know he did. I do not mean that he laughed out loud like a clodhopper. But there was a twinkle in his eye, and an ironic twitch about the corners of his mouth which were equally painful to me.

However, after my second journey to the kitchen I found Big Baptiste installed there, white apron, cap and all. Kit the Crowl, grateful as perhaps no boy ever was before or since, was doing scullion duty, running to and fro with the utmost vehemence and good will. In an instant and without the least hurry,

seeming indeed as if he cared nothing about the matter at all, Baptiste had places for his pots and pans, he calmly extemporized a few extra fires in nooks and corners of the hearth. He seemed to want nothing but a few bricks to work miracles.

Then I proposed to take the new-comers the tour of the island. But the Doctor slid off by himself with a book, and, as he went, I could see him feel in his coat-pocket for his pipe. So he was all right. I offered to accompany him, out of pity for his loneliness. But he would have none of me.

'No, no,' he said, 'I am an old fellow. I leave the young to the young. Go and amuse the girls. I will go and sport with my own Amaryllis in the shade.'

And, he held up Amaryllis, which was a short and very 'well-trouser'd' meerschaum in a worn shagreen case. Then he showed me a little pocket edition of *Horace*, a *Greek Testament* - and with a final dispensing nod, disappeared.

I had hopes of Mr. Trevor, but somehow when I turned from talking to the Doctor and offering my company without avail, lo! Mr. Trevor was no longer there. Not only so, but Hilda Causland was also missing and - Myrtle, with an eye of fate, was bearing down on me. There was no hope now. As Mr. Gladstone used to say (and a few other people), 'the fat was in the fire!'

There was no help for it. Right in the fairway was Cecille, who no doubt, had the poems, the agreements she had made me sign in blood, and all sorts of proofs. Perhaps - horrid thought - so had also the other two girls. And there was I with all three - 'alone, alone, all alone!' - How I only wished I had really been so - I should not have minded the wide, wide sea! Not a dump!

## ROGUES ISLAND

But there before me stood Myrtle Causland expecting an explanation of my long absence, and there also, the fires of two engines running a heavy train on a dark night in her eyes (and stoking often) was Cecille. My mouth got dry, and I never really knew before what being 'tongue-tacked' meant. Be thankful, you fellows, that you don't know, and take warning by the present faithful historian. I can tell you I felt about the size of Ben Nevis, and solid fool right through!

What I said, I do not know. I only stood and dripped, while the girls exchanged sweet feminine nothings between each other - as that Cecille's hat would probably have become her mother better. Also that second-hand clothes took a lot of changing, it was hardly worth the trouble.

And Cecille said in reply, that she did not know much about millinery (at which Myrtle nodded expressively), but that she did know a good school - *in France* - where they taught very good manners.

'Then why did not your father and mother send you there?' came back as quick as a flash from Myrtle. For she had had a long experience of school wit - which consists chiefly in saying as many nasty things as possible in a given time.

I think a kind of moisture arose under Cecille's dark lashes, but she did not answer directly. She only said, quite gently, 'I beg your pardon if I have said anything rude!'

And that, I know, made Myrtle Causland feel worse than anything else, as of course it was meant to do. Sweet things, girls! Our way of a little lively fisticuffs is tender and sympathetic by comparison. Yet the ignorant call it brutal.

Then when I thought it was the proper thing to

introduce the girls to one another, Girlie May of the Knock made a little pretending courtesy, and with her chin very high in the air, she said, 'If you please, I am only the girl from the farm come with the milk, and mother says I am to tell you that there is four-and-sixpence owing!'

This knocked the wind so completely out of me, that I had not a word to say, and before I could think of anything or recover myself the Knock party were all in their boat and rowing back to the farm. May had hustled them all in without letting them have a single minute to explore the island, or make friends with the rest of the fellows, as I knew they wanted to.

Myrtle Causland tilted her nose into a kind of double-strong sniff which said 'Pretty sort of company *you* keep, young man, and owing four-and-sixpence worth of milk besides!'

I thought that I had had enough of it, so in a huff went off by myself, and, carefully placing my hat and coat - with my waistcoat inside to keep the watch all right, I put a card on the top with this simple and touching inscription:-

*'I have been driven to this by anguish of mind.—  
J.LAURIESTON.'*

Then I plunged right into the Rogue's' Hole and swam with an overhand stroke to the little secret nook opening out westwards into which the sun was beginning to shine. Here I sat and dried my clothes, and as I did so I rejoiced to imagine how they would feel - I mean Girlie May, and Myrtle, and Cecille - when they saw to what they had driven me with their persecution. Perhaps they would be sorry then for their cruelty, when in their dreams they saw my

## ROGUES ISLAND

poor dead body, tossed upon the tides of Solway, and my storm-driven spirit long, long ago at rest.

There was, in fact, a great deal of fuss when I was missed from dinner - an admirable one which Baptiste had cooked express. But Penley, who knew that I had some reason for lying low and avoiding the giddy throng, made excuses for me quite serenely, saying that undoubtedly I had been called away on some business of importance. So that nobody went to look for me or anything. And it was a first-class sell for me.

My clothes, even, were never found till Cecille, who had been prowling about suspiciously, came on my jacket and read the note. She was not a bit taken in. She knew boys' tricks. Also she knew the island, as indeed, she had good cause to do, having headed and planned the spoilation of the orchard.

So she just leaned over at the place where she knew the westering cave to be, and she called out softly, 'Come out of that, you great fool. You will get your death of cold - I see you! (which was a strict untruth) - You needn't be afraid. Your schoolmaster's daughter would not look at you now. Mr. Trevor is going to marry her sister Hilda, and... Myrtle Causland is going to be presented at Court.'

So I came out, very sneakingly, but glad. And Cecille helped me on with my coat and gave me my watch to thread through the buttonhole of my waistcoat - the last but two, the same as Mr. Trevor wore it.

She was the finest sort of girl, and I always liked her best anyway. The others were Namby-pambies compared to her, though I admit I never knew it till that moment.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

### THE TREASURE HUNTERS COMPANY, LTD.

But enough and better than enough about girls. We now come to the great Treasure Hunt. Like most boys I had always dreamed that sometime I should find under an old slate stone, any amount of gold and jewels. In consequence of this belief the number of grubs and Meggy-Mony-Feet that I routed out into the light of day, is simply something beyond arithmetic.

But this was a real treasure, and, what is the funniest thing about it, we had no chart with arrows and writing in red, with signatures tailed off into clove hitches. No, I made the chart myself and started the whole game, never for a moment thinking that I should pull it off. But I did - and more too.

The idea came to me one morning, early, when I was lying with one eye on the clock, waiting to kick Penley out of his comfortable bed at the proper moment, because it was his turn to go to the flats and tramp flounders. He always grumbled about it, and had to be rebuked. Then he took it out of Fitz or Kilpatrick who were his subordinates. Of course both did not go to the fishing, because there was need of one to row over to the Knock for the eggs and milk.

And I will say this for Girlie May - she never made the least difference after she had renounced me (or I had renounced her, according as you look at it). She took the four-and-sixpence without a word, though

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whether she ever handed it over to her mother or bought neck-ribbons with it, I am not in a position to say (one who looked over my shoulder when I was writing this, says that fellows can be just as horrid and nasty and spiteful as the most 'catty' of girls). But this, of course, is not true. Boys are not born noble, but at least I have done my best to make a few of them decently so.

At any rate, after that we paid our milk bill every week regular, so that our insolvency could never more be cast up to us by Girlie May or anybody else. Yes, we paid it gallantly, even when Penley had to ride over to Sea Cliff and plague his mother for the money. We were not the fellows to stick at a little difficulty like that in a matter of honesty. Not we!

Well, I was waiting in the dim light that came filtering through the eastern window - a very small oblong one - marking time till the minute-hand of the three-and-sixpenny tin-cased alarm clock should ring out half-past three a.m., when I would kick out Penley, who would kick Fitz, who would kick Kilpatrick, who would kick Kit the Crowl. And so with a mere movement of my toe (just as in 'The House that Jack built') the whole of the work-a-day world of the Round Tower would begin to move forward. It is a fine thing power - rightly used, of course.

That morning Hammy and I were on Lazy Guard. That is, it was the turn of the other fellows to catch the flounders and look at the crab-holes, to fetch the milk and sweep the floors, to make the breakfast and the beds, while we lay stretching our limbs, and trying if we could not stand so firmly on our several heads as to crack a fly on ceiling with one of our bare feet.

The only thing that detracted from our bliss was the fear that the Colonel might come across ‘on Early Inspection’ as he called it. He was just as likely to take this into his head on a morning when we were off duty as on a morning when we were returning home, laden with spoil, hungry and meritorious.

So we had in Kit the Crowl and told him to keep his weather eye on the little inlet of the Balcary Dean, from which the owner of Busby Hall would come rowing out. But Kit, though true as steel, and willing as a boy given the run of a sweet shop, could only do one thing at a time. If ordered to keep watch, he kept it like the Roman soldier at Pompeii or a marble statue of Nelson in a cocked hat and a telescope. Only at the same time it was quite impossible for him to ‘do the rooms’ or attend to the kitchen. So finally he had to be sent back - without rebuke, for really it wasn’t his fault, being ‘off it’ a little at times, though generally agreeable.

Well, it was as the minute hand came round to touch off the alarm that I thought of the Treasure. I thought quick. For I had it all ready - in idea, at least - by the time the long thin black crawler touched ‘VI’ of the half-hour and the bell began its irritating *chirr!*

When the consequent commotion had died away, when Penley and Kilpatrick had got their grumble out, and Fitz was on his way in the boat to the farm of the Knock, there fell the usual morning silence upon the Round Tower of Orchard Dean. Oh, it was a famous time - so still you could hear the bare feet of Kit the Crowl pad-padding softly on the flat blue ‘whin’ flagstones of the kitchen beneath, and the creak of an unshut yard gate with which the wind

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was playing. Far off too was the little *clitter-clatter* of the sea, clean and tripping like a distant reaping machine heard on a still and broiling day. I knew that it was calm at the point of the isle that morning, for there was no great current - ten miles an hour they say it runs there - and when the wind is in the south-west, it shakes the island with a noise like - well, of all things in the world - like the lowing of cows!

Then in this peace I bethought me that this tower had stood for many hundreds of years, a thousand certainly, fifteen hundred very likely, two thousand just as like as not. I did not want to overstate the facts even to myself, because I was going to reason from them directly.

Well, the Tower would have three or four owners per century - even if none of them got killed. But the rule in these far-off times was that owners of Towers frequently did die - owing to a little application of cold steel too soon after meals, or a tiny packet of poison which the house-keeper had put into their tea instead of sugar, and forgot to say anything about. That would make from eighty to a hundred owners, take them by the large - the few who died unassisted and the many that - had to be helped to their last long home in those good and lively times of old.

Now consider - as the cow did after she had eaten the floormat made out of her uncle's hide - consider that a lot of these eighty (taking the minimum) would have a good deal of cash stored away - cash meant gold in those days as now. They would know that there was no policeman in Palnackie, nor in Dalbeattie, because these places did not exist. There would be no chance of their trusting banks with

their money. For there were no banks to trust. They could not invest it - for there were no investments, except Crusades to recover the Holy Land. And from these the return was precious uncertain (*v. passim The Life of King Richard Coeur de Lion*).

Of course there is that yarn about the Good Sir James, who was an original Douglas, protecting with his life the heart of Robert the Bruce. But the real facts of the case (as everyone knows, who knows a Douglas intimately) are that he died defending the gold case in which the heart was soldered up, and for which he had never got paid his X's' out of the royal treasury. Of course he fought so gallantly because he saw no other chance of getting back the money which he had so honestly earned by stealing the cattle of the Southerns and being the Bogie-man of all the children across the Border, as Sir Walter says.

He was a real proper Black Douglas, he was. And I'll bet you the rest were up to sample. Only James the Good had rather a better chance than most, that is all - having been mixed up with Bannockburn, and the burning and plundering of English abbeys and market towns, ever since old Edward the First died and the young one began to reign, like Rehoboam, in his stead.

So (I argued) all these old fellows would certainly keep their gold pretty near at hand, where they could defend it, and then they would get killed without ever having time to say a word to their heirs even if they wanted to. And this for obvious reasons. Heirs were a very tough lot in those times. You just read the history of the Kings of Scotland and you will see. One way or another they mostly did for the Old Man - or hired a man to do it.

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Well, after their death the heir would look. Or the fellow that captured the Tower would snuff about. He would take up hearthstones, and tap walls. Pick and crowbar would put in some good work. But half the time he would not find anything - or if he did, as likely as not it would be the treasure buried by some of the more ancient fellows, and not by the late lamented at all!

Well, that would all go into the melting-pot, the broken bits of the walls would be plugged up, and the hearth-stones cemented down. It would be all square again till he went by the board in his turn! In those days, I told Hammy, they never thought of putting up a bust to the deceased. A man had to have all the bust he could manage in his lifetime, and after he was dead, he need expect no epitaphs, nor laboured urns, nor hour-long speeches saying what a fine fellow he had been. No, instead, they looked for his money, and smashed things till they found enough - his or another's - they were not particular.

I showed Hammy, when all the house was still, that there were about fifty chances out of the eighty 'late lamenteds' in our favour. It was likely that about one in three hoards would have been spotted already. Not more.

This he thought too small a proportion. But I held to it because there were no blooming Sherlock Holmeses or detective stories in those days to put the thieves on track. But now we had the benefit of all that, and we could profit by it - honestly.

Or at least Hammy's Uncle Trevor would, and Mr. Trevor was a generous man. He would not fail to think of the poor boys who had thought and worked so manfully on his behalf. No, he was not the chap

to be ungrateful. Hammy agreed, so we could go ahead without fear. This was a considerable load off my mind

But there was another and yet greater difficulty. I had heard of the Law of Trover, and about pecks of money going to the Crown, which had no need of them, and had not planned nor worked to find them - any more than Kit the Crowl or the Colonel. Hammy said that whatever was found in the ground, belonged half to the man who owned the ground and half to the Royal Treasury.

I said that that might be so for treasure discovered outside - though, by the way, it gave very little encouragement to an honest labouring explorer to continue honest - but that inside a house you might discover anything - gold, silver, precious stones, flint-lock pistols - all that sort of thing - they would always be the property of the man who owned the house.

Hammy goggled in the disagreeable way he had whenever he did not understand what was being said to him. I told him not to be an owl or I would pack him off to help Kit the Crowl to peel potatoes. So he promptly let on that he understood, and said 'Why then, the best thing is just to cover them up and let them stop! If neither Uncle nor we get anything by it!'

But I said no - that was not the trick, as anybody except a ninny might see. The proper way was to convey them secretly to a hiding place *in* the Tower itself, previously arranged for the purpose, and then, after a while - rediscover them!

Whatever we got inside would belong to Mr. Trevor, just as much as the contents of his purse or his strong-box, and he was not the man to forget the

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founders of the Treasure Hunters Company, Ltd. We were not going to act for the benefit of any old Government. It was Mr. Trevor who had lent us the Tower and the island, and we would see to it that he lost nothing by it.

The next question was the serious one as to whether or not we should take the other fellows into the secret. There were, as ever, pro's and con's. On the one hand, we should deprive ourselves of a vast deal of good sound help, besides limiting the time of search - for we could not always be prowling about mysteriously tapping walls and digging graves only to fill them up again. It would look suspicious.

But on the other hand, there were more fellows to trust, and I knew the crew I had to deal with. Just give them one smell of the Treasure Hunters Company and not a scrap of work would we get out of them. Fitz would draw plans the day by the length. Penley would sit devising cogwheel machinery to help in the excavating, and Kilpatrick would float about everywhere with the rapt expression of one who sees a golden vision.

So, as to food we should be thrown back on corned beef and cold water. No one would fish, nor go to the farm, nor wash clothes, nor do any useful work. On the whole I thought it better to keep the secret between us two, Hammy representing his Uncle the owner, and I, Laurieston, representing myself.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

### THE COLONEL TAKES A HAND

So far, good! There was just the finding of the treasure that remained, and before we could go into that, the voice of the Colonel in the outer court recalled us to ourselves. He had slipped over just as we anticipated, without any one of us being a whit the wiser.

'Lazy rascals!' he cried, 'is this the way you keep guard? In my time you would have languished for ten days in the cells. Where are the others?'

We told him that it was our day off, but he said that unless we declared ourselves on the sick list, there was such thing as 'a day off' in the army when on active service. So we told him that we were really in hospital. Our exertions of the day before having wearied us beyond the power of words to describe. With that, if you will believe me, he pulled out - a pocket medicine-case.

'Nothing like calomel in such circumstances!' he said, 'this little case was presented to me by Sir Colin Campbell, afterwards Lord Clyde. It served him right through the Crimea and especially the Mutiny, when he mowed down the black rascals at a breath! Here, sir - take your dose! Calomel and Turkey rhubarb never hurt any man!'

I at least took care that this prescription should not hurt me, by spilling the powder carefully on the floor, and rubbing it about with my boot-sole. This I did while he was fooling with Hammy. Second come was best served in this case, for Hammy had to swallow his dose, good and strong, with all the appropriate wry faces, almost the same that I had

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made. But mine must have been the more convincing for old Fuz-Buz never took his eyes off Hammy all the time.

Then afterwards he pulled out of another pocket a flat bottle of Lochenbreck Spa Water.

'I never travel without it, my dear sirs,' he said. 'It is diuretic, diagnostic, diaphanous and anti-dispeptic (or pepperpot adjectives like that all scattered about). Take a little, gentlemen, only a little - as my present supply is limited. It will take away the taste of the medicine!'

Snakes and water-rats, but the Spa water was a caution! I would a hundred times have preferred taking the whole boxful of tricks out of the medicine-case, than that solution of brimstone and rotten eggs, warm from the Colonel's pocket!

I spurted for the pump - and just made it. As for Hammy he was button-holed and had to stand there, enjoying the whiffs of flavour that came up to him each time that he breathed.

When he came out again he signalled that he wanted me very much.

'Hang on to the Colonel,' he said, 'while I go and take a little mustard and water. I can really smell myself. I think I must be going bad inside!'

I accepted the situation and showed the Colonel round till a very pallid and wispy Hammy reappeared, ostentatiously munching a biscuit with an enjoyment and vivacity that were palpably affected. However I believe that in the long run the colonel, with his pocket medicine-case, and his bottle of lukewarm Lochenbreck water did us good. I don't think I was ever so hungry in my life. I felt as empty as the Rogue's' Hole at low tide. And if I could have dived into my own inside, I should have come

an awful cropper. Hammy said exactly the same thing in another way.

His words were, 'I think it is like eternity, and that there will never be any breakfast again.'

I reproved him for irreverence, but still, what with searching for crumbs out of our pockets and taking dives into the house and orchard, we managed to while away the time better than you would have thought. But the Colonel gave us no peace. He would yatter on about his great fortune and noble ancestors.

Since we had seen him he had definitely annexed the whole tribe of the Douglasses - specially the Black Douglasses, whom he judged more noble than they of the Red. And he talked with the utmost glibness about 'What our people did, sir - at Otterburn, sir! You have heard of that little business? - Only a skirmish, but *such* a skirmish - like the Charge of the Light Brigade, sir - an affair in which I had the honour to be concerned myself! Indeed the latter event moved me so much, that though not strictly scientific warfare, sir - I ventured to write a little copy of verses about it, which I will now read to you from the original manuscript.'

And if the old rip did not proceed to puff out his pouter chest and ground his voice in the soles of his boots, before proceeding to declaim,

*'Half a league, half a league!'*

And all the rest of it.

A tremor of doubt must have taken him, for, after looking at us steadily a moment he added, 'Afterwards I gave copies to some of the men in our mess, and so they got abroad. And, will you believe me, one of these writing fellows at home had the impudence to print something very like it as his

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own. Happily I have the evidence of all who heard me recite it sir, on the very eve of the skirmish under the walls of Balaclava itself.

Best of all I have the evidence of my own conscience, sir (here he slapped himself powerfully on the chest), of my own good conscience - the conscience of a soldier, sir, which I have kept honourable and immaculate for thirty years! And I would transfix the man who would date to deny it!

He gazed fixedly at us, but I had learned enough of Mr. Trevor's manner to listen with a quiet and soothing sympathy, and of course Hammy, now that he had been shaken out of *Mammydom*, reverted to type, and received these remarkable military confidences as if they had been extracts from *Napier's Peninsular War* - which we were just then reading aloud with joy in the evenings. The book had been lent to us by Mr. Trevor. He had also Kingslake's *Crimea*, which must be ripping stuff. But when I asked him to lend us that, so that we could read about Colonel Busby's exploits, he said that he was sorry but that he would be requiring it himself for 'several years to come!'

You didn't ever get much change out of Mr. Trevor. He was a thoroughbred, and no mistake. And if it gave the poor old garrulous Colonel any pleasure to drown his sorrows in romance - why, Mr. Trevor, without aiding or abetting except by his wonted grave, placid attention, would give him all the rope and all the storyteller's license he thought fit to take.

Yet, as Hammy knew by experience (and the rest of us by instinct), there was not a man who was straighter himself, nor yet one who was harder on a downright lie. But then Mr. Trevor did not count the

Colonel's romancing to be lying. For, as he explained, It takes in nobody, and simply means that the old man is trying to gather together some shreds of his self-respect!'

But all of us knew better than in any way to imitate the Colonel. He was a privileged character, while we had to toe the line and tell the truth with much consistency. Once Fitz tried on a mild copy of one of the Fuz-Buz tales, and the suddenness with which Mr. Trevor who had been listening to the Colonel with approval the moment before, turned upon him with a coldly overwhelming 'You are not speaking the truth - get out of my sight!' was enough to quell for the future any extempore imitations of Colonel Busby of Busby Hall.

Yet Fitz did not mean any harm - only just to be funny. Well he may have been, but Mr. Trevor's sudden outburst cowed us all - yes, there is no mistake. It took the tucker out of every man on the Island, and one thought before one spoke all the rest of the week. Oh, a ripper, was Mr. Trevor! He could shut up Fitz. And that was a blessed sight more difficult than taking any old Redan, or even charging (in the words of the Colonel), 'Half a league, half a league onwards!'

We were regularly on egg-shells, however, that morning after the Colonel had physicked us, and watered us, *and* lectured us - not even excepting poor Kit the Crowl, who made worse faces than any of us at his potions and portions. For our consciences told us that the Colonel was looking up at the Tower with a musing eye - maybe wondering where the Treasure - our Treasure, as by this time we had named it - might lie hid.

However, he only waited for breakfast, of which

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he ate as much as any other three. But he edged in the most gentlemanly way that ate about as much as any other three. But he acknowledged in the most gentlemanly way that he was grateful to us. For although he was personally under the utmost obligations to Mr. Trevor, there was something in the attitude of his servant James to himself – considered as the owner and host of Busby Hall – which was extremely irritating.

'Hang me, sir,' he said, 'if the Cockney fellow were in my own rank of life, I would call him out!'

I remarked that if he killed him, he would be hung for it. That, I understood, was the law, and I instanced the case of Colonel Snapshot of the Guards, of which I had read in a collection of chap-book trials.

'So much the worse, sir!' he said, 'so much the worse! Ah, it was not so in my time - very different, indeed! Why, young Spofforth of the 55th and I exchanged twenty-five balls apiece in one of the trenches – a traverse it was, and though neither of us did the other any harm, it is a most curious fact that between us we killed exactly fifty Russians who were guarding the neighbouring ramparts. So celebrated was this event (and, in fact, so unprecedented), that General Todleben sent word that in future English officers engaging in duels were begged to fire *at* his men in the hope that so they might succeed in damaging one another! No, we were not first-class shots at that time, sir, Spofforth and I, but we fetched down our men all the same. And what did it matter, if we were not aiming at them but at one another? A detail, sir, a mere detail! Next day, however, we were both called before Lord Raglan, sir, and decorated with the Royal Humanity

medal for the Saving of Human Life!'

'Oh,' cried Hammy, surprised out of himself, 'but how? - If you shot each twenty-five Russians?'

'Sir,' said the Colonel, with immense dignity, 'we saved each other's lives! I saved Spofforth's and he mine. We fell into each other's arms - on the spot, sir. There we swore eternal friendship. Ah, in those days English officers might indeed be called true men!'

And with these notable words - which, rightly considered, involved a distinct reflection upon the truthfulness of all officers upon the present army list - the old warrior and proprietor of Busby Hall twirled his stick triumphantly, and allowed himself to be escorted down the little worn track to the boathouse pier where he had beached his flag-ship. While we were pushing and lugging at the boat to get her afloat before the tide got too far out, Old Fuz-Buz cocked an eye along the cliff edge.

The rocks were very high and shiny at that point, slippery and dangerous-looking, but the Colonel surveyed them with the same eye that had gazed undaunted upon the Redan.

'In my father's time,' he said, meditatively, 'I remember that the sea-eagles used to nest there. You can see the very cleft in the rock from here. But nobody has ever been there to my knowledge since young Sandy Paterson broke his neck in trying to get a setting of the eggs. Then his father waited out four nights with provisions and a gun - he was my father's head gamekeeper - and on the fifth day, at four in the morning, he shot them both! And since that day, gentlemen, there have been no eagles on Rough Island.'

## CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

## EAGLES' NEST

As I told you - or perhaps it was Penley who did, I could climb more than a bit. There was hardly a roof in the town of Cairn Edward I had not been astride. The crumbling eighty-foot wall of Castle Thrieve, a very cliff of masonry, was safe and familiar to me as my own bed. If there was anything that was too difficult for me to climb, I did not know about it - or I should have had a shot.

In the days of my hot youth, I own that I have occasionally done it 'to show off.' But in more recent times the passion of climbing for climbing sake had grown upon me, and I used to seek out cliffs on the hills and heughs on the sea-board for the pure sake of conquering them. Penley called me a fool, but I think he was secretly pleased. If he had to jump at a word or do as he was told smartly, he liked to have for his Director of Conscience somebody who could climb Whitestane Cliff hand over hand.

Well, that old story-telling Colonel had given me an idea, with his talk about the nesting of the Rough Island eagles - Sea Eagles' Heugh, and all the rest of it. At first I did not believe a word of it, and neither, of course, did the boys. Indeed I had to be firm with them to keep them to a decent sobriety till the Colonel was out of hearing, and only the silvery dipping of his sculls could be seen far out on the water.

They had no sense of decorum, and were even as I before I knew Mr. Trevor - just ordinary beasts of

boys, with no trace of the human form devine, except inordinate appetites.

But after a bit I took Hammy aside, and said to him (says I) 'Now listen, Hammy and perpend -'

'What's that?' he asks

'Go and buy a dictionary,' I answered sharply, 'but in the present instance it just means, 'Don't let me have to tell you twice!' Well, Hammy, of course none of you believed that old joker, when he was yarning to us this morning!'

'Of course not!' he tittered, 'Why, Fitz has been imitating him over on the threshing floor of the barn - enough to make a cat laugh out loud!'

'All right,' I said, 'I shall deal with Master Fitz in a little. He has had his orders about that. In the meantime (this is between you and me), I believe that old chap sometimes gets hold of the truth by accident. It may be true about the eagles, and certainly there is a hole in the rock. Now I do not say that treasure is to be found in that cave, if there is a cave, or in that hole if it is only a hole. But what I do say is, that the most likely place of all on the island is along these cliffs.'

'But why?' inquired Hammy, 'wouldn't they dig in the ground and bury it there?'

'Dig in your grandmother's flower-garden!' I snapped out. 'Why man, every foot of the soil has been turned over not once but a hundred times. Mr. Trevor's cousin's grandfather, old Colonel Douglas, cropped it, his son 'high-farmed' it, and between them they lost more than a thousand pounds on Rough Island!'

'Oh, I wish we could find that thousand,' Hammy's eyes lighted up, 'My uncle Trevor would be so pleased.'

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'Nonsense, I mean they spent the money, and all to purpose. The land gave a fair enough yield for a year or two and then the bent grass and heather came swarming back again. You can see the lines of the old furrows and rigs when the sun is westering. In a little while they will call them Pict's Crofts, and say the fairies made them. I know the people about here. But anyway the ground has all been turned up, and there is no hope for us just putting in our spades here and there. We must look in likelier places!'

'And where are they?' cried Hammy with something of contempt.

In the sea-cliffs, sonny - up there where the eagles used to nest, and out on the Point where only the gulls live now, and where when you fire a gun the blue guillemot eggs come plumping down in showers!'

I thought Hammy looked a little pale at this, so I reassured him. 'Oh,' said I, lightly, 'I will do what climbing there is to be done - all you will have to do is to hold on to a rope!'

'But,' said Hammy, persistent in a safer idea, 'there is the orchard!'

Now, privately speaking, this was a pretty good idea, supposing always that we could get all the old trees up by the roots, or find skulls nailed far out on the branches, and shoot Gold Bugs through the skeletony sockets of their right eyes - at the time of full moon, ten yards west by north. *That* would have been the regular thing. So it is written in the authorities, and all rightly found treasure expeditions take on board their regular supply of Gold Bugs, same as they do a crew of assassins and mutineers - else there would be no proper adventure

books any more.

But our home on Rough Island (which God bless!) was quite modern. We had none of these old time conveniences and so had to do our best, being only ordinary boys eating ordinary food, and living on an ordinary island during our holidays - the same as tens of thousands of boys might do all about the coasts of Britain, if only they get the chance. The boys are there - the islands are there, and - take them the right way, so are the Mr. Trevors. Not that there is anybody *just* like our Mr. Trevor. Don't go and expect too much. But island landlords are generally good enough, if you get at them through their bodyguard of land agents and game-keepers. They will let you camp out where you like, and have as good a time as we had. Often they have boys of their own, who come and see you, and after a taste of scouting and living away off by themselves among the sounds of the night and the work of the day, you can get them to join. Then, of course, you are in same clover as we were with Hammy's mother's store provisions.

Only mind you have to keep your camping out from too fat and cloverish, or you might just as well stay at home and sleep every night, like an old stager, in ceiled room, with a night-light and a basin-and-ewer in the corner. There will come a time - all too soon, when you too will actually *like* these comfy things and can't do without them. So take your camping time when you can get it. For afterwards you will grow to prefer a home upon which you pay taxes, to which the butcher's cart comes three or four times a day, where there are no flounders to be 'tramped' and you wouldn't budge an inch out of your comfortable bed to 'tramp' them -

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not if you could bring back twenty pounds a day of flapping sides and flicking tails every time as regular as the morning postman.

All that padded cushioniness is waiting for you. So, be a Rogue's' Island boy while you *do* like it. It's awfully good for you, and maybe will come in handy some day - all you learned there, I mean.

Well, I thought over the orchard suggestion, and made a good private survey with only this in my mind - I mean the question of whether or not it was any use making excavations for hidden treasure there. There were plenty of good-looking spots, I don't deny, and I resolved to set Fitz to make an enlarged map of the orchard marking the extra big trees, and any big stones, whether in the wall or flattened out on the ground. There were some of the latter, which I thought might yield us something. 'The Grave of Ossian's Chieftains' was what I called the place where they most abounded.

For though I was born too late to have read any of Ossian - or perhaps too early - the country people talked a good deal about him. That is, about Ossian and the Devil, who between them seem to have taken the contract for our coast-line. Whatever the one did not make, the other did. But the Devil was responsible for by far the most. It was the Devil's Cauldron, the Devil's Bridge, the Devil's Footprints - at every half-mile! And, considering where most of our coastwise people were liable to bring up finally, I do think they ought to have talked less familiarly about their possible future host.

At least, *I* would, if I had been in their fix!

It was, at any rate, a good plan to keep the extra hands on the Island from imagining what we were about, or starting a treasure hunt on their own

account. We would give them plenty to do, and make Penley responsible. I knew he would take to the thing seriously - being given that way - and would keep Fitz up to his drawing job. Kilpatrick could pull a chain with any man, and Penley was as accurate as a yard measure, and as steady as the compass of a wooden ship. So, as soon as the morning catch of fish had been made, we two conspirators were free for the day. I forgot to say that Mrs. Hamilton Alexander had been as good as her word, and had not only sent us several boxes of prime stuff, but had given us a special ticket and deposit at the Stores all to ourselves. All we had to do was to get Mr. Trevor to countersign our list of wants. And once that we could run him to earth - either at his alpine garden or more often at Colline House - he was never very hard to convince. For the arrangement saved him not only money, but many journeys to Dumfries - and in those days he was not nearly so anxious to go from home as he used be,

Well, everything was in train for a good old scramble for treasure, which we knew to be somewhere concealed about the Island.

'It isn't at all difficult to find,' said Hammy, cheerfully, 'there's only the Island after all - that's not much!'

'Not more than a mile square!' I said with contagious hopefulness, 'a mere nothing, once we get on the scent. Only with those blessed caves and cliffs, there's nearly an eighth-of-a-mile in thickness! It mounts up - like cubic measure in the arithmetic!'

'What's the use of making an island all humped up like a blessed brides-cake?' grumbled Hammy. Hitherto he had thought the cliffs to be an advantage. You could see far out to sea from them.

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Thence on a clear day were the trains puffing and mountebanking about Whitehaven Station, and with the glass you could even see people walking along the sands with parasols up - and prayer-books in their hands if it were Sunday. We used to pity them all except Hammy, because (when we remembered) we were all real true-blue Scottish Presbyterians and used no prayer-books - only the Lord's Prayer, which is ever so much shorter, and as my grandfather said, very much better.

## CHAPTER THIRTY

### THE GREAT COASTWISE SURVEY

But with all the cliffs to examine, there was nothing for it but to start a regular marine survey, and go pulling round the island every calm day, or several times in a day, marking all the likely places on the cliff. Gradually we got decent maps of the whole coast-line, all done out on paper pinned to a drawing-board, and with notes on another paper at the side. We showed the Cubs the drawing, at which Fitz of course sneered, but the book of directions we kept for ourselves.

I remember as if it were yesterday, the morning when we had finally got it finished and the whole trimmed, so that there would be no overlapping places. Then we made a little chunk of wood, round like a milk-pail and gummed the chart all about it, sawing the material down to the proper height. Then and not till then did we have our island in miniature, and very good fun it was doing it.

Every cleft was marked - every dark spot which might be the entrance of a cave, where a fellow might stick in his head - be it high up near the sky or low down on the water edge. Then we began to mark off the 'N.G's' - that is to say, we eliminated the 'No Goods.' We could see most of these with the spy-glass for which we had rigged up a little stand, so that we could spot such from the boat. Because, what with the movement of the boat and the shaking of the long telescope, the result was certainly somewhat wriggly.

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But after a week's faithful sea-work and a nightly inspection of the Land Party's new survey of the orchard, we were in a position to begin serious operations. Fitz had made a real work of art, as I was dead sure he would, and after I had cured him of putting in 'Mole-run here!' 'Traces of Rabbit, very recent!' as he did at first, he really began to make a noble work of the enlarged survey. He made besides a separate drawing of each of the four walls yard by yard, with all the big stones marked. Awfully good practice, Fitz said, though severe on the paint box - so many greys taking a lot of compounding.

Our map - that which we had gummed round 'the milk-pail,' was called by the vulgar, 'the cheese' - and indeed was rather like one. It did not draw forth many commendations. Penley considered it as a mechanical drawing of an engine-wheel the height of art - while, of course, Fitz thought that nobody could draw except himself. Kilpatrick and Kit the Crowl did not care a dump either way, Kilpatrick you had only to let alone to please him, and Kit the Crowl, with all his fidelity, was but a hewer of wood and drawer of water to the tribe of Esau with which he had associated himself.

All this lack of response did not in the least discourage us. On the contrary we were delighted that so little notice was taken of our production, which was really a unique one.

But wait a little (said we in private), and we would surprise them, when we laid bare the ancient treasure of the Douglases. I had a little crink in my conscience - not greatly bigger or more annoying than that famous curled rose-leaf, but still something definite and on occasion unpleasant. It said, 'You should have told Penley - *he* would have

told you!'

This I knew to be true, and I had to console myself the idea that I was the chief and dictator of this commonwealth - same as Cromwell was without any Long Parliament. I told myself that if I kept this in private, it was because I had no right to betray national secrets. Whereas if Penley did anything 'on his own,' it would be nothing less than an act of high treason, and punishable as such. That was the difference.

Still in spite of this admirable logic, I could not quite get rid of the uncomfortable feeling. However I got over that by thinking about it as seldom as possible, and giving up to Penley rather more than his share of authority and responsibility, accompanied with threats if he should fail in any point. But he knew better. He and I had long been friends, and he knew when to be chirpy and when not.

Hammy and I went on searching the water-caves first, at least all we could reach - for it was the bottom of the neaps and the tides were 'lagging,' as they say. So that many of the holes towards South Point (which was the likeliest place of all) were never free of the salt water. I could have stripped and dived in. Only in an unknown cave you have got to know whether there is any air, or if the waves go swashing right up to the roof! In the latter case, you knock your head, and stop under water permanently. In the former, you may find noble halls and fine sandy passages - such as are seen more frequently in books than along any sea-coast which (as yet) it has been my lot to explore.

Still, when you go at a thing systematically as we did at this, it is wonderful what a lot of things you

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find out - things which mostly have no apparent bearing on the object of your exploration. Thus, for instance, when you look at the island from a boat, even from a few hundred yards out, it gives you the impression of a regular wall of rock of a reddish-grey colour, broken only by the little bays of white sand of which I have spoken, and the wide up-and-down rifts torn by the torrents. But, if the day be calm and you are on the look-out for hidden reefs (or, better still, if you have already charted the water) you can paddle gently right in to the cliff edge. The way to do it is for one fellow to stand up in the bows and paddle, one stroke on one side, one on t'other. In this position you would not believe how easy it is to steer. You can con her to an inch, as sweet as toffee. It is tip-top fun. And then your chum sits in the stern with two sculls out, ready to 'back-water' at the word of command.

Oh, there is no end to the good times you can have, if both are careful and your mate is to be depended upon - that is, if each can depend on the other not to get into a funk. The second (stern) man had better sit with his face to the sea to watch out for sudden swells. That's all! Only if you try it, watch out - and don't go blaming me if you get copped. But I warrant you that, by always minding out, Hammy and I have passed in this fashion some of the 'goodest' days of our lives.

In our rocky island there are little nooks into which your boat will glide till you get quite lost - the cleft still wide enough to dip the oars - the water ever so deep beneath and the fish a-gliding. Then you can look up and see that the crack in the rock runs far into the island, passing under a natural rock bridge beyond which the salt Solway water

breaks, a creamy sort of green, into a heart-quivering roar that sends all your courage (mine, at any rate) into your boots.

Then there are narrower and steeper cracks, where you have to fend off all the time with your oars, almost with your elbows. These you must keep for the very stillest days and even then do them - well, do them in bathing-shorts. For about half the time you have to be in and out of the water seeing that your boat is not being 'egg-shelled.' And the amount of scratches and bruises you get without noticing, is quite marvellous. Oh, the life of a scientific explorer on a sea-island is not all skittles and gum-drops. So don't you think it! Hammy began that way, but he ended up by being as hardy a Norseman as any of us - indeed I think he ran Penley hard for second place - he obeyed quicker, for one thing. And that is much when you get into these sort of water-traps. Interesting they are, but you have to keep both eyes open - and also have the instinct that something is going to happen, like a fellow who knows he deserves a licking and sees that he is going to get it.

It was in one of these narrow gorges of the rock that, with the glass cocked up at an angle of about seventy-five, I saw something that took my attention. It was rather like a set of half-finished tracks cut in the rock very high up near the top of the cliff. You could not call them steps, much less stairs. They were nothing like that. Since then I have watched an Alpine guide cutting steps in a glacier. For the green tourists whom he was guiding he carved staircases, almost like that of Amboise up which somebody rode his horse. But for himself and his fellow-expert he contented himself with mere

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side-long ‘swipes’ at the ice, giving place for no more than the rim of the boot-sole. Up these he and his neighbour mounted like wild chamois of the hills, which in a sense they were.

Well, the steps or semblances of steps which I saw, were cut for the biggest *pro’s* among the guides of the Douglas period, early and undecorated.

I pushed out to sea, much excited. All that night I hardly got a wink of sleep, and in the morning I started Hammy off before breakfast, on pretext of a bath, but really to survey the top of the cliff from which the fragments of stairway appeared to descend. We had our bath in Rogue’s Hole and then ran up the cliff, in the neat and easy costume habitual to our morning promenades, as before referred to.

We found the place with some difficulty, for we had not our ‘cheese’ map with us, so we could not lay the spot down by compass. But rule-of-thumb did nearly as well. It was as if the knife had slipped in cutting a cake, or the ‘short-bread’ of the island had cracked right to the centre. The cleft went in straight for maybe twenty yards, and then slid away to the right. The steps were bound to be just at the corner - which curved out and then in like the point of a fish-hook. Of course, that was where they *must* be, if there was any truth in our observations at all, because that was the place in which we had seen them.

Hammy dug his toes deep into a rabbit-hole - which were convenient all over the place - and laid hold of my ankles. Then I eased myself forward to get a good a good look down. You had better believe that I grabbed the heather and stuff fairly firm. For in spite of what my grandfather said, and all I had

learned of good sound Calvinism in our interviews down by the wood-shed, I did not want to give Providence any trouble, nor yet to anticipate my time appointed, as grandfather put it.

But in spite of periling my life I could see nothing of any step, stair, hack, gash, ledge, lump, descent, or ascent such as we had spotted from below. It was certain, therefore, that the cliff must lean over, and so there was not the least chance of tripping it lightly down that ancient staircase, unless you wished to find yourself a hundred and fifty feet lower - all, that is, that was left of you after the craggy points of the 'heugh' had finished with you.

Clearly, something more mechanical and effective must be devised, and at once my thoughts turned to the little portable crane they had used in the work of destruction of the ancient part of Peninsular House. Mr. Trevor had wanted to get out all the moulded lintels of windows, besides certain engraved stones with armorials on them, and everything that seemed valuable or historic in the old house, before he started in to build his new house of Orchard Dean. As I remembered it, the crane was a stout little tripod that had been easily fixed on the thick old walls, and from which men had been let down by a rope working in a pulley-block. Oh, how I longed for it! And yet no doubt, there would have to be some explanation given and any amount of promises that I did not mean to break his nephew's neck by swinging him over the cliff into space.

Of course - young birds and belated nesters among the guillemots, terns, and sea-fowl would be a good enough explanation for the Cubs at home. But Mr. Trevor was a regular fox for sniffing out excuses. He must have been a terror when he was at

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school, to be so well up to games now.

Then I thought of having repairs made on the roof of the Tower. But Mr. Trevor would be sure to send over men from the building of the new house. I thought of a lot of things, but at last settled on simply 'taking the loan' of the crane, and then asking leave afterwards. It was in a corner of the building-yard, half-hidden under a perfect heap of old rubbish.

Hammy kept on asserting that his uncle would not in the least mind us having the crane, but that we had better go some afternoon when it would be 'a dead cert,' when, for instance he would be over at Colline talking to Hilda Causland. Then we would write a note, signed by both of us, asking permission and saying how sorry we were to have missed him, and how well his alpine garden was looking! After that we would hyke the old dwarf crane with ropes and tackle complete (if we could find them) into our boat and splash out for home. Thursday afternoon or Saturday would be best, because the masons stopped earlier on those days.

Oh, I began to think that Hammy might begin to have an idea or two - if he lived long enough.

Well, this is exactly what we did. We lounged about and suffered greatly in our minds till Thursday came. I had a sort of comfort in hazing the other fellows, finding fault with their work, and licking them if they talked back. But even this consolation, feeble as it was, was denied to Hammy. He would have been promptly clouted, if he had tried it on. Penley would have jumped at the chance. Besides, to avoid suspicion, I ordered Hammy not to speak to me unless he was spoken to. Indeed, I was in such a brute of a temper because Thursday would

not hurry up, that I don't believe he wanted much to consult me anyway.

Mostly the chaps kept out of my way, and divided their time between the plums in the orchard (now ripe) and bathing in Rogue's' Hole. But at long and last Thursday *did* come, as any day will if you don't get in a fuss and so put it off. For you can, you know, by making every hour seem as long and as weary as a century - or the continuation of *Robinson Crusoe*.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

## THE DWARF CRANE

It was some considerable fun getting the crane. First we had to dodge the factor who was now gracious but asked too many questions. Next we had to 'bulldoze' the third keeper, who glowered threateningly till Hammy ordered him to carry the letter of explanation and apology to his uncle, wherever and whenever he might find him. So of course he had to obey. Then we went and routed out the old thing. It had three adjustable legs, like a big photographic tripod, but to our after-sorrow it was strengthened by a sort of iron table three parts lower down, which held the legs rigid when planted either on a platform or on the ground.

It looked a solid, dependable article of furniture, and so indeed it had need to be, for in a little while a good deal was going to depend upon it - including me. At any rate we found it all right and in good repair, while underneath the iron frame of the table, the rope and hooks were packed. The pulley and wheel were in their places. Everything seemed complete to the very oil-can! So we made haste to carry it down to the boat, lest something should happen. But lo, the weight of it was far beyond our strength, tug as we might. This was a most unexpected difficulty, and it was the strengthening iron circle underneath that did it. We tried our best to disconnect that part, but it would have destroyed the framework of the dwarf crane if we had done so. It is quite thoughtless how some manufacturers will take a delight in blighting the honest endeavour of boys.

Hammy said that the thing had been made to his uncle's order as if that were any excuse, or explanation. His uncle ought to have known better. We were still eyeing the thing with aggrieved contempt, when, over the hill from the direction of Killantringan, as if it were the most natural thing in the world there appeared... Cecille Garnier!

She had with her a handy little pony, curiously caparisoned with hooks and chains, as if for carrying boxes and so forth. Yet there she was riding on the saddle as comfortably as in an easy chair. She evidently knew the ways and seasons of the workers at the new house, for as she came into view she was sitting with her pretty ankles carelessly crosswise, the chains jangling, as she piped out, gay as a lark, *Oh, whistle and I'll come to ye, my lad!*

She pulled up at sight of us and then came on again. I asked where she had been, but all the answer I got from her was 'There was a yacht looked into Orchard Dean Bay last night.'

Which, in itself, did not seem to be a very important event - not at least to the extent of causing a good-looking girl to ride about the country, on a pack-saddle, with her feet hanked up in a tinkling mass of hooks and chains.

As soon as she knew the why and the wherefore of our struggling thus with the awkward triangle of iron and wood, she offered us the use of her pony. So with the chains and attachments we were not long in getting it safe into the boat. Of course we did not tell her about the treasure hunt. At least, not so long as Hammy was within hearing. Then I told Cecille. For after all, it is as well to be friends with a girl like that, as not. And I felt sure she would not give us away to her 'Killies' if I 'fessed up straight

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and at once. But if she spied us out at the cliff job, she might very soon get suspicious, and set the Band of the Black Hand to work again. And of that I did not want another experience, I can tell you.

Besides, there was another reason which I need not do more than mention casually. Cecille was a grateful girl.

She took quite an interest. You would never have believed how much. I don't think she ever regretted so much that she had been born a girl. Petticoats are fearfully in the way when you are climbing - still more when going up steep slopes of slippery sea-grass. Your foot (Cecille told me) *will* catch in some flounce of your dress, or in the hem if you haven't any flounces, and down you go! And then as to where you bring up finally, that is a matter for your clergyman to decide. Not in this world at anyrate!

I suggested various ways of overcoming the difficulty, but somehow none of them seemed to meet with Cecille's favour. Finally, however, I asked her why she did not take the loan of a pair of her father's trousers. Then with her own pretty pair of sea-boots (which I would gladly grease for her) and a red Garibaldi from the store given us by Mr. Trevor, she would make rather a striking figure.

'Rather too striking!' she answered, with a toss of her scornful head. But all the same, I suppose the idea must have struck her.

'Perhaps I *could* make them down a bit - and - that old French pair with a scarlet sash and a kind of kilt would do.'

One is not born the daughter of Baptiste Garnier and of a long line of Garniers, for nothing. There had been sashes of a red hue in the family for many generations. Her great-grandfather has been of those

Reds of the Midi, who had marched to Lyons chanting the *Marseillaise*. What Cecille possessed of Cumberland Bet's Northern blood only made her aware of herself and more cool-headed in the hour of peril - as indeed she always was.

But, by the instinct of race she loved smart dresses and bright colours - as indeed, according to my experience, little and limited, does every girl worth twopence-half-penny. I have known swift-footed girls - one was named 'Sweetheart' - who in early days used to keep a string permanently coiled to her waistbelt behind. This upon occasion, she passed between her knees, thus tucking up her skirts in an impeccable manner, and clearing her long legs for action in the case of a trial of speed with any set of boys whatsoever. She could beat them hands down, too, and well deserved the name of 'Greased Lightning' earned by her at that time. But when she got to be seventeen or eighteen, she did not seem to care about running races any more, and actually gave away the string to her little brother to fly kites with!

Something of this had already begun in the breast of Cecille. Only, by good luck, the process was not completed. There was, for instance, the business of the yacht she had mentioned, and the mystery that clung to it. However, I don't think I was very anxious about that. The defection of Myrtle Causland, because she was going to be presented at Court, and of Girlie May, who never once mentioned my name to the milk-carriers - had broken my heart. At least I thought it had - later I found I had been mistaken.

So Cecille Garnier arranged to be of our next treasure search party, and I had to tell Hammy. I put the necessity of letting her into the secret upon

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the certainty there was of the 'Killies' getting on our track. They were always hanging about the island with their fishingboats, and of course, with glasses could easily make us out. Only Cecille could keep them from landing and as like as not, plundering us of the treasure that was rightfully our own - at least, Mr. Trevor's. Hence the excellence of the idea of telling everything to Cecille, who could hold them in check with a word - or even a nod.

There was a little more difficulty with the other fellows - Penley couldn't see the drift of the thing at all, not knowing our plans. And when I explained about the 'Killies' making another raid on the island, he laughed and said, that they were now welcome to all they could catch - sour gooseberries, and apples that would be hard as nails even when the November winds blew them off!

This he said because he was still a little sore about my taking Hammy into a secret from which he was excluded, and if it had not been for his inexorable loyalty I think there might have been a conspiracy to 'tip me the black spot' or something like that. There would, however, have been a very decent number of black spots scattered about among the mutineers before that spot would have been tipped.

When she came back to us, it was easy to see that Cecille's needle had not been idle. She had a first-rate white tam-o'-shanter on her head (she said it was 'ducky') made on some kind of frame like the foundation of women's hats before they are trimmed, and she wore a white blouse with a scarlet bow set a little low like a bunch of flowers. Then came the red silk sash, which I wager had been her father's Sunday rig-out when he went ashore in his courting

days. Then a short skirt fell midway below the knees, but underneath she wore real corduroy knee-breeches, made down by herself and finished off by the softest and smartest of brown shoes.

This all appeared to us very proper to behold, and such as any mistress of a boat of her own might wear along the Solway shore, when she was doing a little private fishing 'on her own.' She had the sea-boots all ready, but these she left in the boat, donning the slippers and elongating the skirt fore and aft. But there was a secret about this fine turn out - indeed two.

The slippers were attached to the stockings and, when Cecille pulled, they came away in a piece - so that in a minute, if need were, she could climb with bare feet. Then all about her blouse, a span or two above her waist, ran a ring of little 'eyes,' while the bottom of the skirt was garnished with an equal number of hooks, women's brand - not fish-hooks - so that when it came to climbing she could have her knees in the corduroy coverings in half a shake. It was a funny contrivance, turning her all khaki colour, shutting off the flaming waist-band, the white blouse, and even trenching on the red splash of colour at her breast. However, for some considerable time there was to be no need for this. We agreed that during the first day on the island, she must pay no attention to us, but stay with the second gang, or Penley's Watch - that is to say, Penley, Fitz, and Kilpatrick - because Kit the Cowl was a fixture in the kitchen.

Cecille was to wade into their demerits, concerning which I coached her carefully - and generally to render their lives a burden to them, till they would be glad to be shut of her fault-finding,

## ROGUES ISLAND

and joyful to trade her off on us tomorrow and the succeeding days. Nobly did she fulfil her mission. Never was there a more deserving and dependable girl than Cecille Garnier. She took the loan of Fitz's paint-box and mucked up all purple madder with his best ultramarine ash (he used that for skies). And though he could not *say* anything but had perforce to smile, he was hard at work making up things inside him, against girls in general and this meddlesome Cecille in particular. Cecille said that for a little while she thought that he would really burst.

Then she made Penley hold knitting-wool - a thing he abhorred, as beneath the dignity of a fellow of seventeen. Indeed, he would not have done it to save his sister from gaol. But he did it then, grumpily conscious that all the others were treasuring up little speeches of Cecille's, such as 'How nice it makes your hands look - the contrast, you know!' (It was white wool.) And, again softly 'You do do it so well! - You must have had a lot of practice. Who was the fortunate knitter? Laurieston would not do it for me (though I would!) so generally I am obliged to fall back on my father. He can do I everything, just like a woman.'

She spoiled a sheet of the wonderful artistic survey of Orchard Dean - one of Fitz's masterpieces, by spilling jam on it, accidental-like, and then rubbing up the mess with a pocket handkerchief.

She made Kilpatrick fetch and carry all day from the stores in the cellar of the Tower, and charged him with waiting to eat some on the way - which was correct. By the eventide she had not a friend in Penley's Watch but Kit the Crowl, who didn't count, anyway.

So we on the cliff were all fixed and ready for her the following morning. I think the Watch below cheered out of the orchard depths, as through the green leaves, they saw Cecille making her way up in our direction. We were, of course, very busy mapping - our dwarf crane already adjusted on the cliff edge.

We sort of sidled round to the farther side, and even slunk into the shelter of boulders as she advanced. Of course the fellows thought we were hiding, and enjoyed it like maple-candy and strawberry-cake mixed - to see us thus run down in our lair, as they thought.

And when Cecille stood and called us to come out - her thumbs in her waist-band and her head thrown back in an attitude of a captain of privateers, they could hardly keep from cheering. It was a long and lonesome time up there before we decided to straggle out, Hammy and I. And when Cecille began to ask us in a loud and piercing tone (intended for the orchard) as to where we had been and what we meant by it, the Watch below let go a howl of delight.

We looked so squelched and cur-like, so debased and wilted that the fellows below jumped about and clapped each other on the back with splutters of delight.

'It's their turn now,' they said, 'we served *our* 'hard' yesterday!'

## CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

## THE STEPS IN THE ROCK

It was a ripping fine morning for our project. The sky lightly overcast, with nice thin fleecy clouds, that let down the rays of the sun as through ground glass - stopping most of the heat but leaving all the light that was needed.

This was particularly good for climbing. For the glaring sun right overhead makes the rocks slippery, besides giving you hot coals of fire in the back of your neck - a feeling which becomes dangerous as your head begins to swim. Indeed, there is a point beyond which you don't even try to save yourself. Your skull grows empty as a drum and all that you think of is that yonder is the sea two or three hundred feet beneath - so cool and creamy and desirable! Fact! I've been there. Believe me if you like. Only if ever you feel like that, think on all your sins, the very worst ones - and hang on with feet, hands, teeth, and as the saying is, eyebrows. It is a sort of steam hobby-horse feeling - the world going round and round - all except the sea, which stops still, waiting for you down below, cool and so inviting. So mind and hold on like grim death. For however pleasant it may look, that is what it is - just grim death.

This then was the great day of 'The Steps Cut in the Rock,' and of the beginning of our famous search for the Lost Treasure of the Douglases upon Rough Island by the Solway shore.

I think we all cringed a little when we came to the

big cleft in the rock where the steps were (or at least ought to be – for as yet we had only seen them from below!) At the sight of the abyss, Cecille clung on to my arm. Hammy yelped like a dog kicked when least expecting it – while, though I said nothing, I do not deny that there may have been, deep in my inner works, a sort of ‘glug-glug’ like the emptying of a bottle. Only, mind you, that wasn’t fear, only just a little leakage of courage somewhere. I it was who had to face the music and be lowered down into space to rake about with my long legs for these blessed steps. It wasn’t just quite as good as snoozing an hour longer in your bed on Sunday mornings!

Still, having been arranged, the thing had to be gone through with. And I was there to do it. I slid behind a rock and stripped to Garibaldi and shorts. Meantime Cecille had been apparently examining the gearing of the crane with much admiration. But it was not nearly firmly enough planted for her taste. She made us dig down and fix the tripod legs each between two big boulders - especially the front one where the strain would come. Then she gave the rope that was to let me down, a turn round the bole of a ‘scroggy’ or twisted thorn. The tree was not very thick, she said, an oak would have been better. Only oaks not growing here, we must needs put up with what we could get.

‘At any rate,’ she added, ‘a seaside thorn, bowed like a hunchback struggling against the wind, is sure to be pretty firmly rooted. You are a deal safer with a turn of the rope round that than with only us two pulling, even if we pulled till we found ourselves going over the cliff after you.’

And indeed it was a most unpleasant place.

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Because, you see, just there the cliff-edge sloped a bit, with the going awfully turfy and slippery, the grass being hard as quills, and short as the hair of a fox-terrier, only greyish-green - which is unusual in fox-terriers. (Though I did see one once - our own 'Ross' who fell into a green-scummy pool when he was out rabbiting and brought a lot home with him - of the scum, I mean.)

Cecille lent me her scarlet sash to keep the rope from too sharply cutting into my waist, and then I found out that it was not real woman's silk, but a sort of roughish Spanish cloth, half baize and half silk, very enduring, and the rope worked round it like nothing at all.

So over I went! I did not stay to bid farewell to all my friends and relations dear. I only looked at Cecille and saw how excited she was - not about me, but with

giving contradictory orders to Hammy. She also gave *me* directions - chiefly about not letting myself get turning, and as to hanging on to the cliff all I could, even if I scraped my knees. Various little things of that kind, which, considering that she had never been down a cliff in her life were, better intentioned than actually useful. The curve on the brow of the upper 'heugh' ceased dead where the bare wall of the main cliff fell away. I lost sight of Cecille and Hammy. Yet somehow I did not seem to move in the least, nor (a strange thing) neither did the water of the sea approach any nearer. I dared not look down, so I had only a general idea of a great cool washing to-and-fro under my dangling feet - and away below a glimmer of light, a kind of Troublous emerald, such as one sees sometimes in the heart of an opal - or perhaps that unnamed and

un-nameable hue that turns the heart to water when we see it in feverish dreams.

But all the same, I clawed about manfully and kept legs stiff against the cliff as if I were walking down, with my head and body well thrown back as Cecille had told me. If I felt frightened, I did not let on - which is the saving grace of most who get the name of being brave.

I don't mean that I wasn't brave. I wouldn't have been where I was if I had not had some few grains of sand, but mostly I came out at the other side by keeping my feelings strictly to myself. I had been let down about twenty feet, as nearly as I could reckon, in the roughest possible way. I reckoned by the number of revolutions of the pulley-wheel, the diameter of which I knew. For Cecille took care to put so much 'brake' on (with the aid of the 'scroggy thorn,') that I descended with a series of bumps and dumps - safe, maybe, but decidedly unpleasant to the inward man in the neighbourhood of where the rope pinched me about the sash. I was the heaviest of the lot, and so ought to have stopped aloft and managed things. But *noblesse oblige*, and there was nothing for it but to go on dangling there, and be slowly cut in two. In spite of all I could do, I rotated. Perhaps no rope ever hangs quite still and straight with a heavy weight at the end of it. At least this one didn't. Perhaps something in the process of manufacture, which is twisting, makes a rope wriggle ever after.

I could hear the voice of Cecille calling to me from above 'not to twist the rope' - same as if I was having a top-spinning game all by myself out there two hundred feet above the Solway - a thing no fellow in his senses would do. But Cecille was abusing

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Hammy so hard above stairs, that she could not help sparing a little for me down below. I did not answer. I did better - I observed.

And that is a good tip. When in doubt, always shut your head and... *observe!* Take my word for it, you are not wasting your time. They say in our country 'Keep a thing seven years and you will find a use for it.' But *I* say, 'Remember a thing... *exactly*, mind you... thirty or forty years and you will find a place expressly hollowed out for it, where it will grow and branch out and seed like a potted plant!'

Now, mind me, this is dead serious. If I had not kept my eyes about me even when I was swinging and plunging about with my feet to the rock I would never have noticed that we had started our descent of the cliff about ten or twelve yards too far to the left! Of course we could not help it, not being able to see the steps, or anything that we had located with such care the boat below. Looking the other way, somehow effaced the landmarks.

Now it was quite evident to me that the deep gulf into which the big waves tumbled, splashing green and white, was only a cave with the roof fallen in. So, too, was the rift in the island up which we had paddled the boat at the imminent danger of our lives. That narrow piece was the cave entrance, but what we could not see was that the cave took yet another turn, so that the steps were in two flights, turning round the angle of the rift and continuing right to the very verge of the cliff!

You can imagine what a whoop I gave at this discovery, and how I howled to be drawn up again. But that was slow work. It was perfectly easy, like throwing a stone down a cliff, or like the water going over Niagara 'wid nothing to stop it' - to let me down.

But contrariwise, Cecille and Hammy had to sweat for it, and the ‘scraggie thorn’ for the first time in its life, leaned towards the sea almost to the breaking point. Still I went creaking up, span by span, till my waist felt no thicker than a hanged man’s neck, and in about the same wobbly condition. At last I came to the level of the grass and, you had better believe that I took hold! I gripped it as if it had been something good to eat. And before I could get my breath back or forget in the least the red hot circle about my waist, Cecille began asking me questions. She had not been trained like Hammy, because she was not a boy. So she did this, instead of waiting till I was ready to tell her.

‘Did you find the Treasure of the Douglasses?’ she said all in a flutter, bending over me and fanning me furiously with the sash she had undone from about my waist. I could not speak - not yet! My ribs had not filled out. So I only feebly waggled my head.

However it answered all right. She understood and... like a girl... instantly asked me another. Hammy knew better, and got me some water out of the flask. After I had drunk it, I told about the steps. And it was all that Hammy could do to keep Cecille from going on by herself to explore. But the edge of the ‘heugh’ was no place for girls, I can tell you. So after resting a bit we set about pulling up the ‘dwarf,’ and settling him down in a new place. He was a good Dwarf and accommodated himself readily to circumstances.

I leaned over the edge which was far steeper than at the first place - indeed, to look at from landward quite perpendicular. But my heart bounded again when I saw that within reach of my foot, by simply putting my leg over was the first step, broad as a

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school bench.

I was for trying it immediately. But Cecille, for once wiser, cried out against this. And indeed she was right, I owned it afterwards.

'You are a fool, Laurieston,' she said, 'and of all fools I abhor the head-strong fool who runs his neck (and the rest of him) into danger without the least use. If it were to save anyone's life, now - there might be something gallant about it. But with the crane all ready planted, and for a treasure you may either get or not - with us two here to let you down and pull you up - you only want to show off, and you know it.'

To this - I answered nothing - for, in fact, such was about the state of the case. So the sash was re-tied and Cecille and Hammy got behind some big boulders, so that they could give the rope a turn round them, the thorn tree being now too far away. 'It will not be so hard to hold you this time,' said Hammy, 'you will have the steps for your feet, and then you can grip the rock with your fingers!'

But Cecille shut him up.

'Of course - *if* the steps are continuous. But seeing that it is a few hundred years since anybody tried them -'

'How do you know that?' I cried, turning sharp upon her.

Cecille looked at me with an air of something pretty much like scorn. 'You have little sense, Laurieston,' she snapped, 'if you think that such a thing could have been known to exist on Rough Island, and I not heard of it in Killantringan!'

It was true. I had not thought of that. As the captain of the Black Hand, she would certainly have heard all that was known about the rocks and caves

of Rough Island. For there were always a few daring cragsmen who come each year to scale the heughs in search of sea-birds eggs and such as were edible of the young birds before they flew - there being also a market for their oil, chiefly among the seafaring men and old wives who believe in solan-goose salve for all manner of wounds and sprains - albeit there had not been a solan-goose nesting nearer than Ailsa for a hundred years.

So, with sundry groans at the condition of my unfortunate Plimsoll-line, I was again tied up. But this time all was different. The rope was paid out freely. I could set foot after foot on the ledges of the rock, which in the main, were about six or eight inches wide. Stauchions, too had been driven into the rock in the shape of small hoops. But time and the sea-mist had rusted these away, so that only a little bit of the metal was left sticking, showing clearly, however, that it had been the custom of these cave-dwellers or cave users to ascend and descend without other aid than the steps for their feet and these hand-catches to steady them high above the roar and suck of the tide, sapping and tumbling the boulders beneath.

I do not know when I felt more gay or better pleased with myself than then. My feet on the future - the unknown beneath me! I descended carefully, however, and the steps turned just like the turn of a stairway. I went down two full turns, getting deeper into the narrow trench of the rock all the time. I could hear the voices of Cecille and Hammy very faintly now, as they shouted questions about the amount of rope they were to pay out. But I doubt much if they heard my replies, because, the very next minute they would be asking the same question

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again. Of course, that might simply be owing to Hammy's nervousness about me.

At last I came to the mouth of the cave which we had seen from below. In shape it was like the wicket window of a barn - that is an irregular isosceles triangle set properly on its base.

Steadying myself, I gave three tugs to indicate that I had arrived and was going to cast off. That had been prearranged. I could hear faint howlings from above, but could make out nothing definite. I shouted my best - that all was right so far. And it must be that in that place the sound rises better than it falls (at least when pinned against the wall of rock) because they actually heard me this time. At least Cecille did, and seemed pretty well comforted - at any rate Hammy was.

I laid down the rope and sash, tying the first to a big strut of stone at the cave mouth, so that it would neither be pulled up by mistake nor swing outward of its own accord.

Having landed on a flat slab, cut with tools, which made a kind of threshold, to the cave I glanced back at the steps and acknowledged that, even with all my practice at Thrieve, the ancient Douglasses of the Black (my predecessors at both places) were certainly also my masters in the art of climbing. If it had not been for the rope safely tied to the jutting tooth of rock and Cecille's sash lying beside it, I might have died there of starvation. For I am sure that I should never have succeeded in making the ascent by the aid of the steps alone.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

### THE TREASURE OF THE DOUGLASES

Of course I had provided myself with candles and matches - also a ball of string to pay out as I ventured into the depths of the cave. They all do that, and I had read too many stories of treasure-seeking to omit the least bit of precaution. I knew, of course, that the real up-to-date cave explorer goes out with a little electric lamp, and a battery in the small of his back. But I had no battery and I didn't understand them anyway - not as I did a candle. So I judged that stowing away as many of these as possible, and sticking them bit by bit in my little bicycle lamp, was not half a bad scheme a considerable economy as well.

Here I should put in my emotions, which were poignant, especially about the waist, and when I knocked my elbow on a jut of rock. Then I paused a while to think how I should express these in my best English when it came to writing this history. But now all I can remember is not suitable, so that history must just do without.

But it was a very solemn moment. There I was – cut off from all the world, and only that perilous staircase to connect me with the world of men... and Cecille. Before me lay a bird-bedropped, twig-carpeted entrance hall - or rather, as it might be called, lobby. On the ledge to the right were manifold marks of nesting, but whether or not those of the long extinct Solway eagles I venture not to say.

All this I could see without lighting the candle. So

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to fulfil the conditions of my survey and throw the necessary dust in the eyes of the islanders not in the secret, I made a rough sketch of the entrance, took few careful measurements, and jotted them down in my notebook. Nothing is so convincing as exactness.

Then I was ready for action. I lit the candle, shut it up in the lamp, bowed my head and went forward. It was a rum cave. I never saw such a place - a sort of Alice-in-Wonderland cave, not a bit like the old Black Holes of Calcutta, drippy and desolate down on the margin of the sea, within tide-mark, and with black crackly 'beasticles' always creeping up your trouser legs, and biting you in the most unexpected times and places. This cave was clean hard rock all about, so dry you could strike a match on the walls anywhere, with the certainty of getting a light. But I had not gone very far before I could see that it was, in part at least, a 'made' cave. And what convinced me of that is very simple. *There were more steps!*

I found a date - 1377. But then again it might just as easily be 1877, for the second figure was not very distinct. However I settled for the date which was earlier by five hundred years. Because, first, it was by far the more romantic. Old Archibald the Grim would be building Thrieve about that time, and to him also Rough Island would belong. I had not the least doubt that he would come down there often, for the old Druids' Tower in its principal parts would be much the same as now - bar repairs, of course. Why might he not have used this passage, or even excavated it, in case of an attack from the English, who might come questing for good red Scots gold - and not very particular where they found it either!

As I went I began to poke about in all the

crevices, and pass my lamp over the face of the rock for secret signs, such being my business. But never one did I see, till I came on something that looked like a carven hand. Then for one awful moment I thought that Cecille had been taking us in again and that the sign was that of the Black Hand. But there was a cut about it that told me it was far more ancient and wonderful. Then very fortunately I remembered that the Douglas crest was that of the Bloody Hand.

Now I was happy and contented, for certainly the Douglases had been there. Not the least doubt remained to my mind. I further decided that there they had left their treasure. It only remained to find it, and I had candles sufficient to follow out miles of cave.

I actually supposed that I had only to go on and on, to tumble over gold in heaps. I did not do this, quite at first, but I was not discouraged. Clearly I was proceeding inland and also descending. For the steps, when I came to them, which was often, led always down and yet further down into the bowels of the earth. There was a sense of oppression, but not the least difficulty in breathing - as you might have expected in such a place.

In four candle-lengths (for I measured time like Alfred the Great) I had made considerable way, and as far as I could judge in a direct line. The little compass at my watch chain always pointed directly to the north.

I did not know till afterwards that Fitz, having taken the loan of it without asking, had mended a slight breakage by sticking a pin into the axle which kept the whole needle as stiff as a poker. My compass would not have moved if the Magnetic Pole

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had begun to describe waltz circles. This, however, I did not know at the time, which pleased me just as well and filled me with as much confidence. In the end it turned out all right, for I could not have altered my direction anyway - not if I had carried a ship's compass.

The passage was strictly confined within two walls of rock about four feet apart and in height between six or seven feet. In the natural parts the crack widened out and I could hold my lantern high above my head. Still there was not much to see. I had long passed the limits of bird habitation.

But suddenly I came to a great black widening of the hitherto narrow passage. At first I could see nothing but a sort of jumping-off-place - where one could leap into nothing. The floor sank blackly down out of sight, The walls receded. And as to the roof, it might have been the midnight sky, save for the absence of stars, (For up in the heavens, even on the most cloudy night, you always have a feeling that somewhere there are stars. Now I knew that there were none.)

It was black, dense mirk - the very mirk of Egypt's land, that night when the folk were glad to find each other by touch.

Then lowering my lantern, I saw stairs and yet more stairs descending as it seemed into the bowels of the earth. I took my way carefully down, because these were slipperier than those above on the level of the cliff.

Finally I reached firm standing ground - a levelled floor, all good staunch rock. Looking about I saw, as it were, the shelves of a library and on them, in cases of lead with rusted inscriptions, a vast company of the dead.

I had found the treasure house of the Douglases. I went spying about with my lamp till it had nearly burned down to the socket. Then I lighted another candle. Almost all the Douglases of the Black were here - save the few whose tombs are to be found in the little chapel at the village of Douglas in Lanarkshire. But all the Galloway chiefs were before me. The three brothers - the last of all - who were slain, fighting for their race against the King at Arkinglass. Over against them Archibald the Grim lay, his armour showing through the crumbling lead of the coffin. Only James the Good Lord - the Tyneman, Lord of Touraine, and James the Gross were absent. All the others lay in this hidden shrine. And shrine it was - for I discovered in a corner the remains of a stone altar and a great crucifix hewn in stone, the top of which ascended into darkness.

It was so astounding that I could not credit the evidence of my eyes. Treasure, indeed! What were a few gold nobles, brought over from England, or all the mines of Potosi to this? For I was a Galloway boy, and to me the Douglases were all the law and the prophets.

You see Galloway has always been a land apart - the Ancient Free Province. And under the Lordship of the Douglases it was yet more so than even under the descendants of Fergus. Money coined, laws made, no man safe in all the south unless he were either a Douglas or a Douglas's man! It was no wonder that the haughty race of more than kings died hard, or that, when they did die, it was not safe to leave even their dead bodies within the reach of those false marauding Stewarts, who had made themselves Kings of Scotland by marrying the woman with the plainest face in Scotland.

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Only the harmless of the clan could lie at Douglas in family vault. The others, men who had held to the independence of the Ancient Province - never to this day admitted as a Shire of the Land - died mostly sword in hand - Jameses, and Archibalds, and Williams - but Douglasses all of the swardest black.

I thought no more of money, you may be sure. Who would? I knew this would rejoice Mr. Trevor more than all the gold in the Bank. I had still some more candles, but not many. A passage led out at the other end of the Hall of the Dead, and this I took, the staircases, as before, leading ever downward. Now a trickle of water spurted on my face. Anon the air grew heavier and the walls contracted. It was not for half-an-hour that I reached a wider space and there I leaped down upon a heap of rubbish which, as I landed upon it with both feet, seemed somehow curiously metallic.

I put my hand down and lifted up a handful of heavy discs, mostly small, but all covered over with a thick coating of mud, and underneath a kind of thin inner skin of blackness. Setting down my candle I scraped one. It shone white under the point of the knife. The next was yellow! This was my fortunate day. I had found both the pride of death, or rather Pride in Death. And also, if Mr. Trevor was what I thought him to be, something that would make our next holiday to the wilds of the Raiders' Country both possible and easy.

Lifting my candle into the air and shifting my grip on the lantern handle, which had become hot through carelessness, I saw on ledges, less wide than those of the Douglas Chamber, about a score of iron-bound boxes, some of them crumbling into dust, others still intact, but only the one over the

steps wholly destroyed. A stream of water had continued to run that way, rotting the wood and filling all the interstices of the tumbled heap of coins below with muddy detritus.

I pushed on, for my candles were fast failing, and indeed by this time, I had had enough of my experiment, The money, if such it was, could very well wait. To me it appeared that I had been absent barely an hour, but the number of candles I had used and the dwindling supply which still remained might have demonstrated (if I had given the matter a thought), that I was far out in my estimate. Still I had had the day of my life, Never - no, never would I have such another. There were only one race of Douglases (for I did not count the house of the Anguses - what Galloway man would?), And I - I had found them! Then the treasure! I was well content to let Mr. Trevor explore that. *The Douglases of the Black lay back there in their leaden shrouds!*

Yet I went on - I can hardly tell why. I ought to have turned back and made my way to the cliff to be hauled up, But the glamour of exploration was upon me. I cannot explain my persistence otherwise. I went on and on, down more steps, my head turning with the excitement, my feet stumbling and splashing through streams of water. So I judged that I must now be approaching the sea level.

But I was still hurrying forward, when I seemed to hear - not all at once but growing upon me - the sound voices. Or, at least, as if it might have been, the of voices. I did not believe that after so much I could be frightened. But away deep down there - with Archibald the Grim and all his folk in the dark behind me, I tell you I tripped it, till at long and last I fell bang against a door that gave outwards with a

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rotten crash, and lo! I found myself in the cellar of the Druid's Tower of Orchard Dean!

But not alone. Penley was there. Fitz was there, Kilpatrick was there. And they were standing up clasping each other's hands, and swearing to 'put down the tyrant' - which was me!

I came upon them, wet from head to foot, splashed with the slime and mud of infinite caverns, dusk with the grime of passages, dripped all over with candle-grease, and my face blackened by wiping the sweat off it with my sleeve.

They must have taken me for Sathanas himself. I tell you I scared them out of a year's growth. They fled like the most faded sort of autumnal leaves before the winter wi-i-ind. They went. They scooted. They were not. And from the back kitchen-door I emerged into the open to find the sun setting and a great stillness upon the island and all the sea.

Then, and not till then I remembered Cecille and Hammy, faithfully waiting for me up on the cliff's verge. So I made my best pace up the orchard valley. I emerged upon the plateau, and ran swiftly towards the dwarf crane which I could see above me.

One figure alone was there. It was Hammy, and he was dancing about in the extremity of despair. He shouted 'Cecille – Cecille!' Which, ordinarily, he had no right to do.

And when I came upon him, it was as the return of one from the dead. He gasped at the sight of me and remained speechless. I asked him what had become of Cecille. For a moment he could not answer. A last he gasped out these words:-

'She tired waiting, and tugged at the rope to make you answer. Somehow the cord slipped, and we could see the empty noose swinging in the air above

the sea. Then she would go down to find what had become of you. She would not listen to a word I said. And she is gone.'

'Gone?' I cried, 'Cecille down there?'

He nodded mournfully.

It was true. Cecille was down there in that dark place without so much as a match, much less a candle. For expecting no such accident, I had taken all! Was she there with the dead Douglasses or fallen headlong into the sea?

Then I forgot all about Archibald the Grim and his abominable treasure. I wished I had never seen either. And I called out in a sudden anguish, '*Cecille! Cecille!*'

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## CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

### THE SEARCH FOR CECILLE

There was not much time to lose. I made one dive down to the house for a new consignment of candles and matches. This time I brought the stable lantern, so that those at the head of the Cliff Steps, manipulating the crane, should have a light also.

Of course it occurred to me, as it will to everyone else, that it would be possible to approach Cecille from the side of the passage which led into the cellar of the Round Tower. But in a minute I saw the impossibility, even the cruelty of this.

For, you understand, if she had got to the hall where all those old Douglases lay in crumbly coffins or in their rusted armour, and she were to see me suddenly appearing from beneath, she might take me for a very unpleasant personage indeed, and as like as not fling herself into the sea!

No, it was not to be thought of. And it would be worse if I were to go towards her, calling her name.

In those hollow arches and vast caverns, frightful enough at any time, the sound of the voice of one she took for dead, was enough to scare any girl out of her wits.

With considerable trouble I got hold of Penley and Kilpatrick - Fitz and Kit the Crowl being both in hiding somewhere - probably in the garret of the tall old tower, where for the moment I had not time to seek for them. But anyway they would not come when they were called. And that I laid up against them.

To Penley and his cousin I explained in a swift clear way that Cecille was down the cliff in a cave,

and that they must come and help to work the crane. I had absolutely to knock their heads together to keep them from asking questions. But I succeeded. They accompanied me in silence, but they must have been mystified fellows when they tried to piece together Cecille's descent of the 'heugh,' and my sudden appearance, candle-bedropped and bedraggled, in the very cellar where they were conducting their precious conspiracy against me.

In this I felt I did wrong. They needed a thumping badly - all of them, but I was too much pressed to begin any court-martial business just then. So I was satisfied with a prompt obedience for the moment, and even hinted that if they did their best in this crisis, I might be inclined to let bygones be bygones when we got Cecille safely home.

At the dwarf crane I found Hammy anxiously awaiting me. His calls, his prearranged tugs at the rope had not been answered, and it was evident, therefore, that Cecille must have gone on into the interior of the cave. This gave me the cold shivers down my back to think of her there alone in the night. It was a fine clear gloaming already, even with us. The sea was a myriad of tints all spread out smoothly as if you had done it with your thumb (and the nail to score in the infrequent waves). The sun (so they say) was quite magnificent - as big as a barge on the horizon and as crimson as Cecille's sash - though that, if you remember, was scarlet.

But I had not the time to bother with any old sun. First of all I tried the rope, but Cecille had taken precaution, and done the job more securely than I. Anyway, she understood better about ropes from her father, owing to his business of going out to seek for

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yachts in the early morning off Port Ling and away west by Port-o'-Warren.

Then before going down I stood up and harangue the company assembled. There was but one way (I said) and I had started to explain this when Penley suddenly held up his hand.

'I have thought of something!' he said.

'Well, out with it and be sharp!' I cried, for only I had any business to think.

'Let us all howl as loud as we can, '*Laurieston is safe! Laurieston is safe!*' he said.

I came near pitching him over the cliff, but after a moment I thought it would be no harm to try that way first. Though from the resistance of the rope I was sure that it was useless.

So we gave a 'One, Two, Three!' And taking the time from me, we shouted '*Laurieston is safe! Laurieston is safe!*'

And I cried, all off my own bat, 'Put on the sash and the rope and we will haul you up!'

Then Fitz, who had been larrying behind to keep out of the reach of vengeance, being reassured, suddenly appeared and making a trumpet of his hands, had the cheek to add, '*All will be forgiven!*'

For which I knocked him sprawling.

But there was no answer either to the shout general, to my particular appeal, or to Fitz's misplaced cheek! Cecille evidently was not there. She might have fainted or she might have wandered on, perhaps finding some passage which had escaped me in my over-eager desire to follow the hollowed-out main passage.

So I said, 'there is nothing for it, fellows, but for one of us to go down those steps, steadyng himself on the rope, which the others will keep taut.'

'But suppose it gives way at the bottom, and the loop swings out as it did before!' said Hammy who was more anxious about me, than, perhaps, he had been on Cecille's account. Funny beggar, Hammy! I told him that made no matter, not a pennyworth. It was obvious that we could not go comfortably home and sleep in our beds with Cecille Garnier down there! I put it to them if we could.

'No,' said Hammy, the blood of his uncle showing, 'I agree that is impossible. But I am the lightest, I have done nothing today. I am not tired. I ought to go!'

'Hammy!' I argued, not in the least meaning to give in, but because I recognized a plucky attitude, and did not want to discourage anything of that kind in the corps, 'don't forget that you are the heir of all the Elshiners -'

What Hammy said about his ancestors just then was a distinct breach of the fifth commandment. So I told him that, if he did not mind, his life would not be long in the land. For so it was written.

But he said. 'Well, I didn't mean anything not reverent - you know that very well! But what's the use of always ragging a fellow about his eternal ancestors, D'ye suppose I picked them special-like off my own bat?'

I said that I supposed not - that I shouldn't think so, as they were a bright lot, from what I had read.

'Now' (said I) 'look here, Hammy, you are a good chap, but you have got to stay here and mind that crane while *I* go down those steps with an extra rope -'

'What's that for?' said he, sulkily at being refused.

'Well, I can tell you that Cecille, when I find her, will be a jolly sight easier to hoist up that with a

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steadyng rope than just dangling. Besides, remember, it will most likely be dark then!

'And why can I not go as well as you?' he cried, 'You have all the jam. It seems to me, it's pretty mean!'

'Hammy,' I answered, 'do as you are told. It will be healthiest. Penley will tell you so. I am responsible for you to your uncle, and for Penley to his mother. Besides I know the way. And if I find it easier, I shan't return this way at all, but come out where I dispersed a certain band of conspirators - that is, in the Tower cellar! Gimme a packet of those candles and help me cut them into short lengths. Sharp's the word, boys, and no more talk! We are wasting time!'

It was a pleasant summer dusk, when, with the spare rope loosely arranged about my armpits, and my 'out' hand stayed lightly on the taut rope down which Cecille Garnier had gone to look for me, I set my foot on the first of the cliff steps.

The boys above were almost offensively silent, except Penley who had a difficulty with his breathing, and Kit the Crowl who blubbered undisguisedly. The last thing I could see before my head disappeared beneath the cliff level, was the look that Hammy cast at these two. It said, 'You beasts, here have I been standing the burden and heat of the day, while you were lazing down there in the orchard. Now shut up - will you?'

And I went down marvelling at the improvement which had taken place in Hammy since he first came to us, and the position he was making for himself in the band. He began to do better and better every day, and in fact, to grow more like his uncle, Mr. Trevor. I can't say better than that.

I wish I could tell about that wonderful descent and all I saw. Fitz could paint it, of course, easily. That's his job. But writing in colour-words is not so easy afterwards, when you are afraid about a friend's life. Also what you will find when you get to the stair-foot! And that friend... Cecille Garnier! I never could have believed that I would have cared so much before. But a fellow never knows till he is tried. And the queer thing is - that sort of feeling does not come because you have known the person an awful long time. That does not matter at all. Now, there's - but it's no use naming names.

Well, here goes for the description. But, mind, I saw it all just as a chap going to the scaffold might have seen the roaring ocean of white faces all turned toward him - heard and seen, and cared nothing at all about it.

It was like this. My feet trod on invisible steps which I searched for one by one. The cliff itself was a misty blue-grey flecked with black. This seemed to draw me to it, as if I were a stone thrown from a height. (Have you tried this?) I had not the least desire to fall over, as you would have expected. The least touch of my fingers on the stretched cord, steadied me. The sea looked very near, hollowed out like a sheet ready to bear me up in case of falling, soft as a cradle and very peaceful. And then the colour of it - like the inside of one of those old mantel-shelf shells in which you can hear the winds blowing and the tide roaring on the pebbles, according to your power of imagination. Pink it was in stretches, that great flat of sea - streaked with the palest sort of green, the kind I never saw except in skies, when the setting sun is breaking through the clouds that have poured down bucketsful of rain all

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day. But for the most part it was just grey, pearl-grey with little curls of deep blue and dabs of white here and there.

Oh, no! I did not think of all that at the time. I told you not. But all the same I carried away the picture, printed on the little Kodak film I have for ever winding within my head, somewhere at the back of my eyes. I was minding my footing too, and keeping touch with the taut rope as I descended. Also, to the best of my ability, I was counting the steps. Take it all in all, the descent was easy this time.

The absence of any fear of falling did a lot, and perhaps, but I am not sure, the hope of saving a human creature, and such a creature as Cecille Garnier, stirred me up to do it as neatly as a tight-rope dancer. The fellows above kept howling to know if I were safe, till I bade them I shut up. I wanted to listen for Cecille and these idiots annoyed me. Never was their match for making a row in the wrong place.

Then when all was quiet I steadied myself at the outer angle of the rock, whence I could look every way all round about. The lighthouses were everywhere springing into little Morse dots and dashes of flame. Yonder were Killantringan, the Mull, Rathan, and Satterness, besides some vague rushlights far away over on the English side of the Solway, of which I only knew St. Abb's and Maryport by name.

I took breath a moment and then turned the lid of the lantern I had at my waist. I had made it into a kind of dark lantern by means of a little plate of tin, which I had fixed myself. I was now heading for the dark of the cave's mouth, and as I didn't know what

I might find there, and as there were none of the chaps to see - please don't mention it - I put up a little bit of a prayer. It was for Cecille Garnier - of course it was. For a fellow of my age ought not to bother the Lord too often. A chap ought to be able to look out for himself. As my grandfather used to say 'HE is the most High - to be feared and reverenced. If you want to know HIS will, go and read his Book. But let your prayers be few and your words well-ordered. Don't chatter to your Maker!'

And I have tried not to. When I do pray, I have generally good cause and I pray awfully hard. And from experience I think that my old Cameronian grandfather was right when he said, 'Stick to the Lord's Prayer, my boy! And when you do pray, see that you want something you can't do for yourself. HE is the hearer of prayer, but will get more if you don't be for ever deafening HIM with vain repetitions as the heathens do!'

I still remember the mordant and terrible irony with which he uttered the last scornful words - 'Vain repetitions!'

So I tried to put all my heart into that prayer for Cecille, who had gone down to help me, when the rope loop swung clear of the eye-tooth of rock about which I had cast it so carelessly, and there seemed no way all to save my life.

So, for this reason (which I don't mind telling here, though I should not have liked any of the fellows to know at the time), I do not remember very much about that part of the steps where they turn towards the cave-entrance, which is called the Eagle's Nest. I passed that bit almost like a somnambulist walking a roof-ledge in his sleep.

All the same I got there, and when I set my foot

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on the safe, wide threshold I gave three tugs to the free rope which the boys were letting down to tell them that all was well so far. It was to be six if I found Cecille, and nine if I decided to return by the other road which I had found - that is, by the Burial Chamber of the Douglases and the Treasure Cove. But there was a good deal of wet and mud that way - besides the fear - so I thought I had better put off a decision till I should find Cecille herself and see in what state she was.

I looked about me. There was no sign of her in the outer entrance or 'lobby' where the eagles had built their nests long ago. But the first rope was made fast to a hoop-shaped iron stanchion in the wall, which, though very rusty, still held firm owing to its great thickness. Certainly Cecille had made better arrangements than I. Now I profited by her discovery to fasten in the same manner the second or 'free' guiding-rope, in case of it also swinging clear.

The only other sign that Cecille had passed that way was my finding a hairpin of a big wiggly kind, straight at the ends, such as I knew she wore to burrow among and keep in place her great mane of locks.

Then I pushed forward - candle lighted, and calling out 'Cecille! Cecille! It is I, Laurieston!' Only to sound more like myself I said, 'It's me, Johnny Laurieston!'

Anyway I went forward swiftly and carefully as far as the first steps, and then casting the light of my lantern downward, I saw beneath me, gathered into a heap, the body of Cecille Garnier. One hand was stretched out and the other doubled under her. She had been going forward without a lamp or candle, and had fallen headlong. There were, however, only

four or five steps, but they were narrow and steep, so that she might be badly hurt for all that.

I hastened down and stooping, lifted her. She hung on my arm a dead weight, and my heart gave a great plunge. Could it be that she was really dead?

Hastily I unstrapped the lantern and setting it on a shelf of rock - at this place the passage was of the most irregular dyke formation - I felt her pulse. It was hardly perceptible. Perhaps I was in such haste and trouble of mind that I did not set my finger on the right side of the wrist. But, on placing my hand over her heart, I could feel it beating, or rather fluttering. So I laid her carefully down on my jacket, and hurried forward to the first little stream that crossed the path. I filled my bonnet with water and brought it back. Then I dashed it on her face, and wetted her hands and her wrists. After an interval which seemed like a century, she sighed and sat up, instantly sinking down with a groan of pain.

'John!' she said. And even in that moment I felt ashamed that I had never told her that my real name was Jonathan. I would certainly have to reveal that disgraceful business some day, but as decidedly now was not the time.

She tried to rise, but it was very evident to me, who had had experience of such things, that her ankle was badly sprained!

I stood looking at Cecille and as she did not make a second attempt I realized that we two were in about as bad a fix as was good for us. There was night and the cliff above us - and beneath the lead-coffined, iron-mailed Douglasses of the Black, and any amount of dark halls and staircases before we reached the Tower.

Then I looked at Cecille and Cecille looked at me.

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And as we did so, that beast of a candle would get blurred and wobbly. I did not think that Mr. Trevor would have sent us such a horrid bad make, so dim and spluttery - why, you could hardly see anything by it.

Cecille cried.

But as for me - I did not. For I was of the opposite sex and so could not demean myself! And I'll pitch into the first chap who says I did. Anyway, only Cecille really could know if I did. So there!

## CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

### HOW I SAVED CECILLE

But this sort of thing did not last long - couldn't in fact. Cecille was not the kind of girl to cry when crying was no use. And it never *is* much use crying - unless, that is, you want to get something out of somebody, and even then you have got to be sure that the person to be operated on is open to that kind of argument. Of course if you are a girl and pretty, you can go ahead!

I wrapped her in my coat and lit a new section of candle. Then I leaned against the rock and, very gloomily, we took council together. Cecille Garnier was girl you could depend upon, and she discussed ways and means as calmly as if it were somebody else's ankle that was sprained - and you know that's a jolly lot to say of a girl!

Mostly they 'preach for their own parish' - that is, they reduce anything *you* say to their own common denominator, as Dr. Causland would put it.

'It's a fine night!' says you, just for something to break an awkward silence. And immediately the girl thinks, 'Ah, he says that because he wants to see me home or ask me to go a walk with him!' There are no proper Socialists among women. Like true Scots they are all individualists, and the number of each is One. Oh, I don't mean as to being heroic and sacrificing themselves! Oh, no, I know better. We men are selfish pigs as compared to women. But all the time they are doing it, they are saying to themselves 'What is *he* thinking about *me*?'

Well, I told her first all about the way down the

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long flights of stairs, and how we had to pass through the Burial and Treasure Chambers. I could see her getting paler and paler. But in a minute, from a little piteous movement of her hand in the direction of her ankle, I knew that was owing to the sprain and not to the interest of my story. Being half French, of course, she could not care as much about the Black Douglases as I did - though after all they were Dukes of Touraine, and great French nobles besides - not iron-jacketed horse-thieves, as some people, who know nothing about the matter, have the cheek to say.

Then, when Cecille had recovered a little, and I had again wetted the place with water from the stream, she began to tell me what she thought we had better do.

She spoke somewhat as follows: 'Laurieston,' she said, 'we are in a mess (which I knew!) and I can't put my foot to the ground. Now that prevents me from going up those outside steps. I might possibly push away from the rock with my hands and left foot, but I could not climb up them. Nor yet - which is worse, could I get round the big outer corner. You will have to carry me, Laurieston - and come back for the traps afterwards!'

So I went towards Cecille and tried to get the girl on her feet. But it was quite useless. She sank down again with a moan of pain - and a shivering - the first symptom of fear - or at least a sort of mute appeal which was very touching for me to see in one who had kept me so long shut up in the old Rum Keg Parlour at the back of Baptiste Garnier's house.

But somehow I did not mind it. Instead I felt suddenly strengthened, and running to the cliff edge, I gave the nine pulls which signalled to the

fellows waiting above that I meant to return by the underground passage, Then I added six more to intimate that I had found Cecille. I shouted up, but I did not think they heard me. At least only a confused noise came back to me in reply.

To keep up Cecille's spirits I told her of the good news about the treasure, and how we would have to carry every bit of it along the passage into the tower, so that it would belong to Mr. Trevor, and not have to be given up to any silly old Crown, which does not mean the King, but only some quite impersonal treasury or other. But she said, 'No, Laurieston, you don't understand. Was the money, if it is money, found in the ground?'

'No,' said I, 'certainly not. It was found in a rock passage - '

'A rock passage hewn by the hand of man - a kind of back kitchen, like ours at Port Ling, wasn't it?'

'Exactly,' said I, though doubtfully, for I did not yet see her drift.

'Well,' she said, 'keep your mind at rest. Your treasure is as much Mr. Trevor's as if he found it in his purse!'

I only hoped that our proprietor would think the same, and not go and make a case of conscience of it, mixing up lawyers and other doubtful people with my great find. So I told her that in a place in France which I had read about there was a great cavern called the Gouffre (or Big Hole) of Padirac. Here (so the people say), the English, at the end of the War of the Hundred Years, hid *their* treasure - the same as the Douglases had done in their Cave of the Druids. For that was the name I had fixed on in my mind to call it after - that is, I had saved Cecille and got her safe back to her father.

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However, Cecille was still to be saved and just at present the job looked precious tough.

I brought back from the Eagle's Nest the stay-bar of the free rope - narrow indeed, not wider than one of my hands, but with proper holes at either end. I thought that in some way Cecille might be mounted upon this, by ropes passed over my shoulders like a knapsack. But as soon as she saw it, Cecille had a better idea.

'Yes, it is good!' she said, 'if you can hold me upon it, you will have your hands free. Let me see - give it me!'

She looked at it awhile, turning her head from side to side as she always does when considering anything very deeply.

'See here, Laurieston,' she said at length, 'I think we can manage this!'

And with nimble fingers she began to knot her Spanish waistbelt or sash through the rings, making it the proper length to hang over my shoulders.

Now you will have your hands free to steady yourself. I can dismount at the difficult places and if you give me your hand I will hop as far as I can!

So said, so done!

There was not much more to arrange. We were anxious to get away. So I fitted the cycle lamp and belted it about me. Then I fitted the scarlet sash over my shoulders, and with the little cross-piece of the steadyng-rope swinging at my back, I helped Cecille upon it with the greatest care. For so tall a girl, she seemed at first a very light weight, but I found that I had reason to modify my opinion before all was done.

As the path led down-hill all the way, I made her lean well against me back to back, and, with both

hands gripping my jacket, we got along very well. This may appear difficult to understand from explanation in words, but the fact is, I carried her exactly as a travelling window-mender does his panes of glass in the little back-crate strapped over his shoulders.

After starting it was a good long time before I allowed myself to take a rest. You can well understand that I wanted to get the Burial Chamber past, and leave Archibald the Grim with all his clan behind us, before I let her sit down. We reached the great cave after what seemed a long, weary journey - much longer as it appeared than before. Indeed, if it had not been for the cut inscriptions and the dressed stone of the passages, I could easily have believed that we had missed our way.

But at last I saw the great chamber open out black and blank before me. I put my hand down, and burned my fingers in shoving the plate of tin half-way across and holding it there. I also flapped open the sides of my jacket to keep the light only on the path. For I did not want Cecille, in her present state, to see any of the Hamlet-and-Gravedigger scenes, which were so frequent where the coffins had crumbled, as some of the more rubbishy ones had done - distant relative no doubt, of the great family. As for the Earls and Lords of Galloway themselves, they were laid carefully out in their war-armour in leaden cases which, generally speaking, had kept all taut. Not a word did Cecille say as we passed through. Nor I either, any more than if we were going up the High Street (and Low Street, for there is only one) of Killantringan! I do not know even whether she saw anything or not. I expect, however, that she was suffering quite enough with

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her foot, which was now swelling rapidly, to make her indifferent to everything else.

As soon as we passed the Great Chamber she asked me to stop at the first water to dabble her foot in it. But I saw at once that it was of little use doing that, without making some sort of bandage. So I hastily cut her boot-laces and stuffed the boot in my pocket. Then, with our two handkerchiefs I made a pad of soft wetness, folding my bigger one and laying it on the swollen place while I tied the ankle about with that belonging to Cecille.

Then, again using my cap I gave her a good drink, hoisted her up, and on we went. I need not tell you how my back ached. It is written in some story-books – for grown-ups, of course (boys know better!) how it is everything that is lovely to be allowed the privilege of carrying a girl. Nonsense! Carrying a boy is far easier, because owing to practice in leap-frog, steal-the-bonnets and other games, the thing comes much more natural. Just you ask any boy if this is not so. Besides, a boy rider progs you up with his heels, pretending he has spurs on and a girl is ever so much more of a dead weight – just a lump, in fact. This is real gospel truth, sworn to on the Book. Even Cecille agrees that she must have been a perfect smith's anvil to carry. She was, but I had, at least, the grace not to tell her so - not at the time anyway. For she was forlorn and suffering, and would really have been in a bad way but for me.

She told me also, that really and truly (and hope she might die!) she suffered just as much as I did. More, maybe, for she had her ankle hurting her like fun in addition being jolted about on my back !

Somebody says Thou winter wi-i-ind, thou art not

so unkind, as Man's ingratitude!' Which is all very well, but for good first sample, triple-woven, yard-wide ingratitude, commend me to a girl!

Anyway Cecille did come off once or twice and hopped a bit, clinging to my shoulder at the steps - notably at the steep bit which leads down into the Treasure cave. But there it was so slushy that I had to carry her in my arms right across and up at the other slope till we came to a drier place, where she could sit and get her wind for the long push along the home stretch which was still before us.

I don't know whether it was the carrying of Cecille across or the pain of her foot, or what was the reason - but as I was arranging the sash more easily about my shoulders, she suddenly swayed, and began to cry into her hands. I don't think that 'she burst into tears' - I never saw anyone yet who did - least of all Cecille Garnier. But she began to 'hic' and 'haec' and 'hoc' like a little kid kept in for his Latin grammar. And you have no idea - at least if you have, I had not - how such a thing stirs up a fellow's heart (I suppose they call it that) to hear a girl whom he has always looked up to a bit, suddenly being taken like that! I, at least, would not have believed it!

But away down there in the blackness of the cave Cecille cried - not wet blubberings, you understand, all running down her cheeks, the way ordinary girls and little kids cry, but regular dry sobbing same as boys sometimes let out when their mother dies or they think themselves disgraced for ever, or something like that.

So I had to comfort her the best way I could - which from lack of practice I suppose, was anything

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but good. Only, somehow, after a bit it comes to a fellow, and then Cecille Garnier did not seem to mind nearly so much being down there in the cave nor even the pain of her foot.

We were still there when, at first a good way off and then nearer, we heard shoutings, and I thought that I could make out my name.

'It's the fellows come to rescue us!' I said, and you should just have seen how quickly Cecille picked herself up and sat nice and erect, as if in church. The sobbing stopped just as quickly, all but a little occasional click in the throat, which after all did not matter. Anyone who had not seen her five minutes ago, might have taken it for hiccup!

And it *was* the fellows! I hurrahed at the sound. But Cecille did not seem nearly so cheered up as I had thought she ought to have been.

'What are they doing here?' she said, pettishly. Of course, she was suffering a good deal from her foot, so I put it down to that, and answered nicely that of course they knew the way because Penley, Fitz, and Kilpatrick had been in the cellar when I came in upon them the first time. So she said no more, but leaned white and languid against the rock down which the moisture was now trickling.

Then I hallooed for the chaps, and presently we saw the stable lantern, and Penley and Hammy leading. They had taken two six-foot poles from the stake-net and plenty of sail-cloth to make a stretcher-hammock if either of us happened to be hurt - which (when you come to think of it) was none so dusty for mere kids. Of course Penley was seventeen and Hammy had been so much with me that he was beginning to get the rudiments of sense by mere contact.

They gave us a roaring cheer, and I told them that they were pretty decent fellows, and that I would forgive all bygones. But when I had finished my little speech, and turned round again to Cecille who was keeping on saying nothing, and never letting a word of thanks out of her head, I saw she had fainted. Now she was not the fainting or crying sort, not a bit. Only all that had gone before, since I left her on the top of the cliff with Hammy, must have taken a precious lot out of her. This should be a lesson to every fellow never to let girls be mixed up with serious exploration.

There was Peary, of course. But even he, great man as he was, did not find it worked very well as a steady diet. A girl's place is either at home helping mother, or out earning her own living. They get out of their depth when they go exploring, and may end in being suffragettes or strong-minded or something equally horrid. Not that Cecille would ever come to anything really awful like that.

For one thing she was too pretty - much! Oh, loads!

So we were rescued, but it was after I had done the rough of the work all by myself. Not that I want to lessen the credit of the fellows and they certainly made the last bit much easier for Cecille, though she never once said so.

We sent right over to the Knock for Girlie May till we could get word to Cumberland Bet and Big Baptiste at Port Ling about their daughter's accident.

And in the next chapter I shall tell about Girlie May's coming. For I take all the credit of this to myself. It flashed upon me (and we shall see if I was wrong), that this was the best way of making up the

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peace.

Besides I thought it would be easier for Cecille if there was another 'she' person at the Tower when her father and mother came. Funnily enough, Cecille herself did not seem to mind a bit about this.

'Oh, mother knows I can look after myself!' she said.

The swollen ankle did not look much like it, but I was far too wise to say so.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

### WE BREAK THE NEWS TO MR. TREVOR

Well, Girlie May came at once and what is more – I bless her for it, and shall never say a word about girls being nasty again – she brought her ‘maternal’ with her, all motherly and flustering like a hen promenading two settings of chicks at once. So I had to prepare an expurgated version of how the accident happened – it was near the cliff edge – Cecille had fallen a little after slipping – not very far! Still – Girlie May’s mother could see for herself! And see she did and after that there were poultices and bandaging and all sorts of games, till I was afraid that there would not be enough meal left for the breakfast porridge, nor water in the well to boil it with.

You will ask why did we not send for the Garniers at once. Well, you see, the Solway is a difficult highway and a message could not be sent to Port Ling except by boat, there being a couple of estuaries, a bay and three rivers to cross. Then the tide was low and the sands dangerous in the dark. Also we were no great boatmen. Cecille Garnier was the only one of us who really knew how to manage a sail, though Penley thought he did. You see, we were all inland bred and though we could row fairly well (there being a pretty little loch near Cairn Edward) a sail put our lives promptly in danger and other lives as well if there was anyone about fool enough to come with us.

But Penley and Hammy went over in the morning, and were back with Big Baptiste and

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Cumberland Bet before we knew they were gone, almost. Wind and tide favoured them you see, sweeping them right into Port-o'-Warren, and then on the cliffs above they came upon Cecille's father hunting for her. She had been often 'out,' he said, but there had been no yachts 'in' that night - and he was getting anxious. So was her mother, and rather angry too - at least with Penley and Hammy. But the boys knew that she would not be angry with her daughter, who had her completely under control - that is, Bet and her father both.

So in a trice we had the lot of them all buzzing about, and you may imagine that Cumberland Bet was glad to see Cecille in the kindly hands of Girlie May's mother. The old lady said that we had sent for her right at once, and, without precising a time, she healed up the breach that had been widening between Cumberland Bet and ourselves. It was silly anyway, for she might have known that Cecille would not do anything, or go anywhere, unless she wanted to.

As to Girlie May she had never left Cecille, but had sat and talked low to her. What they said I don't, of course, know exactly, but I do know that they were pretty good friends ever after. That is as far as they were concerned. But Girlie May still had her knife a little into me. And on the whole I do not blame her - though, upon honour, I had never done any more than merely tell her that she was no end of a nice girl, which was truth, and the least that anyone could say, if they wanted to talk according to the facts.

Still Girlie May could not help asking me at the door malicious-like 'Why I had not wanted *her* to go treasure-hunting?'

And I answered with equal simplicity, that I thought she was better fitted for the making of daisy-chains.

Which shut her up effectively and even made her blush - that is, as far as any one could tell. For dairy-maiding at a big cow farm goes naturally with cheeks as rosy as apples and the fresh air that blows the cowslips about.

But what I was gladdest about, was that I had made it all right between the two girls, and that they were not jealous of each other any more. I never knew why they should be! I certainly had no ill-feeling to any of them. But fellows are different - more forgiving, as it were. Yet neither we nor they can help it.

Of course Cumberland Bet could not leave her house for very long. There were mysterious clients to be received and business to be dispatched, which was utterly out of the power of Baptiste to transact with his limited knowledge of the Scottish tongue - English also for that matter. So he stopped, and Girlie May's mother said she would not leave a young girl like Cecille on an island with 'a lot of good-for-nothings.' So she packed her daughter off with Penley to bring back the boat, and stopped herself at the Tower to take charge.

And the way she bossed us was a caution! She made us wipe our feet before coming in - so much so that Hammy said it reminded him of 'Home-sweet-sweet-Home!' But we circumvented her a bit by clearing out the cellar of the old tower, which had an extra entrance from what may have been the ancient stable in Douglas times. And there we could be just as happy, and fish-scaly, and sea-sidy as ever we liked, with never a soul to say us

nay.

But we had to watch out too. For the old lady had an eye that was very ready to put two-and-two together, and if she had come on us lazing, would have hounded us out mercilessly. Penley did not need this. He was a good deal over at the Knock helping with the dairy-churning and cheese-making, as *I* knew - and bringing over stores, as *he* pretended to the old lady.

And oh, the things that did come! You should have seen them. Girlie May must have kept her sisters and the 'indoor lass' on the trip-step all the time that Cecille stopped on the isle. You should have seen her mother unpacking the baskets - which were really young crates - with a smile of satisfaction. She had brought up her family to be dependable, and could rule them from a distance. So there was a little letter on the top of the egg-basket every day, asking advice on any thorny question which had arisen meanwhile, and sometimes containing a covert flout or jeer at some of us - me by preference.

At last, on the fifth day Cecille was pronounced well enough to be carried down to her father's boat, which her mother fetched across for her. And so she left us. I did not know whether to be glad or sorry. On the one hand it was a great deal to have Cecille there - to know it, I mean - for really one saw mightily little of her. The old Lady of the Knock was a great deal too bustling and chirpy for that. And if she saw any one of us hanging about the door of Cecille's room or during the last day of convalescence, talking with her in the sun, she would send us off with a job to do, maybe kindling wood to chop - or, in any case, a flea in our ear.

So, though there was a kind of emptiness about the Tower at the sight of Baptiste carrying Cecille down to the boat where her mother had spread a sail comfortable for her, this was somewhat counterbalanced by the departure of that kindest and most super-careful of old dames, the housewife of the Knock – whom we all loved, but on the whole rather preferred in that enchanted distance which two miles of sea lends to the view.

Oh yes, we loved her – only it wasn't like holidays and island life when she was round, and after all that was what we had come out for.

Next to be arranged was the great visit to Mr. Trevor! But, after thinking it all over, we judged it best to bring the whole contents of the boxes of money – old French gold pieces for the most part – into the Tower cellar, and dump them in a hole in the corner. At some period there had been a cask of some kind of wine there, but it had all leaked away or evaporated – I don't know which - and so we poured most of the coins into the cask, afterwards bursting a stave, and mucking the whole up with earth and spilling a lot of pieces over just as they had been on the floor of the Treasure Chamber when I stepped ankle-deep among them for the first time.

How I hoped Mr. Trevor would not sniff us out - not so much for our sakes, because we had always had the Douglas family vault in reserve, and these no old Government could claim - no not one great toe of Archibald the Grim.

We covered all up snug and comfy. We battered down the earthen floor of the cellar and danced on it a good while, taking turn and turn about. When complete it was just as nice as ninepence, so we fetched spades and picks and made several false

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attempts, but found nothing anywhere about the cellar, till by chance (of course) - *bang* went Hammy's pick-point through the staves of the barrel and some of the coins came spinning through. We picked up a few of these to show, and I put them in a mustard can which had held bait (and smelled high). Oh, we thought of everything which would be really convincing evidence. And if we neglected anything, it was not our fault. For we did our best to secure to Mr. Trevor undisputed possession of his own money.

And after all why should Mr. Trevor not see things as we did? I certainly should in his place. But he thinks differently from us - even from Hammy. Why if he found a half-penny on the road, he would go three miles out of his way to deposit it in a police-station. *We* would have met the case by simply putting the coin in our pockets and waiting for the owner to come along asking for it. That is, we did this, like any other boy, till Mr. Trevor taught us different. Our simple and sufficient code, so far, had been just this:

'Who loses, seeks -  
Who finds, keeps!'

## CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

### THE LAST RUN - AND OTHER LASTS

This is the story of the last run. Solway smuggling died hard. The days of the great 'landings' are long past. Though even in my own day I have talked with men who had been in Webster's famous venture at White Horse Bay, when two hundred smugglers went through the preventive men like a thunderbolt, or in that of Black Steve at Port-o'-Warren when Steve's daughter Jess, decoyed the Customs Officers away to Kirbean and Satterness, so that the whole of Colvend was full of 'hidie-holes' - not one of them empty.

But these great days were past. There remained only the yachts. There was always a little squadron of them hovering about the coast, white of wing - aye, and some even flying Club pennons. Above, there was nothing to indicate the dark and nefarious designs of the owner. The skipper was smart and all there, with perhaps a touch of Captain Kettle in the cock of his chin. The owner lounged in ultra-nautical blue with many superfluous buttons, and read Admiralty Yellow Surveys and Lord Brassey's *Year-Book*, so as to look knowing.

But in the dead of night, when all ashore were asleep, and only the stars wheeled above like a phalanx and the waves broke softly and almost affectionately about the little ship, if you were near enough you might have seen her glide silently away, then her skipper and her owner were no more dreamy, and the foreign sailors did what they were

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told at the jump. The yacht glided softly close alongshore, and at every half-mile she let drop a little flotilla of casks, with an empty one in the centre and sinkers at the edges. This raft sank only so far, being held in place by an anchor at a depth sufficient to clear any boat trading in these waters - or likely to venture among our dangerous quicksands and uncom-promising headlands. A tangle of floating sea-weed marked the spot, sometimes only a fisherman's basket, or even a cork fender.

And thus was the later smuggling carried on, and so, perhaps, it remains to this day. There is hardly an owner of a small boat who has not had propositions made to him 'go out to the fishing that needs no bait' in the estuaries of Clyde and Solway.

I do not think that Big Baptiste ever considered smuggling any harm. It was to him a pleasant and not unprofitable way of spoiling the Egyptians. In his own country he had been 'agin the Government.' And here, on the Solway shore, it was much the same. But what he only winked at, his daughter Cecille and her band did, and double did. As for Cumberland Bet, she came of a long line of St. Abb's Freetraders (not the political sort, but the genuine original article). The traffic flourished everywhere between Annan Water Foot and the Calf of Man, including both sides of the Solway. Though, perhaps, owing to the weakness or connivance of local magnates, it thrrove best and lingered longest on the Scottish shore.

Cecille's last trip began with our telling Mr. Trevor of our find. By great good luck we caught him just as he was leaving his alpine garden. During these weeks the new house of Orchard Dean had

advanced greatly. Long before we got there we could see the grey towers of Craig Nair granite pepper-and-salt-coloured against the dense green, looking at us over the trees of the park.

I had a suspicion that Mr. Trevor was in a hurry. So I pitched it to him strong and sudden. I had brought the chart of the island - our 'cheese' as the other fellows called it. All the later 'discoveries' were beautifully done out now by Fitz, and though the rounding of the cheese - I mean cliffs, was rather rough - still Hammy had cut down all the 'heughs' to their proper heights, whittling the wood down with his pocket knife and marking the different heights and distances, so that there could be no mistake.

I plumped down the 'cheese' before Mr. Trevor - right side up, and I said, 'Sir, you gave us the use of your island and we wanted to do something for you, to show that we were no ungrateful pigs. So we have explored it everywhere in search of treasure. We don't know yet whether there is any in the ground or not, but there are any amount of old coins down in the cellar of the Round Tower -'

'Pshaw - you are welcome to them,' he cried, fidgeting with his hat as if on the very verge of bidding us good morning. I knew where he was going, and if anyone else cannot guess, he has read this history to very little profit.

'But,' I said, impetuously, 'you do not understand - it is a really great treasure - like Captain Kidd's or Avery's or some first chop pirate like that - not just something that has been dropped accidental. It is mostly gold, and so far as I can make out, French coins - of the Valois kings, I should say.'

At this he changed his attitude ever so little, but only said, 'Anything else?' For while I was speaking

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he had been studying the ‘cheese.’

‘What do you mean by Burial Chamber?’ he demanded.

So of course I told him about the Douglasses and you should have seen the difference then. He started for the boat in a moment, as soon as he heard of Archibald the Grim lying there all in armour as rusty as an old plough - and the Arkinglass brothers - Ormonde and Moray and the other fellow who died for their race after the treachery of the King of Scots in Stirling Castle.

I thought he was coming right off to the island to see for himself. But all at once he stopped and seemed to remember something.

‘One of you fellows run up to Colline House, and tell Miss - but no, I had better go myself! Ah, there’s the factor’s trap. I shall not be gone five minutes!

He was all of an hour by the clock, and we stood there, confounding Hilda Causland and all girls, not for the first time in this long eventful history.

But arrive he did at last, and that was the main thing. As we rowed him over to the island he recalled - what we had never had out of our minds - the treasure. He asked who had found it. And he seemed pleased that it was Hammy and I. But I spoke up and said that the other chaps were busy making a map of the orchard and marking likely spots for further excavations.

And he said with a good deal of enthusiasm, ‘Well done, you chaps! I shall write to the Lord Advocate tonight to see what ought to be done.’

‘For the Crown?’ I cried with a gasp. For I felt that all was lost - if once the lawyers and ‘crown’ people got their fingers in the pie.

‘Yes,’ said Mr. Trevor, ‘he is an old college friend

of mine and a good golfer!'

(As if that made any difference!)

'But,' I urged, 'if you please, Mr. Trevor, we have been talking this over among ourselves...'

'And you think that this ought to belong to you?'

'Oh no, sir! No!' The cry of negation was unanimous. Even quiet Kilpatrick shouted. We did not want - we could not bear that Mr. Trevor should think such a thing of us!

It was Hammy who had the floor. He could speak with most freedom and authority.

'Uncle,' he said, 'we wanted you to have it. We knew that building all this new house cost an awful lot, and we meant what we found to help. That was all!' 'Then you want to give it to me?' said Mr. Trevor.

'No, sir,' said Hammy very quietly, but with a certain determination that made me proud of my pupil, 'it is yours to begin with. It belonged to your ancestors and is as much yours as the money in your purse!' (Sentiment cribbed from Cecille – but no matter!)

'Oh, no,' he answered, quickly, 'I cannot take it – it is not mine. I should never have looked for it.'

Then I had an inspiration – a cheeky one, now that I come to think it over coolly. But at that time not one of us was very cool, not even Mr. Trevor himself.

'Mr. Trevor,' I said, 'will you accept the Treasure of the Douglasses, rightfully yours... as a marriage present for Mrs. Trevor?'

And then, when he saw we all knew, as of course fellows always *do* know if any spooning is going on – he flushed pretty badly, and said 'Of all the impudent young dogs – '

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But Hammy kept at it.

'Uncle, you can't refuse a present like that, and you won't write to some Lord Big-Pot-Or-Other. He is sure to grab it all!'

'Well, if you put it like that,' murmured Mr. Trevor, 'I'm afraid I cannot. But at least I shall have to consult my lawyer as to the proper course to pursue. Treasure trove is unusual in these parts – and in any case I set more store by the tombs of the Douglasses, my ancestors – only four hundred years removed!' They must be taken care of and not made a show.'

But from that moment he was different with us, and though he was grave and quiet as usual, there was a spying twinkle in his eye – as if to find out how much we knew, and how it came about. For the ostrich with its head stuffed in a sand-bunker is a creature vigilant and perspicuous (as they say of police-officers in the local papers) compared with a man in love. And Mr. Trevor was not one whit better than the rest – rather worse, in fact. For you see, the disease took him late in life - just as I had measles while at college and nearly died of it. Whereas if I had had it when most babies do - plain 'saps' and beef tea would have put me right again before anybody knew what was the matter with me. So it is with Love. Poll early and often, and though you *may* have a bad quarter-of-an-hour when three girls come at once to call upon you at your island - still on the whole, it is better to get it over and be done with it.

All the fellows on Rough Island agreed with me in this, so we were all sorry for Mr. Trevor, and acted quite gentle to him. A fellow in that state can't help being a bit edgy and feeling ratty. I think we would

all have liked to tell him that Hilda Causland was a nice girl and a pretty girl enough, but nothing to get into a state about. We had been at school with her and knew. Only we were not sure how he might take it. So against our better natures, we refrained.

We spared him, therefore, as I say, and he stepped on shore and was taken first into the cellar, where we dug out some more of the buried treasure for him to see, and he rubbed one piece on his ribbed waistcoat and said that it was a 'Rose-Noble' of the time of Edward the Fourth, the chap who fought such a lot of battles in the Wars of the Roses and at last came out 'top-dog.' The name was prettier than the coin, even when cleaned up.

But on the whole, he did not take a very great deal of interest. He was all on eggs to see the Douglases of the Black. So we lit up a regular torchlight procession and made him an overall of the corn-sack persuasion with a hole for his head and one for either arm. We did not laugh, not one of us, though the sight he looked in this rig, with his keen eager face, boyish as to colour, and the hair just crisping a little towards grey, somehow looked dignified even so - like some of those fine chaps who were led out to be pilloried or burned, as they used to do in the time of the Spanish Inquisition and Bloody Queen Mary - or Elizabeth - I forget which.

Well, Mr. Trevor looked like that - just as much of a gentleman as in his evening coat and a stand-up extra-starchy collar. Manners make the man - maybe - at least the outside of him. But God himself makes the inside, and He has been very careful about Mr. Trevor.

In what Fitz called 'the Chamber of Horrors,' we stood round with our hats off and Mr. Trevor gazed

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reverently at the great fighters of long-past ages. *They* would not have let the Killies get their strawberries. Then he turned to us, and said a very unexpected thing.

'Fellows,' he said (and now he never called us boys) 'I want you to promise me not to say anything of this to Colonel Busby. I could not stand that.'

So of course we promised him. More than that, we understood.

'I shall bring over some stone and lime,' he went on after a pause, 'and all of us working together will block up the passage at both ends. We will not have upon us the curse of those who move the bones of the great!'

Then he came out, and afterwards as he went down to the boat to be rowed across, I took my courage in both bands and asked him what we were to do with the treasure.

'Put it all back where you got it, till we see,' he answered. Then revising his opinion he added, 'Of course if any of you would like a souvenir or so to give away now, I daresay nothing need be said!'

But I shook my head and answered for the chaps, 'Oh, no, please!' Indeed none of us would take a brass button unless from his hands. Therefore we would promptly seal up the treasure and keep it so till he was ready!

But I own I was somewhat disappointed. For though the discovery of the Douglas funeral vault had gone off all right, yet I had hoped more from the treasure. But the fact was that Mr. Trevor had got his head so full of other things - as may easily be understood - that nothing else mattered very much to him. The certainty of a whole Ben Gairn of solid gold would hardly have kept him an afternoon from

Colline House. Still as to the lawyer, I suppose he was right. He himself had been an advocate of sorts - only in England where they are sorry not to have Scots law to deal out. Accordingly he only knew something about English law, though he had never let on to anybody and nobody could have told it on him.

So in the end he wrote to his adviser - and with the last weeks of our holiday running out, we waited impatiently. Now curiously enough most nights I was to be found in the neighbourhood of Port Ling. I went over to see Big Baptiste or Cumberland Bet - I forget which. But I generally had a talk with Cecille, who was getting over her sprain quite enough to move freely about the house. And once when the coast was clear I managed to say how glad I was to have got her out of the cave and how grateful for all she had done for me.

But she cut me short.

'Will you go out with me to the fishing tonight?' she said 'I am not yet good for much except to steer!' I promised, of course, gladly enough. It was a clear night and really under Cecille's teaching, the sails were no trouble at all even to a fresh-water sailor like myself. We struck away to the west till we came opposite the dangerous little Bay of Rascarrel, where in times of storm the south-west swell rumbles the boulders about so that the grinding and clattering can be heard all along the Rerrick shore - even far up the slopes of Ben Gairn and Ben Tudor.

Now, however, it was calm enough to sail paper boats, and we put out our net, which was a little sweep with a float. I did the most of that. We did not want fish, however, as I soon learned. On the contrary we had a lively interest in a most innocent-

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looking little patch of floating seaweed, inside which was a cork fender. Beneath was a dainty little flotilla of casks, hanging like a captive balloon, only down in the tawny Solway water not up in the blue heavens. Soon we had these in tow and made all speed homeward towards Port Ling. Cecille was specially proud of what we had done, and the full strength of the 'Killie' gang was waiting to convey them to the hidden room with the top lights in which I had so long been the captive of the bow and spear of a certain Chief Thomas of the Black Hand.

I must say no one took very much notice of me. I obeyed orders like the rest of them, and Cecille sat there in the stern as calm as if she had been in church, with her bandaged foot straight out on a thwart, and her hair, a great soft twist of dusky crape, dank and beady with the dews of the night.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

### MR. TREVOR ROUGH - HEWS OUR ENDS

I was helping her ashore just after all had been stowed, or at least had been cleared from the suspended Mohammet's coffin of the float. As the holding anchor took ground the flotilla rose, owing to the pull of the empty central cask, and so in time they were all on the surface, and I doubt not, by-and-by, safe in the cave.

But as we left the boat whom should we meet but Mr. Trevor. He had been waiting for us, it seemed. He nodded gravely, but then he was always grave. And we bade him good morning, for it was very early rather than late.

'Look here, you two,' he said, more sharply than his wont, 'I am not going to do anything this time. But there must be no more running of illicit cargoes. The time is past for that. There is work for all the young men in the village, and float-running, besides defrauding His Majesty's Customs, makes them idle and dissipated. It was the curse of this shore only sixty years ago and I don't mean to have it all over again in my time!'

I could see that Cecille was very uncomfortable, so I took the blame on myself.

'I am very sorry, sir,' I said, with as piratical a 'Captain Yawkins' expression as I could muster, 'but we did not think we were doing any great harm!'

'I do not suppose you did,' said Mr. Trevor, 'and though I am a Justice of the Peace I will condone the misdemeanour for this once, on condition that it does not happen again.'

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He paused and smiled very quietly to himself as if his thoughts had passed to something more cheerful.

'I suppose, now,' he said musingly, 'that you two young people imagine yourselves in love the one with the other?'

'Yes, sir,' I answered quickly, before Cecille could get in a denial, 'the same as you and Hilda Causland!'

'The cases are not at all comparable!' Mr. Trevor answered coldly.

'Moreover I beg you not to bring Miss Causland's name into the matter. She is a lady for whom I have the very greatest respect.'

I have no doubt he had, but then he had not been at school with her or with her sister. That made some difference.

'Well,' Mr. Trevor went on, 'I have one or two things to propose for your consideration. I have been talking to your father, Mademoiselle Garnier, and he agrees with me that you are getting a little too old to be running wild with the boys of Killantringan!'

'She never did that,' I interposed, again rather indignantly, 'Cecille gave them their orders and they obeyed her. But she did not talk to them nor yet let them speak to her.'

He nodded his head gently, as if to intimate that he knew all that very well, but that he had yet more to say.

'Your father, Monsieur Baptiste Garnier, agrees with me that you ought to go to a school in France which I know of - indeed, where my sister lived some time, in order to finish your education!'

I had looked for Cecille to protest against this proposal. It would certainly separate her from me for

a long period. But the cry that came from her lips told me something very different. 'Then I shall see France!'

'Yes, you will see France,' said Mr. Trevor, smiling, 'and as to this young gentleman, I have had a talk with his schoolmaster, Dr. Causland. He assures me that, with application, the Dunstan-Clumber Bursary is quite within his reach. He ought, says his headmaster, to go to college in October of this year, and this he can do if he will only work fairly hard.'

'Then I am to leave school?' I cried as triumphantly as Cecille had done at the thought of merely seeing France.

'Well, yes,' said Mr. Trevor, 'on the whole I see no good in putting off your university studies. Penley is going there to learn engineering - FitzGeorge to paint. Kilpatrick returns home, and as Hamilton, my nephew, is going this year to the Academy, I must look to you to help him to prepare his work and keep him up to the mark generally. I think of taking a flat for you all in the New Town, and with an old housekeeper to look after you, leaving you to work out your own salvation.'

'And am I to have the same authority over the fellows as here?' I asked.

'Well,' said Mr. Trevor, smiling, 'I suspect that you could hardly expect to be able to kick an evil-doer full-dressed into the depths of the Rogue's' Hole. But I don't think that the final difference will be very great. I have not the smallest doubt that, in one way or another you will be able to maintain your authority!'

'All right!' said I, 'so long as the housekeeper does not object to the noise, I can keep the fellows in

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order!'

'I will endeavour to prepare her for your methods,' he said gravely.

'And is Hammy to attend the same church as the rest?' I asked, 'he has now learned the metre psalms and is not so very bad in the Shorter Catechism - better than Fitz, anyway!'

'I see no reason to the contrary,' said his Uncle, 'Hammy is not yet of an age or character to make up his mind about such things for himself. There is no hurry about that, and I prefer your keeping together!'

'But,' I said, wishful to empty the affair to the bottom, once for all, 'even supposing that I get the Bursary - how are we to live?'

'I would not trouble about that,' said Mr. Trevor, 'Penley's father and I are rather good friends. Fitz, I understand, has a little money of his own and will soon earn more. I owe a good deal to you fellows one way and another. So I am going to provide you with the house and somebody to mend your clothes. The rest you must do for yourselves.'

'And how long will Cecille be away?' I asked.

'Three years, most likely,' he answered, 'but in that time you will have holidays, and if you do well there is no reason why you should not see your friends - including, perhaps, Cecille.'

'I am an idle fellow,' Mr. Trevor continued, before we could thank him, 'my factor is leaving me, so my lawyer and I must do the best we can till you are free to take up the burden. A little knowledge of business in an Edinburgh accountant's office - some scientific agriculture - a good deal of chemistry - and a year on a farm will put in the time for you rather neatly, till Cecille comes back. Perhaps then you will

have forgotten all about each other. Such things have been. But if not, you can have the house I am going to build at Dean Bay, opposite Rough Island – and - well, you may follow my example..!'

Upon which Cecille and I affirmed that nothing would ever tear us apart - that we would always think of one another and so on. Just what very young folk always say!

'Ah, yes,' said Mr. Trevor, smiling pensively, 'I have heard something like that. Indeed I may perhaps have given utterance to something like it when about your age. Still, you are a young man of some experience by what Hild - Miss Causland - tells me. So there is at least a chance that both of you may keep your word.'

At this point Cecille quietly took my hand and said firmly, 'I have always made others do what I wanted, and Johnny will do as he says. Besides I shall write to him from France and from his answers I shall know if he is being faithful!'

Then the faintest of smiles began to lurk in the corners of Mr. Trevor's mouth.

'I was not thinking of Laurieston,' he said, 'but of you, Mademoiselle! A young lady who runs yacht-loads of dutiable goods at the age of eighteen - well, she may have all Paris at her feet by the time she is twenty-one.'

'I have never yet broken my word,' said Cecille, calmly, 'build the house, Mr. Trevor, and at the end of three years I shall be ready—!'

'But no more cargoes!' insisted the lord of Orchard Dean.

'I must bring home a dress-piece for my mother and some lace for Miss Hilda the very first holidays!'

'That is next year - a long time yet!' said Mr.

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Trevor, laughing, 'all I ask is, do not land them at Port Ling nor yet hide them in the smugglers' Back Kitchen.'

In due time I got the Bursary as the Doctor had foretold. You can trust the Doctor in things like that. He put on a good deal of steam pressure before he sent me up. Cecille went to Paris, and in her very first letter she said, I like the place, and the school is more interesting than I had expected. *Myrtle Causland is here!*

In a boy this would have meant that there had been 'times.' But with girls you never can tell. As likely as not they were bosom friends and showing each other their secret hordes - original poems and such-like. I did not care to dwell on this. However Cecille certified over her signature that she was 'mine for ever' which was as much as a fellow could expect from Cecille Garnier. Myrtle Causland sent word that I was a nice fellow enough, but not nearly so clever as I thought myself. And Cecille added that I was not to mind, because Myrtle Causland had only known me when I was young and foolish.

As for Girlie May, I met her the first Sunday of the Christmas vacation, and when I called her 'May' as usual, she said with dignity, 'Mrs. Winter, if *you* please - I was married privately last Friday week to Frederick Winter, of Margreg. Here, Fred - (she hailed a great broad-shouldered blond giant) 'Here is the boy who owes mother four-and sixpence for milk sent across to Rough Island! Shall we have the police after him?'

And by that I knew for certain that the minx had never given a penny of the money to her mother, but kept it for neck-ribbons and such-like. I would have called her names then and there but for the blond

and hairy giant. He seemed rather good to keep friends with. So I explained to myself that Girlie May had the right to whatever milk she could sell - for pin-money - which was the more probable because we always paid the money for the eggs into her mother's own hand. At any rate, being now Mrs. Winter, it was Mr. Frederick Winter's business - not mine.

So that year we never got to the Raiders' Country at all, Mr. Greenock's tent not being done in time. But next year we mean to have everything settled. Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Trevor are going fishing to Loch Dee, and Hilda has promised to bring Cecille up there with her. If Myrtle comes too, it will be cheerful! Anyhow for that we shall have to wait and see.

One thing is certain. Never will we have such a holiday as we had on Rough Island - nor any flounders so good (though there will be trout and gypsies and Murder Holes!). But the best will be the Herd's House at Loch Dee . . . and the first walk with Cecille. I shall know in a moment if she is different - also if that wretch Myrtle has let her see the silly verses I once wrote. But I don't believe even a girl could be so abominable.

I got the Bursary, as I said, and everybody said how fine it was of me. It was really all owing to the Doctor and my wanting to have Mr. Trevor start building that house on the Bay. But the realest thrill of all comes when I think of swinging down that cliff and finding all the treasures hidden in the caves of Rough Island, where lie the Douglases of the Black, now walled up for ever.

And what comes oftenest of all, Cecille lying unconscious at the foot of the first flight of steps,

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having gone forth to seek me in the darkness,  
guided only by her brave heart and what that heart  
contained.

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[www.srcrockett.weebly.com](http://www.srcrockett.weebly.com) and The Galloway Raiders YouTube channel at [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

'Mayhap that is the best fortune of all – to be loved by a few greatly and constantly, rather than to be loudly applauded and immediately forgotten by the many.'



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S.R. Crockett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "S.R." on top and "Crockett" below it.

