The Complete Crockett

The Galloway Raiders

digital edition

Scottish works

SWEETHEARTS AT HOME

S.R.CROCKETT

First Published by Hodder & Stoughton in 1912

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

Even though this is set ‘at home,’ Crockett is ever the Traveller. He tells us: *‘I cannot help my heart beating faster when I set foot on any of the untrodden places of the earth, when I know that the next person I meet will be different from anybody I have ever met before.’*

Published in 1912 by Hodder & Stoughton as a long overdue sequel to *Sweetheart Travellers,* it is also a sort of final hoorah to the waning childhoods of Crockett’s real and fictional children in the *Toady Lion* and *Red Cap* stories, *Sweethearts at Home* divided opinion even at the time.

Sweetheart Travellers was hugely popular for a decade and in this sequel Sweetheart reports: ‘*Ever such a lot of children whom I don't know have written to me to say how glad they were that I made father take me with him on his cycle such splendid long journeys. Because, you see, their fathers read the book, and had a little seat fitted for them! On the other hand, I suppose parents write and abuse my father for putting such ideas into their little girls' heads.’*

She notes that praise wasn’t universal and gives a funny anecdote of a man who wrote to complain *of* Toady’s behaviour.

Some find *Sweethearts at Home* too contrived – I hesitate to describe it as like the Curate’s Egg, because each time I think I should, I find I like it more than that. I suppose what it isn’t is ‘connected’ in any literary sense. It’s something of a mind wandering down memory lane. You should

think of it maybe as a memory blanket – patchwork and worn in places but familiar and friendly. It is mostly a loose set of memory stories about Crockett's children from youth to their teenage years.

There is a sense of Crockett filling in some of the gaps from earlier books and a feeling that he is delving into his store cupboard and remembering incidents, then writing them down. And for me this is both its strength and its charm. It is equal parts sentiment with pragmatism and defies genre classification.

By the time *Sweethearts at Home* was written Crockett's children were, of course, no longer children. The family moved to Peebles in 1906 and while this is described as the end of the 'diary,' the published edition is five years beyond this date. By which time 'Sweetheart' was 23, Philip (Hugh John) 21, George 18 and Margaret 15.

While the conceit of the diary may seem too contrived and perhaps Crockett's own voice comes through too strongly at every stage, I can forgive him this. After all this is the story of his children by their father, not their own story, however much the fictional construct pretends. We can sense a father who is losing his children, but only because their childhood is gone. Can we condemn him for trying to hold onto the memory of childhood?

As with all Crockett's work, to get the most of *Sweethearts at Home,* you have to understand the context and be prepared to engage with what the author is trying to do rather than shoehorn it into some more conventional style of book.

While Crockett hides himself behind his characters – using a fictional version of his

daughter's voice is something of a conceit, he delivers many an interesting comment on his own life and times. We see him well aware that writing a 'children's' book is perhaps a folly. Even at aged ten Sweetheart has no time for them: '*I would know ever so much better, and would have down half-a-dozen Grown-up books that just make your eyes stand out of your head like currants in a ginger-bread bunny. That's what I like. No children's books for me.'*

Maybe Crockett felt he was on a fool's errand with *Sweethearts at Home.* He shows himself fully conscious that there may not be an easy audience out there for this work. Times have moved on in sixteen years between the two publications, as he is all too well aware.

In the nostalgia for times past there is still much to interest the modern reader – in what might also be seen as an analogy of change in the world of fiction, Crockett writes at length about the dangers of motor transport. Crockett was a keen observer, also an innovator, but he has a respect for old ways too. He notes how times have changed in the countryside since the motor car has taken over from cycles and carts.

Then we had the world to ourselves, save for a red farm cart or so. Then there were no motor-cars, no motor-buses, no clappering insolent monocycles! It was in some wise the rider's age of gold. The country still lay waste and sweet and silent about him. The ignoble 'toot-toot' and rhinoceros snort of the pursuing monster was unknown—unknown, too, the odours which leave the wayfarer fretful and angry behind them.

'Get out of the way, all you mean little people!' was not yet the commonest of highway sounds. The

green hedgerows were not hidden under a grey dust veil. The Trossachs, the Highlands, the English lakes, and our own fair Galloway roads were not splashed with the iridescent fragrance of petrol. Ah, we took Time by the forelock, Sweetheart, you and I, in those old days when the hawthorn was untainted and the wayside honeysuckles still gave forth a good smell.

He speaks in no uncertain terms of the madness of privileging the motor car over the bicycle.

Ah, a good time! Neither of us are in the least likely to see a better! For during these fifteen years there has come upon our land a strange thing, a kind of plague of heartlessness; the return, perhaps, of mechanically civilized man to the brute, or (if that be too strong) at least to the ruling-out of all gracious consideration for the rights of wayfarers.

I am sure that the 'motoring-habit' is more poisonous and more injurious to the nations in this Year of Grace, 1911, than all the poisons that ever were 'listed.' It is the Indian hemp of the soul, which makes even good men mad.

And is clear that there's a class issue here too. There seem to be far too many *Toad of Toad Halls* on the road in 1911. Crockett writes of how the rich pay scant attention to the poor: *'The police failed to obtain the number of the car which caused the accident.'*

Naturally! Excellent Under-Slaughterman, vulgarly called Chauffeur! Knows his business! He will ask for a rise next week and he will get it. That paragraph about the little girl trailed along for fifty yards under the rear wheels, with—Hold your tongue, you understand, Higgins—the details would not look well posted up in my club! Brave Under-Slaughterman! He winks an eye, as he has a right to do when he puts

his latest-earned gratuity in his pocket.'

And closes with a final warning: *it is the pursuit of the mile-a-minute which sucks men's hearts empty of a generous feeling, which is the great open-air school for making iron-bound materialists out of human men—or rather animals fitted with deadly mechanical appliances worse than those of Mr. Wells's Martians.*

I love my friends who are tied to these chariot wheels. But I fear for them. Temptation is great.'

Part of the patchwork of this constructed 'diary' is the potential love affair between Hugh John and Elizabeth Fortinbras – and Cissy Carter makes an appearance towards the end to have her say. Yet even if you are less than captivated by the 'will they, won't they' love story, there is plenty to glean in the pages of this book. We see in detail the kind of small town gossip that was clearly prevalent in Penicuik of the time. Penicuik, fictionalised as Edam, is after all, just one exemplar of small-town Scottish life in the early 20th century. You do have to feel some empathy with Philip having his 'affairs' thus trawled for public consumption. At the end of the book Crockett gives the children (fictional) right of reply and in doing so we might see him giving them something of a peace offering, begging their indulgence even, for the way he has 'used' their childhoods over the years in his fiction.

Crockett's observations are always keen. We might even credit him with foreseeing the likes of ebay as Sweetheart writes about presents. She hates 'useful' ones, and doesn't like getting 'money you can't spend.' But most of all she thinks: *'There ought to be a 'Misfit Presents' Emporium,' where you could take all the presents you don't care about and get them exchanged for what you do.'*

I think it helps to see this book as a sort of memory patchwork rather than any attempt at linear narrative. That way you can divert down paths such as *'The Little Green Man'* story which is quite gruesome and very interesting and comes from a time when Maisie was captivated by the stories of Andrew Lang (among others) without fearing you are being diverted.

But as ever, it's the drawing of characters and especially the relationship between father and child which sings out from this book. It is both poignant and believable, if you have the eyes for it. It must be said, you will likely either find a conflict or an interest in seeing Crockett (allegedly) through the eyes of his daughter who then describes her relationship with him. If you take this as an arch conceit then I think you miss much interesting introspection on the part of Crockett himself. Clearly he had strong relationships with his children - better than most of those parent/child relationships described in his children's books – Sweetheart remarks more than once that he 'forgets he is a boy' But there's no doubting his parental authority and the respect this accords him, when the chips are down.

In this book, however, we see a man who is as happy telling stories and playing games with his children as one who is busy working in his study earning a living. Little wonder that when the 'work' is to write a book about the very things that working prevents him from doing, it becomes complex.

Unsurprisingly, the early 'memories' of Sweetheart from the age of four until she is about fifteen deal with childish things. She records early feelings of guilt in the story where she thinks of

blaming the cat for the breaking of a vase and we discover that the one thing Crockett's children had dinned into them from an early age was honesty, not just as the best policy, but as the only acceptable one.

Aged ten, 'she' writes of the different worlds of adults and children:

But at any rate they have not an idea that children really are thinking—nor how much they know. Perhaps that is just as well. For, as they say about the monkeys, if they only knew how we talk among ourselves, they might set us to work. At least they would not be so ready to believe in us when next they saw us with our 'behaving faces' on.

And later, talking about Grown-ups: *'Big Folks' job is to make us behave, so that we are as little of a nuisance to them as possible. Our business to get as much fun as we can out of life without getting in the way of the Grown-ups. All their 'Don't do this's' and 'You mustn't do that's' are just warnings not to give them trouble. Moral (according to Hugh John), 'Give as little trouble as possible to Grown-ups. And they will let you do pretty much as you want to.'*

It's clear, and not just from the extended story of Polly Pretend, that Crockett's children were well aware that the one expectation upon them was that they tell the truth. Beyond that, they had a fair measure of freedom, which might seem at odds with our perceptions of Victorian/Edwardian children of the manse. Except remember that Crockett had left the life of a minister behind for that of a writer. His children were brought up in a much more Bohemian atmosphere than he himself experienced and mutual expectations were, unsurprisingly for Crockett, more to do with truth and right in the heart than in the

eyes of those in power or authority.

'Sweetheart's' relationship with her father is always (at least from Crockett's perspective) a strong one. And through her voice we glean many interesting snippets of information about the life of the writer. Bank House is described – with the library and father on the typewriter: '*the library, which is made of wood. And mostly there is a ticking sound inside, which is the typewriter—tick-a-tack—tick-a-tack! Then a pause, a few growls, and then the noise of a book being pulled out, rustling leaves, more stamps, more growls, and again—tick-a-tack!*

It goes on like that most of the time, except when the Animal inside must be fed, or on fine afternoons, when he comes out to play.'

And then we come to the descriptive elements. There are descriptions of the eighty foot library, and the Observatory Crockett had built into Bank House. Both are places of sanctuary and peace. Crockett is variously called 'Somebody', 'Big Growly,' and 'Fuzz' all terms of endearment which go to build the picture of a family. The reader can imagine them all sitting down in the library at Torwood House (it was moved on a train, lock stock and barrel from Bank House in Penicuik) with Crockett reading them bits saying 'do you remember when we...?' and for me, that offers a lot of interesting issues about where the lines are drawn between fiction and reality, as between public and private. The 'right to reply' declarations in the final Chapter 30 make interesting reading in this context. Called 'Disclaimers' it purports to be the children giving their opinion on the book, but I think we can see Crockett issuing the 'disclaimer' showing that he

understands the difficulties of being a ‘celebrity’ author’s child.

We know that Crockett and Maisie (Sweetheart) had a strong, life-long bond. But Crockett also has strong bonds with Philip (Hugh John). We might remember the pangs of jealousy felt by Sweetheart in former days but now she is able to describe their relationship without any such emotion. I have to confess I find this the more compelling relationship.

From Hugh John we learn that: *‘being naughty is just according as you look at it.*

His philosophy is: *‘You do certain things as they say, work out your sums, and keep your drawers tidy. Then you can live in your own world and they in theirs. They won't bother about you.’*

For those who worry unnecessarily about sentimentality in Crockett’s fiction (and life?) we have an indication of Tough love. It is reported that: *‘father's first principle in all such matters is, ‘Support authority—receive or make no complaints—and, above all, work out your own salvation, my young friend!*

And though it sometimes looks a bit hard at the time, as Hugh John says, ‘It prepares a fellow for taking his own part in the world, as you soon find you have jolly well to do if you mean to get on.’

But it’s a good relationship for all that. *‘He was father's constant companion on his walks, and to hear them debate in that precious half-hour in the dining-room after dinner was to escape suddenly from the smallness of the world about, and find oneself on the high Alps of thought where the sun shone early and late, where the winds blew clean and cold, and thought was free exceedingly. Neither counted anything as to be accepted merely because*

they had been told it upon authority. They searched and compared, the man and the boy, Hugh John's finely analytic mind steadied and gripped by the elder experience. Their talk was not the talk of father and son, but rather of two seekers.'

Good old Toady Lion, though grown now into a Naval Cadet, seems largely unchanged (and unrepentant). He is described by ex Butcher Donnan thus: '*If he does not break his neck off somebody else's apple-tree, or get shot in a poaching accident, no doubt he may live to be a great and good Admiral of the Fleet.'*

Crockett may 'use' his children in his fiction but he is fair in exposing everyone under the pen of this fictional diarist. We are also treated to stories of his own childhood. The children revel in stories from Massa, and Mac (William MacGeorge the painter, was a childhood friend of Crockett's, who features both in *Little Esson* and in *Rogues' Island)*

At the end, the two collide as the family take a trip to Galloway to re-visit old haunts. Like us all, they carry memories, and make new ones, but also have to accept how much has changed and been lost in the course of a lifetime. In these later chapters we see more of the original *Sweetheart Travellers* as they make their way through Galloway to Kirkcudbright, Gatehouse, Borgue, Newton Stewart, Creetown, Clatteringshaws and the Crae stepping stones, all of them brilliantly described. As they return to Crockett's birthplace at the Duchrae, they experience a poignancy that must surely have been felt by many: '*we went to the little farmhouse up the loaning, where they took us for ordinary tourists, and pointed out to us the sights. More than once I glanced at father, but he had so grave a face that the kind*

and pretty girl who showed us over evidently took him for a very severe critic of his own books, an enemy of dialect in any form. So, ceasing her legends, she offered us refreshments instead.'

There is sentimentalism and pragmatism in equal measure in this patchwork. And I would remind you that if you read Crockett without humour you are not really reading Crockett. *Sweethearts at Home* opens with Crockett's standard self-deprecating humour regarding the writing of poetry and this sets the tone for the entirety. Of course one might feel as if one's entered a private joke, but if you are familiar with Crockett's own foray into poetry you will 'get' it.

There are far too many little descriptive gems in this book to mine for you here. Read on and you'll find out about Crockett and photography, about some juvenile engineering projects and about the creation of the Abracadabrian private language. There are details about bicycles and about affairs of the heart: *Have you ever noticed that when any one has got a back-set in love, or what they think is love, they are quite apt to fly off at a tangent, and marry the least likely person in the world?*

And there is the in-depth, mouth-watering description of the making of coconut candy. As one would expect from Crockett, there is also plenty of good natural description, of the seasons and the sights around Penicuik and Galloway in particular. Perhaps more surprising, of the very national identity of Crockett himself. Through his daughter's voice: *'That is Fuz all over. He says he is Scotch, but his part of Scotland is so near Ireland that (according to the best authorities) Saint Patrick swam across with his head between his teeth. Perhaps Fuz did too. But don't tell Hugh John that I said so.'*

Crockett is clearly keenly aware of the shift in social class and even national identity as passed down from one generation to the other. His children have an English mother after all and are solidly middle-class.

Class does enter the fray in the book and it is interesting to observe the ins and outs of class in small-town Scotland. The Donnan family takes centre stage for a time, taking us back to the adventures of *Toady Lion*, and there are various other vignettes which explore and explain the class issue.

But for me, first last and always, it is in the descriptions of his children, particularly Philip (Hugh John) which give the shine to this book. Of course Toady Lion steals every scene he is in, but in Hugh John we are gifted a different kind of hero. '*He is the youngest hero you can imagine, but somehow is much more like a young man who has shaved himself very close than the schoolboy he is.*

Nothing puts Hugh John out. When he has some big festival to attend along with father, he sits quiet and self-possessed, doing his part without a quiver on his face. As far as looks go, he could easily be the chairman. The clean-cut outlines of his face do not denote hardness. Only he is of the Twentieth Century, and an adept at concealing his sensations—even from his parents, with whom he is great friends.

But, for all that modernity, there is something essentially knightly, and even knight-errant, about our Hugh John. An elder time has touched him. Ideas growing, alas! extinct—are natural to him. A chivalrous Cromwellian is perhaps the nearest I can come in the way of definition.'

Much of this book's strength lies in the careful

and loving character descriptions of Crockett's children. But it also offers us an interesting insight into Crockett himself. He is, after all, behind it all, ever-present, supporting the characters (and children) he created.

At the end he reminds us and perhaps himself, '*Grown-ups, to my thinking, get narrow-minded.'* And perhaps this is a message we all need to take on board before we condemn this as any kind of curate's egg. Look more closely and while it might not be Faberge, it is perhaps at least an honest curlew!

Cally Phillips
April 2022

SWEETHEARTS AT HOME

BY S. R. CROCKETT

AUTHOR OF ‘SWEETHEART TRAVELLERS,’ ETC.

ASSISTED BY SWEETHEART HERSELF, AND WITH ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS BY HUGH JOHN, SIR TOADY LION, MAID MARGARET, AND MISS ELIZABETH FORTINBRAS

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THE EDITOR'S CHAPTERS

HE TELLS HOW IT ALL CAME ABOUT

1. A sleepy Sunday morning—and no need for any one to go to church!

It was at Neuchâtel, under the trees by the lake, that I first became conscious of what wonderful assistance Sweetheart might be to me in my literary work. She corrected me as to the date upon which we had made our pilgrimage to Chaumont, as to the colour of the hair of the pretty daughter of the innkeeper whom we had seen there—in her way quite a Swiss Elizabeth Fortinbras. In a word, I became aware that she had kept a diary. Sweetheart, like her nearest literary relative, began with 'poetry.' That was what we called it then. We have both revised our judgments since. Only Sweetheart has been more wise than I should have been at her age. She has resisted temptation, and rigorously ruled out all verse from the Diary as at present published! This is wonderful. I published mine.

Since then, she and I have been preparing the present volume, just as eagerly as if we had 'yielded to the solicitations of numerous friends,' as the privately-printed books say.

No, it was quite the contrary with us. Nobody,

except one nice publisher, knows anything about it. He asked us to let him print it, and even he has not seen the very least little scrap. All he knows is that Sweetheart has a good many thousand friends scattered up and down two hemispheres, and he believes (as we also are vain enough to believe) that they will not let *Sweetheart's Diary* go a-begging to be bought.

There is something curiously dreamy about the Lake of Neuchâtel. I knew it and the school down by the pier long ago, when the little town still preserved distinct traces of the hundred and fifty years of Prussian drill-sergeants. Here and there the arms of Brandenburg were to be seen curiously mixed, and almost entwined, with the strong red cross of the Swiss Confederation.

Specially interesting is the opposite side of the lake, for there the Cantons push forward their narrow necks of territory to the very lake shore—possibly as the price of their support against the Eagles of the North, whose claws have never let go their hold but this once. There, within a day's easy walk, you can pass from Canton Vaud into Canton Friburg and back again into Vaud. Then, Morat-way, you come on a little inset square of Canton Berne, whose emblematic bears also have their claws in every pie thereabout. And all the way, never a hotel for the fleecing of the foreigner! Here and there, indeed, one passes a country inn with sanded floor. More often it is only a rather superior house with a bush hung out French-fashion over the threshold.

It is best, as Sweetheart and I found, to make for one of these. Generally I had known them of old, and though since then the years had done some stiff route-marching, most of their hosts and hostesses

remembered me.

How do you get there? Well, you cross the lake almost at its narrowest part. A little stream drains into it, slowly and in Dutch fashion, as if it were smoking a peaceful pipe by the way. Indeed, for a little while you might fancy yourself actually in Holland, so thickly are the flowers set. Only—only (and oh! the difference!) they are all wild. For I cannot help my heart beating faster when I set foot on any of the untrodden places of the earth, when I know that the next person I meet will be different from anybody I have ever met before—that he will be as frankly interested and very likely amused by me as I am by the mouldy and the quaint about him—things that nobody in his senses has ever thought of looking at in that countryside for a hundred years!

Privately there is often a quiet, widespread, wholly unspoken doubt of my entire sanity. That dry smile hovering about the mouth of the courteous mayor of the commune says as much. Just the same with the quick, intelligent glance that shoots betwixt husband and wife when you ask to see their barn—once the chapel of a long-destroyed monastery (Carthusians from the Italian valleys driven out by the religious wars). To them it is a barn, commodious—only a little damp. But it is nothing more. A new model one, now—all burnt brick, floor of concrete, with iron roof pillars—now *that* would be something worth crossing the lake to look at. Hold—there is one at Estavayer! The farmer there would be glad to show it, if only Monsieur and the young lady…? No! Well, there is no accounting for tastes, and that shrug from Master Pierre said quite plainly that he had the poorest opinion of our mental capacity. But all the same Master Pierre is kind to

the infirm—to those (as the Catechism says) ‘of weaker understanding.’

Yes, there is the key. We can take our own time, and when we have done we can hang it up where we got it.

But good Master Pierre is curious too. Where might we be going? If it is a fair question—or, indeed, whether or not! ‘To Madame Marie Brigue's!’ ‘Yes, but certainly!’ ‘Had we known Madame Marie long?’ The Elder of us had known her for some twenty years or more.

‘When she was with old Monsieur Alexander—yes, at the Upper Riffel House, and everything in her charge?’ Sanity was returned to us like a passport examined doubtfully. We should not this time be committed to a House of Retreat for the mentally infirm—no, not if fifty doctors, all specialists, had so certified. *We knew Madame Marie!* Master Pierre would lay aside everything and come with us. It was not possible that we could know the way.

I thanked Master Pierre, but for my own reasons preferred to go alone—that is to say, alone with Sweetheart, which is the best kind of loneliness.

‘There is going to be a storm!’ I said to my Maid, as we paced along side by side. Sweetheart looked at the cloudless September sky, at the boldly-designed splashes of the leaf-shadows making Japanese patterns on the narrow path through the wood. Then she regarded me inquiringly. Of a storm in the heaven above or on the earth beneath there was certainly no visible sign.

Then I explained that the tempest was a moral one, and would certainly break when we met in with Madame Marie. And I set her this riddle to

read, for she is fond of such.

I had always been first favourite with Madame Marie. She had spoiled me as a wandering boy. She has assisted me as a callow youth to the sweetmeats under her control. In my earlier manhood she had taken me to see her brother, who was a *curé* of a great parish in the Valais.

Yes, boy and man, she had always scolded me, railed upon me, declared to my face that I was of a surety 'the Last of the Last,' and that, altogether apart from my being a heretic, my misdeeds would inevitably render my future far from enviable! According to Madame Marie I was certainly bound for an ice-free port!

'And what had you done to her, father, to make her so angry with you—or at least scold you so much?'

'Only come in late for my meals!' I said. Sweetheart took one look at me, as one who would say, 'Pray remember that I am no more a simple child!' But what she said aloud was, 'Did all this happen before I was born?'

And I knew instantly that I was underlying an unjust suspicion, from which the very first glimpse of Madame Marie would instantly free me. For even when I knew her Madame had long passed the canonical age, and must now be verging on the three-score years and ten.

It was, however, quiet unlikely that she would ever refrain from scolding me, even in the presence of my eldest daughter.

By and by we came in sight of a little white house, and upon the path which passed beneath it. Over the door, half hidden by the yellow splashes of *Canariensis*, was the sign, '*Madame Marie Brigue ...*

Restaurant.' There was a great quiet everywhere about the place. Some pigeons were coo-cooing in the Basse Cour. A cat regarded us with the sleepy dispassion of its race. However, there was certainly a stirring among earthenware somewhere towards the entrance of the cellar. We could make out the grating of carrots, or, as it might be, the scraping of potatoes. I motioned Sweetheart to get behind me—which she did, eager to take a hand in one of 'father's ploys.'

Then I went to the front door, and in the loud, confident voice of one who, after a short absence, has come back at the proper hour, to find his dinner not ready, I called out, 'Marie, are those chops not done yet?'

A dish clattered on the floor. We could hear the splash of the fragments on the cool flagstones of the inner kitchen.

'Marie, old Lazybones! Here have I been twelve hours on the mountains, and not even an omelette ready!'

'It is the Herr-with-the-Long-Legs—the Herr who kept my good dinner waiting while he ran about the 'bergs'! And now—oh, the Good-for-Nothing, the *Vaurien*, he come back to old Marie crying hunger—just as he used to do more than a score of years ago up in the Riffel House!'

And before I knew it I was embraced and kissed on both cheeks by this tall, gaunt old woman—greatly, of course, to the joy of Sweetheart. But her turn was yet to come. Madame Marie continued scolding me even in the utmost expansion of her greeting. She held me at arm's length and scolded. She scolded because I had come without warning, and because I had not come sooner.

Scolded because I had let the years slip past till her hair was white like the snow on the mountains, on which I had so often tarried till my dinner was burnt to a cinder! While mine—but there—who was this with me? Was I married? 'Your daughter!' A daughter like that, and old Marie getting so blind that she had called me bad names—the names of the old time—in her hearing. But Mademoiselle would understand! She would pardon a poor old woman who had known her father, and been a mother to him, years and years before the young lady was born, or even thought of!

So, indeed, Mademoiselle understood very well. No forgiveness was necessary. She was all too happy. And while the dinner was preparing, she set down all these facts in her notebook, so that when Madame Marie came to the door to say that the omelette was ready to be put before us on the table, she called to Sweetheart that she was indeed her father's own daughter. For that in the old days at the Riffel House he had always been like that, sitting down on the very glacier to scribble in his notebook all about nothing, and so letting good food spoil because of his foolishness!

And so it happened that on our way back from Madame Marie's, Sweetheart let me see the first pages of her Diary. I found them so interesting that we arranged on the spot how they were to be published. And so here they are, ready (if you be simple) to please you as well as they pleased me.

2. When the Roads Were Sweet, Safe and Silent.

So, preliminaries being settled, the elder of the *Sweetheart Travellers* was entrusted with the editing

of this book, on the express condition that he must *not* edit it! Strange but true! It is just sixteen years since, with the assistance of Mr. Gordon Browne's pencil, he began the preparation of the first series of *Sweetheart*. Ever since which, for him, fortunate day, he has been under promise to supply a second volume having for title *Sweethearts at Home*. From all over the world children keep writing to ask him for more adventures with his little companion on the front basket-seat of his tricycle. Gladly would he respond to this wish of unseen baby lips, generally expressed on ruled paper in straggly lines of doubtful spelling. But, alas! Sweetheart is nineteen and tall. She would be the death of her poor father (and of the machine) at the very first hill. Now she rides a 'free-wheel' of her own, and saddest of all to relate, prefers Hugh John or other younger company to her ancientest of comrades. That is, on cycling trips. But she makes up to him in other ways, and hardly anything gives her greater pleasure than to 'revisit the roads and ridges' where, sixteen years ago, her baby fingers, vigilant on the cycle bell, called the preceding wayfarer to attention.

Then we had the world to ourselves, save for a red farm cart or so. Then there were no motor-cars, no motor-buses, no clappering insolent monocycles! It was in some wise the rider's age of gold. The country still lay waste and sweet and silent about him. The ignoble 'toot-toot' and rhinoceros snort of the pursuing monster was unknown—unknown, too, the odours which leave the wayfarer fretful and angry behind them.

'*Get out of the way, all you mean little people!*' was not yet the commonest of highway sounds. The green hedgerows were not hidden under a grey dust

veil. The Trossachs, the Highlands, the English lakes, and our own fair Galloway roads were not splashed with the iridescent fragrance of petrol. Ah, we took Time by the forelock, Sweetheart, you and I, in those old days when the hawthorn was untainted and the wayside honeysuckles still gave forth a good smell. True, Sweetheart (as above stated) sounded a bell. But even she did it with relish, and the trill carried tenderly on the ear, like the mass-bell rung in some great cathedral as the service culminates, each time more thrilling and insistent. And it was good to see the smile of the folk as they stood aside, and the nod which red-cloaked Sweetheart gave them as we glided noiselessly past!

Ah, a good time! Neither of us are in the least likely to see a better! For during these fifteen years there has come upon our land a strange thing, a kind of plague of heartlessness; the return, perhaps, of mechanically civilized man to the brute, or (if that be too strong) at least to the ruling-out of all gracious consideration for the rights of wayfarers.

I am sure that the 'motoring-habit' is more poisonous and more injurious to the nations in this Year of Grace, 1911, than all the poisons that ever were 'listed.' It is the Indian hemp of the soul, which makes even good men mad. The earth may still belong to the Lord, though, standing afar off, I have sometimes my doubts. But of a certainty the roads between city and city, the creeper-hung village street where, generation after generation, children played, the quiet lanes where the old folk walked arm in arm, are now given over to the Minotaur whose name is 'My Lord Teuf-Teuf.'

Every day in all lands (called civilized) the journals are filled with a lengthening tale of

victims—of the little child going to school, bag on back; the bairn playing with his soldiers in the dust; the deaf old lady walking along the lanes, so safe and quiet a few years ago. I can see her pattering about, looking for a few roses to grace her room—roses to dream over, roses to call back the good days now past for ever.

'HRRUMPH! HRRUMPH!' It is the trump of doom—behind her, unseen, to her unheard. And in the next number of the local paper there will be the briefest of paragraphs: 'No blame attaches to the proprietor or to his excellent and competent chauffeur.'

Sometimes, if one has the honour to be run over by the Highest of the High Born, they do inquire for you at the hospital, or even send a wreath for the coffin. For this one should even be content to die. And the paragraphs in the papers recording the gift quite make up to the mourners for their loss.

But even so, this is on the heights of motoring generosity. For at least *noblesse* does sometimes oblige. But the more recently and the more ignobly the Over-Slaughterman has been enriched, the more ignorant of all knowledge he is, the less he has seen of other lands, the fewer incursions he has made into the world of books and art, the less he possesses of that kindly natural consideration which the King-Gentleman shares with the Working-Gentleman—the more cruel and selfish he is when he gets himself upon the road, rushing along, disguised to the eyes, fakir-mad in a kind of devilish Juggernaut joy, to the holocaust of innumerable innocent victims.

'*The police failed to obtain the number of the car which caused the accident.*'

Naturally! Excellent Under-Slaughterman, vulgarly called Chauffeur! Knows his business! He will ask for a rise next week and he will get it. That paragraph about the little girl trailed along for fifty yards under the rear wheels, with—Hold your tongue, you understand, Higgins—the details would not look well posted up in my club! Brave Under-Slaughterman! He winks an eye, as he has a right to do when he puts his latest-earned gratuity in his pocket.

But, halt there! I will do no man an injustice if I can help it. There are motorists and drivers of motor-cars who are noways 'motor-fiends,' who conduct a car as safely and carefully as in other times they would a pair of horses. I have friends among such. God keep them in life and the practice of 'Unto others as I would that others should do unto me!'

But I grow old, at least in experience, and I fear for these my friends. Motoring as practiced in Great Britain today (and the northern continent is little better) is the direct and intentional abrogation of the Golden Rule. More, it is the only way in which a man, light-heartedly, taking no thought for the morrow, may kill his neighbour with impunity. In old times it was the pursuit of cent-per-cent. which damned a man, and delivered him bound body and soul to Satan. We have changed all that. Now it is the pursuit of the mile-a-minute which sucks men's hearts empty of a generous feeling, which is the great open-air school for making iron-bound materialists out of human men—or rather animals fitted with deadly mechanical appliances worse than those of Mr. Wells's Martians.

I love my friends who are tied to these chariot

wheels. But I fear for them. Temptation is great. Easy is the descent of Avernus, aided by a smart chauffeur, who wants to give you ‘the value of your money’ in speed and the survival of the fittest: *id est*, of himself and you!

Better, far better, to take pack on back, pilgrim staff in hand, and then—to the woods and the hills with Sweetheart and me, where never ‘teuf-teuf’ can be heard, nor petrol perfume the land.

But at least in Sweetheart's new book you will only find the old sweet things, the pleasures that do but gladden, the record of things at once simple and gracious and tender—such as, if you have been fortunate, must have happened to yourself. She does not once mention any car except that pulled along by honest ‘gees,’ or that still more favourite sort of all engineering achievements—the fortifications that the next tide will sweep away.

Sweetheart, little Sweetheart, and that ‘dear diary’ of yours—for this relief, much thanks! God keep you ever of the humble, of the wayside-goers, of those who think—first, second and always—of the comfort of their fellow-men, especially of the weak, the friendless, and the poor who foot it along life's way. In brief, may you stay what you have always been, Sweet of heart—and *my Heart*!

Ainsi soit-il!

S. R. Crockett.

SWEETHEART'S DIARY

1.SWEETHEART OBJECTS

In June—Some Day, 3 o'clock. Cool under the Trees.

Some while ago a book was written about me, called *Sweetheart Travellers*. It was father who wrote it, and I think he did his best, saying a lot of nice things. But, of course, how could he really understand little girls?

At first I thought I would write a book contradicting the mistakes. But Mr. Dignus, who is a friend of mine and knows about such things, said that would not be very kind to father, and might do him harm in his business. But that if I would write about everything just as it seemed to me as I grew up, he would see to it that it was printed and published.

So when father sees it, won't he just get a surprise? Perhaps he will go into a shop and buy *Sweetheart's Diary*, thinking that somebody is poaching on his preserves. I can see him tugging at his big moustache, and walking very solid and determined, same as he does when he says to the boys, 'You, sir, come into the study along o' me!' Which makes all the rest of us go sort of cold and trembly all over, like a rabbit smelling fresh lettuce.

But it is for what we are NOT going to get that *we* are sincerely thankful.

Only, after a dreadful lecture the boys are

generally let off— ‘for this time only, mind you!’—whereas the rabbit always ends up by eating the lettuce. [Moral somewhere about, but I can't just make it out.]

And that reminds me. I will tell you the dreadful history of the Blue Delhi Vase. It is one of the first things I can remember and the one that frightened me the most. It used to sit on our brown, carved-oak table in the little drawing-room. It was pale blue like the colour of the beady stones you can't see into—oh, yes—thank you very much—*turquoise*. And somehow I thought that it had come from a fearfully rich uncle in India, who was Prime Minister to a Begum, and would come home one day with an elephant in a huge cattle truck, like what I had seen on the railway. He would then have a scarlet carpet laid to keep his embroidered slippers clean—there is always mud before our station—and he would ride up to our front door on the Begum's state elephant. And the first question he would ask was always, ‘Is my Blue Delhi Vase in good repair?’

And if it wasn't, then he would demand the name of the miscreant who had done it, and bid the elephant, whose name was quite distinctly Ram Punch, t-r-r-ample him to pieces.

I suppose when I was very young I must have dreamed this, or heard folk talking, without understanding. At any rate I got things pretty mixed in my mind. You see I was *very* little then, so little that I don't remember there being any boys. Though I suppose Hugh John was a little trundler in a ‘pram,’ looking up at the sky with wide solemn eyes and never saying a word. I suppose so, but I don't remember.

All I know is that I wore little red caps, one for

Sunday and one for week-days. The Sunday one was put away during the week, and so mostly I had only one.

Now, on this great day I happened to be in the garden, and Somebody sent me in for my cap. Because my hair flew all about and got just fearfully 'tuggy'—enough to make any one cry, even Hugh John, who never cries at all. But, then, *he* has hair short like a door-mat and rough as if made of teased string. He has also a head so hard that he will bounce it right through the panel of a door for a penny—that was, of course, afterwards, not when he used to lie in his 'prim-pram.' But he got whipped, for the doors had to be mended. So he stopped.

I was in a great hurry. Indeed I flew. I never remember walking in those days. So in I banged as hard as I could, and coming out of the hot sun, the rooms felt all very still and cool. The parlour smelt of old rose leaves, which I sometimes stirred with my finger. They were in a big bowl, all powdery, and smelt nice—especially on hot days. Then I used to think that the poor old dead things were stirring in their sleep, and trying to 'blossom in the dust.' I don't know where I got those words—in a hymn, most likely. But I used to say them over and over to myself—yes, till I cried. Because I was sorry for the old roses that tried to live and couldn't. Silly, wasn't it? Well, it seems so now. But then, of course, it was different.

Now, when I had got over the queer little catch in my throat that finding myself alone always gave me, I started looking round under all the sofas and chairs to see that there were no lurking Day Ghosts about. They are the worst kind, and I began to wonder where my cap was.

I had come for it specially, you see. So I could not go out without it. Also there were awfully nice things going on in the garden; the picking of white raspberries, mainly; each shaped like a thimble; the cap coming easily off, and leaving a small dead white spear-point, and with a taste—oh, to make your mouth water for quite a week!

Anyway, mine does now.

For a while I could not see my red cap. Then, all in a minute, I caught sight of it on the top of the Delhi Blue Vase. It was dreadfully high, and as for me, I was dreadfully little. More than that, the table was slippery.

But I *had* to get the cap, because all the time I was missing the white raspberries out in the garden. I could hear them pattering into the tin pails with a rustle of waving stems and a *whish* of nice green leaves when you let them go.

So I got up on tiptoe. I was still ever so much too short. Then I took a buffet—the one on which I listened to stories being told. And I mounted on that. I had very nearly got the cap off when the buffet slipped sideways, and—oh, it was dreadful—there on the carpet lay the Delhi Blue Vase all in shreds—no, 'shards' is the proper word.

I couldn't think. I couldn't cry. I could not even pray. I forgot how. I grew ice-cold. For I had heard it said that of all the valuable things in the house that was the rarest. I knew it could never be put together again, and it was I who had done it.

For a moment I thought of running away altogether. It was not fear of being punished. No, if it had only been that, I should not have minded. At least not much. Punishments don't last long up at our house. But now I should never see the uncle

from India, nor the elephant being unpacked end-foremost out of the cattle truck, nor the crimson carpet, nor the howdah, nor any of these fine things. Or even if I did I might be stamped to death by the elephant, after all. Oh, I *was* unhappy. I looked in the glass and, I declare, I hardly knew the white, frightened, peeky face I saw there for my own.

You see, I usually see my own face when my hair is being done, or when the soap is just washed off. Then it is shiny and red; but now, in the dusk of the room, it looked very small and pale, and my eyes very big and black, with rims round them.

Now our cat was there, and the thought came of itself that everything might be blamed on her. She was our only *not-nice* pussy, and if I said it was Mir-row who did it, nobody would be the worse. She was always knocking things down anyway. She would only get chased out, and she was always being chased out. So one extra time would not matter to Mir-row.

Well, I suppose that is what the ministers and grown-up people call temptation—when you think you can do a thing so as not to be found out. When you do a thing and don't care whether you are found out or not—that is different. That's like Sir Toady (he's my brother, as you shall hear) when he goes bird-nesting and has to watch out for the keeper. But he doesn't really care if he *is* catched.

But the Delhi Vase! Oh, it seemed as if I never could be happy again in this world!

I knew—I mean at the time—that I should have prayed. I had been often and often told that I ought. Still, you can't just always pray when you ought to. However, I did manage to kneel down and grab hold of Mir-row.

I knew that Mir-row was a bad cat, and did all sorts of things she ought not to do. So I took her to the place where the Delhi Vase had been broken, and asked her if she minded. And she said as plain as possible that she did not care a bit. I should get whipped, that was all, and she would be glad.

She was a hard-hearted Thing. For I was in dreadful trouble. But for all that Mir-row would not take a bit of the blame. And she might just as easily, seeing the number of tit-bits I had brought out for her. But cats have no gratitude—at least Mir-row had none. However, I think she must have been a foreign cat, because she could not even pronounce '*Mee-ow*' properly. And that is the reason why her name was 'Mir-row.' She said so herself.

So I said to her, 'You, Mir-row, will you come upstairs and 'fess'?'

And Mir-row said just '*Fsssst-Mir-row!*' to show that she was cross.

Then I said, 'Mir-row, you are a horrid nasty cat, and you don't deserve that you should get off breaking that Delhi Vase. But I will take the blame on myself—yes, I will—just to show you what it is to be noble. *I* will go up-stairs and 'fess.''

So I said, 'Get thee behind me, Mir-row!' as I ought to have done at first. Because Mir-row had always been so naughty that she tempted me to blame her for breaking it. If she had been a good cat, then such a thing would never have entered my head. But her character was against her.

You see, I knew that I had only to say, 'Mir-row did it,' to get believed. Because she was always doing wicked things like that.

Then I went upstairs, running as hard as I could to get away from the wicked Mir-row, who was

tempting me to tell a story. I ran to find Somebody to 'fess' to. And I found Somebody. And Somebody listened, and then rose up looking quite grave, but very kind. Oh, I was shaking ever so, till Somebody took me in such nice strong arms, and said that as I had come at once, and had not even thought of trying to escape the blame or to put it on anybody else, I should not be punished—though it certainly *was* a great, great pity.

But I never told about Mir-row, or how nearly it had happened otherwise.

And as for Mir-row, she said nothing either. She just curled herself up on the carpet among the broken pieces of the vase, and when we went down was peacefully dreaming of catching mice. I knew she was by the way she had of thrusting out her claws and pulling them in again.

No, Mir-row did not deserve all that I had done for her.

But, after all, honesty is a better policy than blaming things on Mir-row.

This is the story of my first temptation, and how I was saved from the wickedness of Mir-row.

2.PURPLE 'THINKS'

[*June again. Aged ten.*]

Afternoon of the Day when the first Strawberry was Half-ripe.

It will never be whole-ripe, owing to an accident which happened to it. However, none of the Grown-ups knew except Sandy the gardener, and he only tells us not to. But we don't really mind.

Which makes me wonder sometimes if Grown-ups have a world of their own, same as us Children. I don't think so. If they had, they wouldn't always be writing and reading, or paying calls and sitting on chairs, and looking Nim-Pim-Pimmany! They can't really have good times all by themselves, same as us. What do you think? I suppose it is account-books, and postmen, and having to understand the sermon that makes them look like that.

But at any rate they have not an idea that children really are thinking—nor how much they know. Perhaps that is just as well. For, as they say about the monkeys, if they only knew how we talk among ourselves, they might set us to work. At least they would not be so ready to believe in us when next they saw us with our 'behaving faces' on.

Now I will tell you about our house. It is a nice one, and I have a bedroom with greeny paper, and out of the window you can see the Pentland hills and the flagstaff in front of them. The flagstaff is on

the drying green, but the hills are a good deal farther away. Maid Margaret and I live there—that is, at nights, and I tell her stories if she will lie on her right side and not kick.

Sometimes we have fights, but not such ones as the boys have up above. Often we can hear them stamping and thumping, and then coming down with a huge ‘bang’ that you would think would shake down the house. That is when they clutch and wrestle. Outside there is just the Low Garden and the High Garden, a road between big old yew-trees, and then you are at the library, which is made of wood. And mostly there is a ticking sound inside, which is the typewriter—*tick-a-tack*—*tick-a-tack*! Then a pause, a few growls, and then the noise of a book being pulled out, rustling leaves, more stamps, more growls, and again—*tick-a-tack*!

It goes on like that most of the time, except when the Animal inside must be fed, or on fine afternoons, when he comes out to play.

Then we have quite lovely times in the woods and hunting for things, or picnicking. And it is nice to see the white tablecloth, which Somebody has arranged on the green grass or under the shade, all covered with nice things for you to eat.

Then all about there are woods—oh! miles and miles of them. There is the Low Park, where there are lots of apples—rather crabby, but not much the worse for that when you are really hungry.

The Low Park is pretty big, and has a stream running through it, quite slowly and steadily. Then down below is the river-bed, all rocks and pools. Because the water is drawn off for the mills below. We can play there in the summer-time, and keep fish as safe as in an aquarium.

Of course there are nice places higher up—where Esk goes along lipping over the pebbles, tugging at the overhanging branches of trees, or opening out to make a mirror for the purple heather on the slopes above. But of all these you shall hear before I have done. Oh, yes, I mean that you shall.

And in the evening all is lovely dark purple except the hills, which are light purple and green in patches, the shape of cloud-shadows.

I wonder if ever you got to love words, colours, and things till they grew to be part of yourself? What do I mean? Well, I will try and explain.

When I was little, the word ‘purple’ somehow nearly made me cry. Oh, no—I did not like dresses that colour, nor even ribbons—much. Only just the word. Sometimes funnily, as in the line—

‘A pleasant purple Porpoise,
From the Waters of Chili.’

Sometimes seriously, as in two lines which have always brought the tears to my eyes—I do not know why. I think I must have put them together myself when I was thinking in sermon-time (which is a very good time to think in). Because the first is the line of a Scottish psalm, and the rest is—I know not what—some jingle that ran in my head, I suppose. But they made me cry—they do still, I confess, and it is the colour-word that does it!—that, and the feeling that it is years and years ago since first I began to say them over to myself. It seems as if there would never again be such hues on the mountains, never such richness on the heather, never sunsets so arrogant (yes, I got the word that time) as those when I was little.

But what, you ask, are the lines? Well, you won't think anything of them. I *know* you will laugh.

They are just—but oh! I am ashamed to put them down to be printed. For they are just altogether mine—all little girls who have been lonely little girls will know what I mean. Boys are pigs and will laugh—except Hugh John.

However, I can't put off any longer, can I? Oh, yes, I could, but—it is better to be over and done with it.

MY POEM.
Made up when I was (about) Four.

‘I to the hills will lift mine eyes—
The purple hills of Paradise.’

That's all! Now laugh! And if you do, I shan't ever love you again. Father smiles and says that very likely I did put them together, but that the last line is in a book of poems by a man named Trowbridge.

Well, what if it is? Can't *I* think it and Mr. Trowbridge too? I never saw his old book. Why, I could not read then, and *he* couldn't know what a little girl was thinking, sitting down by Esk-waterside and watching the purple hills—till I was told to come in and haste-me-fast, because the dew was falling.

But of course I don't tell this to everybody. They would call it sentiment. But I pity the little lonely girl who doesn't have ‘thinks’ like that all to herself, which she would die sooner than tell to anybody except to her Dear Diary.

After the boys got bigger and could romp, I didn't have nearly so many thinks—not time

enough, I suppose. Boys need a heap of watching. At first they have no soul—only a mouth to be silly with, teeth to eat with, and a Little Imp inside each to make them pesterful and like boys.

Well, little by little, I made a collection of things that were of my colour—all in my head, of course.

'League upon rolling league of imperial purple!'

I think it was father who wrote that, and I believe his heart was pretty big and proud within him, seeing his own heathery country spread out before him when he did it. I wonder if something went *cluck-cluck* (like a hen) at the bottom of his throat? It does in mine sometimes.

Then there is 'the Purple Wine of the Balkans,' and 'the wine-hearted sea'—but that last I only heard of at school.

And I liked a story about an Irish patriot who, when they brought him an address of honour with a green cover, told them to take it away and bind it in purple, the colour of the heather.

Also I loved to read about heroines with 'eyes like the purple twilight,' though just at present these are scarce in our part of the country. One of our forbears (funny word—for *we* are the Four Bears, the little ones! Somebody I know is the Big Big Growly—only don't tell him!) well, one of our ancestors—immediate ancestors, I mean—left us blue eyes, but as we grew older they all turned grey, which I think unfair.

Later on, I loved to be told about the 'purple Codex'—that is, the Gospels written out on purple vellum in letters all gold. That must be lovely. I tried

to stain a sheet with Amethystine ink, and print on it in gold paint. But it only looked blotchy and stupid—you never saw such a mess. So I thought it was better just to dream about the Codex.

I wasn't born in the purple myself, but I resolved early never to marry anybody that wasn't. And I should have a purple nursery, and purple bibs, and a purple ‘prim-pram,’ and a nurse with purple strings to her caps, and baby should live exclusively on preserved violets (candied) and beautiful purple jelly.

Then wouldn't she be a happy child? Not commonplace like me, and compelled to wear a clean white pinafore. They don't half know how to bring up children now-a-days.

Oh, how I do wish that I had been ‘born in the purple!’

But I wasn't, and white soils so easily. You see, if the purple were only dark enough, you wouldn't get scolded half so much, and they wouldn't all the time be telling you that milk food is ‘so wholesome’! Oh, how tired I am of being told that!

Still, after all, chocolate isn't bad, and you can easily make believe that it is purple instead of brown.

At least *I* can. And it tastes just the same.

Good-by, Dear, my Diary. There's Nurse calling.

3.PRESENTS

[*Still the Same Age. But no Date.*]

I wish we could choose our own presents, don't you?

People give you surprises, or think they do. For mostly you can tell pretty well by keeping an eye on the parcels and things as they come in. Or one of the servants tells you, or you hear the Grown-ups whispering when they think you are not attending. Attending! Why, you are always attending. How could you learn else? *They* did just the same themselves, only they forget.

Of all presents, I hate most 'useful' ones—'to teach you how to keep your things tidy,' and what 'you will be sure to need by and by, you know, dear!'

For when the time comes you've had it so long that you don't care a button about it. I suppose there are some Miss Polly Prinks who like things to put on. But I haven't got to *that* yet. Nor yet money that you are told you mustn't spend. There ought to be a 'Misfit Presents' Emporium,' where you could take all the presents you don't care about and get them exchanged for what you do.

'Please, sir, can I have a nice lot of the newest books with the prettiest pictures for four Jack-in-the-boxes, eight dolls (three dressed), a windmill and a Noah's Ark, that only wants Noah and one of his son's wives' legs?'

'Let me see them, miss, please!'

'Can I look at the books on that shelf?'

'Oh, these are the adventure books for Grown-ups,' says the man; 'children don't read such thing now-a-days—something in the picture-book way, Miss—*Little Sambo and the Seven Pious Pigs*, or *How many Blue Beans make Five?*'

But *I* would know ever so much better, and would have down half-a-dozen Grown-up books that just make your eyes stand out of your head like currants in a ginger-bread bunny. That's what *I* like. No children's books for me. And I'd have them all chosen as soon as the Presents' Exchange man had made sure that none of the paws were knocked off the green kangaroo, and that the elephant still owned a trunk.

It is a good idea, isn't it? What do you think? About the Exchange, I mean.

Once my Uncle Tom got a birthday present from Aunt Margaret. It was a set of fire-irons for the drawing-room grate! And when her birthday came round Uncle Tom chose for her present—*a pipe-rack for the smoking-room*!

I think that was fine—and so does Hugh John.

Now I am not complaining. August the tenth is *my* birthday, and it is a good time for birthdays—being sufficiently long before Christmas. I pity the poor people who were born in early January. Also presents are good at our house, and there are enough of us to change round among ourselves if any mistakes do occur. But what I really want to tell you about is what happened to Little Sarah Brown, who lives just outside our gate.

Sarah's people are very poor and her father makes them poorer by going and drinking—as he says, 'To drown Dull Care.' My father says if he let

Dull Care alone and drowned himself it would be better for every one all round. And that's a good deal for father to say, mind you, because he believes dreadfully in letting people alone.

Well, Little Sarah Brown's mother was ill most of the time. She had a cough and couldn't do washing, so Little Sarah came to our house to run messages and go to the post with big letters when father said so. It was pretty nice for Sarah too, because every second Saturday she got half-a-sovereign from father. He grabbled deep in his pocket until he found a piece of about the size, looked if it was gold, and handed it over to Little Sarah.

Just fancy carrying about real-for-true gold like that! Some people are dreadfully careless. Well, one time Little Sarah went up to the library to get her Saturday's money. Father was mooning about among his books, and shoved something at her, telling her gruffly to be off. He hadn't time to be thanked then, but would see about it on Monday!

And do you know—it was a whole big sovereign he had given her! Now of course *he* never knew. He wouldn't have found out in twenty centuries, and Little Sarah knew it. She did not notice till she was nearly home, and then she stopped under a lamp-post that was early lighted to look at what was in her hand.

Yes, it was a sovereign. Nothing less!

And, do you know, a bad, *bad* boy named Pete Bolton came behind Little Sarah and gave her hand a good knock up.

She would have lost it in about two ticks, because Pete Bolton was a perfectly horrid boy, and would have stolen it like nothing at all. Only Little

Sarah was upon him with a bound like a tiger, and bit his hand (yes, it *was* nasty, being very dirty). Only she bit Pete's hand from a sense of duty, and made him let go. She had her face rubbed in the mud, her hair tugged, and all, but she never let go the sovereign—half of which wasn't hers.

There was a girl for you, and yet boys will say that only they are brave! Well, don't you think it was pretty hard for Sarah—harder, I think, after fighting for it than before? You see, she thought of all the nice things she could get for her mother with the extra ten shillings, besides new boots for herself that didn't let in the water, and—oh! a lot of things like that.

Worst of all, she knew that if she did take it back to father he would only shove it in his pocket without noticing. But she said over and over: ‘Honesty is the best! Honesty is the best!’ You see, she could not remember the word ‘policy,’ which does not improve the sentiment anyway—to my mind, at least.

So back she went. Father was still mooning about among his books, and just as she expected he took the golden sovereign and shoved it back into his pocket right among pennies and pocket-knives and so on. But he quite forgot to give Sarah her own real half-sovereign. I believe he thought she had picked the coin up off the floor. For he just said, ‘Thank you,’ and went on with his work.

And Little Sarah stood there fit to cry.

By and by he noticed the girl and asked what she was waiting for—not unkindly, you know. But, as usual, he was busy and wanted to be left alone.

‘Please, sir,’ said Little Sarah Brown, ‘my half-sovereign!’

‘But I paid you your wages, did I not?’

‘Oh, yes, sir; but—’

‘Oh, you would like an advance on next week—very well, then.’ And he pulled out of his pocket the very identical piece of gold that had been Little Sarah's temptation—like mine about the Blue Vase and Mir-row, you remember.

‘There!’ he said; ‘now go away! I'm busy!’

‘But, *please*, sir…!’

‘WHAT?’

Then Little Sarah burst into tears, and father stared. But after a while he got at the truth—how he had given a whole sovereign in place of a half.

‘Very likely—very likely!’ said he.

And how Sarah had brought it back—all of her own accord.

‘Very unlikely!’ he muttered.

And how he had shoved it back into his pocket without noticing…

‘*Very* likely!’ he said, to himself this time.

So what did he do, when he had heard all about it, but promise to whack Pete Bolton with his stick the first time he got him. And Sarah began to cry all over again, saying that Pete had no mother and couldn't be expected to know any better.

‘Well,’ said he, ‘that's as may be! But anyway, I'll be a father to Pete the next time I catch him. I'll teach him to let little girls alone. I've dealt with heaps of Pete Boltons before! Oh, often! Don't you trouble, little girl!’

And he actually got his hat and walked home with Little Sarah, growling all the time. I don't know what he gave her. But, anyway, what he said to her mother made the poor woman so happy that she nearly forgot to be ill. And on Monday I noticed that

Little Sarah had new whole shoes and so had her brother Billy. So something must have happened, and though nothing was said, I can pretty well guess what.

So can Hugh John—and you too, my dear Diary. Only we won't tell. But the ‘Compulsory Man,’ who makes boys attend school, descended on wicked Pete Bolton, and then the schoolmaster fell on him, so that Pete became a reformed character—this is, so long as he was sore. Then, of course, he forgot, and began playing truant again.

Only after that he let Little Sarah alone. Because, you see, he never knew when, in a narrow lane, he might meet a big man, pulling at a big moustache, and carrying a very big stick. Because the sermons that big man preached with his stick were powerful, and Pete Bolton did not forget them easily.

The End—moral included free of charge, as Hugh John says.

4. MISS POLLY PRETEND

[*End of June.*]

Of course there ought to be a story in all this—the story of my life. I have a Relative who can spin you the story of anybody's life if you only tell him what number of shoe he wears. Only I am just a little girl, and have neither been murdered nor married—as yet. So in my life there are no—what is the word?—ingredients for the pudding. Yes, that is it.

So it must just come anyhow, like things tumbling out of your pocket when you hang head down from a tree or haystack which you are climbing.

All the same I will try always to put one story or one subject into a chapter, though these won't be called 'Printed in Gore,' or 'The House of Crime,' or anything like that.

For, you see, the stories the boys read are just stuffed with such things. So it will be rather a change to write about 'The Dirty Piece of Embroidery' and 'The Coloured-Silk Work-basket.'

And that reminds me. Often Grown-ups 'give it' to their children for the very identical things they used to do themselves when young. There is a friend of father's down at Dumfries whom he calls Mr. Massa. And once we bribed Mr. Massa to tell us all about when father was young—he was his earliest and dearest friend—though, by his telling, father pounded him shamefully and unmercifully for nothing at all, even after they had vowed eternal friendship. And do you know, the things that father did when he was a boy—well, he would thrash Hugh John and Sir Toady for *now*!

But I expect that all fathers and most mothers were like that. When *I* am a mother, I shan't be. Because, having kept a Diary, I shall only have to take it out and see how I felt. Don't you think that is a first-rate idea?

Besides, if it is printed, as Mr. Dignus says that it will be, it is bound to be true, and I shall have to believe it. Oh, just won't my children have a good time! Also Hugh John's. But Sir Toady Lion says he isn't going to have any—being married is ever such a swot, and children are all little pigs.

Well, *he* ought to know.

Oh, about this Mr. Massa? He told us some splendid things about father—how he stood on the top of Thrieve Castle with a stone in one hand and his watch in the other to measure the altitude, having just learned how. Only he forgot, and let go the wrong hand.

Smack—went the watch on the grass about seventy feet below! And there was he left standing with the stone in his hand. But the watch was ticking cheerfully away when they picked it up, and it is that very same old nursery watch that is hung up there now, and tells us when it is time *not* to get up.

I don't think I ever knew what it was to have a true friend with a good memory till that moment. And as for the boys and me, we never thought we should like any of father's friends so much. But Mr. Massa told us more things that we can cast up to him in time of need than we would ever have wormed out of father himself in a century. Funny how close people get about some things when they get older. Oh, I wish I had been born my own little girl. Then I *should* have been properly brought up!

However, that is not my fault.

Hugh John says that being naughty is just according as you look at it. Big Folks' job is to make us behave, so that we are as little of a nuisance to them as possible. *Our* business to get as much fun as we can out of life without getting in the way of the Grown-ups. All their 'Don't do this's' and 'You mustn't do that's' are just warnings not to give them trouble. Moral (according to Hugh John), 'Give as little trouble as possible to Grown-ups. And they will let you do pretty much as you want to.'

He says that acts first-rate at school. Toe the line with the masters, and then if you *do* 'whale' your fellow-pupil, no questions are asked. The only way to be a bad little boy in peace and quiet is to be a good little boy so far as work is concerned!

And as Hugh John does it, this is not hypocritical. He couldn't be that if he tried. He has just thought it out, and now makes it work with the greatest coolness in the world. It is his system. And he says every boy is a fool who gives the masters trouble. He means Grown-ups generally. You do certain things *as* they say, work out your sums, and keep your drawers tidy. Then you can live in your own world and they in theirs. They won't bother about you.

But, of course, Hugh John is pretty safe anyway. He has a reason for everything, and is always ready to give it if asked. If not, he keeps it to himself, wraps it about him like an inky cloak—and is triply armed because he has his quarrel just—and knows it.

But, you see, we are really pretty well off at our house, though we do grumble sometimes. When I was a little girl I rode many hundreds of miles with

father on his cycle, and now Hugh John and he spend days over glasses of all descriptions, telescopes and binoculars, while Sir Toady talks about birds' eggs for hours, and has succeeded to father's collection.

In the library there are the loveliest books on flowers—both editions of *Curtis*, the *Botanical Magazine*, two *Sowerby's English Botanies*, and lots more in foreign languages. Maid Margaret thinks she will go in for botany so as to get these. But I like best just reading books—or browsing among them, rather. For of course you can't really *read* forty thousand volumes, even if you knew all the languages they are written in.

There are sets of all the magazines that ever were: *Annual Registers*, *Scots Magazines*, *Gentleman's*, *Blackwood's*, *Chamber's*, *Leisure Hour*, *Cassell's*, *Magazine of Art*—oh, everything! And the library, being about eighty feet long altogether, is the loveliest place for wet Saturdays—so 'mousey,' and window-seaty, with big logs burning on a brass fireplace, and the storm pattering above and all about. It has a zinc roof, only nicely painted and covered with creepers. There is room enough for everybody to lie about, and read, and draw, all the time keeping out of Big Growly's way if he is working.

Even if he does see us, he only says, 'Get out, Imps! I can't be bothered with you just now!'

Only if you are careful and have the kitchen key, you can tell by the growling and the 'tick-tack' whereabouts the Ogre of Castle Bookworm is, and slip into another part. Best of all is the Old Observatory, where there is a bed in a little cabin, and windows all about, and a big brass telescope

high overhead, with shelves and all sorts of fittings as in a ship.

It is first-rate, I tell you. Only you have to put the books you have been using back again exactly, or you will get Ursa Major after you, and he will fetch you out of your bed to do it, storming at you all the time. Then maybe he will forget, and show you the first edition of some book that there are only three or four of in all the world!

You don't really need to be afraid of Big Growly. It makes rather a noise while It lasts, but once It is finished, there is no more about it. It is like a thunderstorm which you hear sleepily among the hills in the night. All you have to do is just to pull the bed-clothes over your head and put your fingers in your ears. There is not the least danger, not really.

Altogether we are about as well off for Grown-ups as it is possible to be, and though lessons are seen to sharply enough—that is all in the day's work. While for the rest, we live less of the Double Life than other children have to do—that is, we don't have to '*pretend* good,' and that makes all the difference.

And this brings me to the tale of Polly Pretend. That was what we called her. And by and by other people found her out, and did so too. And it is an awful thing to be going through the world with a name like that.

Yet Polly Pretend wasn't half a bad girl either. Indeed, if she had been left alone, she would have been quite nice. It wasn't her fault. Only this tale is a 'terrible example' for parents and guardians. *They* put such things, like nasty medicine, in the books we have to read, and why shouldn't I hit back, when

it is only my poor old Dear Diary that sees it? Till Mr. Dignus gets ready to print it, that is.

Polly Pretend had a father and mother, but worse than most. If ever they had been young, they had forgotten all about it. Polly mustn't run or romp, nor speak above her breath, nor climb a tree, nor do anything that makes life happy and really worth living.

And when we went to see her, it was ever so much worse than going to church four times a Sunday. *We* only go once, except on special occasions, because our folks believe in making Sunday an extra happy day. And, after all, church is church, and there is always the music, which is nice, and the organist's back hair, which isn't—and the sermon is never very long and sometimes interesting. Then for the boys there are the bees booming in the tall windows, and the flies that will persist in crawling stickily over the old gentlemen's bald heads—really quite pious flies they are. For the old gentlemen would be sure to go to sleep if it were not for the excitement of watching out and moving those flies on!

But at Polly Pretend's house it was ever so much worse. You couldn't believe it if you had not been there. And, do my best, I really can't give you an idea.

All the toys locked up, of course, all the drawing things, and every book except two—one of which was that everlasting *Josephus*, and the other the *Pilgrim's Progress*. As we knew these by heart, you may guess how cheerful it was. And you had to learn chapters till you hated the sight of an Oxford Bible, and hymns till you wanted to throw the book behind the fire.

Hugh John stuck to it and did pretty well, though he is not a quick study. But Sir Toady boldly asserted that he was a true Mahometan, and made a green turban out of an old green baize school-bag to prove that he was a ‘haji and a holy man’!

He had the cheek to brazen it out even when Polly's people threatened to inform his parents and have him sent home tomorrow!

Bless you, Toadums wished for nothing better. He missed his fox-terrier, Boss, worse than words can tell, and his eggs and his paint-box and everything.

But of course we soon saw how Polly Pretend managed. She pretended. She did not really read the books. She moved back the marker, and, if asked questions, knew all about the chapter. Even if they ticked it in pencil, there was India-rubber in Polly's pocket to rub it out. She played with beads in church—in her muff or under her cloak. And when one rolled on the floor, she said it was her collection money. She got another given her too, which was always a halfpenny saved.

At least so thought Polly Pretend. And Hugh John could not make her see it was not the square thing—to buy sweets and thus defraud the Church. He is awfully armour-plated on what is ‘the Square Thing,’ my brother Hugh John.

But Polly Pretend could not or would not see it. I think *could* not. For what could be expected of any girl who had such people for parents? Then I saw clearly how well *we* were off—whacked sometimes, of course, or Big Growly called upon to erupt (which he does very fierce for five minutes). But not expected to do anything except tell the truth and keep on telling it—not behave like reptiles—and

if caught, own up prompt. Say your prayers when you feel like it. But don't do it just when you know parents and guardians will be coming into your bedroom, as Polly does—so that father or mother will say, 'See how sweet and devotional our little girl is!'

And Polly's father and mother thought how good she was, and told all round the countryside what little heathens we were. Not that *we* cared for that.

But Sir Toady went upstairs to the lumber-room and got an image of some Chinese dragon which had been stowed away there ever since Uncle Peter had been home the last time. And when Polly Pretend's father and mother came to complain of us, he was down on his knees worshipping this false image on the front lawn! Awful, wasn't it? But all the same it would have made you laugh till you cried if you had seen him doing kow-tow to this false god—it was only an old cardboard dragon anyway, like what you see on the Shanghai stamps—and smelling the whole neighbourhood by burning brown paper joss-sticks before it, with a penny fire-cracker at every finger-length.

He was had up into the study for that, though, because father said he would have no 'mockery' about such things. But I don't think he got it very bad, because we all knew by the noise he made that Big Growly wasn't really very mad.

When he is, he goes off and you see no more of him for a long time. He only stops in his den and doesn't growl. That is a good time to keep away and say nothing, till he has done chewing his paws. Only Maid Margaret dare go in then, and even she is wearing out of it—getting too old, I mean.

But about Polly Pretend. Of course she did not pretend to us. First of all, she could not—she knew that it was quite in vain. Children don't try on things with one another. They know they will be seen through. Generally they can see through Grown-ups too, though, bless you, *They* never know it.

Oh, poor Polly! I was sorry for Polly. Because she could never be natural, but all the time had got to—what is it the book says?—'assume a virtue when she had it not.'

At school she knew wads of Scripture and all the Kings of Israel and Judah, but never did a French exercise without copying. Then, because her people were rich, and she so good, she got lots of money sent her—so much for telling what her place in class was. She told lies about that, and got money for being first when really most of the time she was first at the wrong end.

Now at our school every fortnight the class was turned upside down, the top girl being put at the bottom and the wooden spoon at the top, so that the clever ones could work their way up again. And so each alternate Monday Polly Pretend was really top girl for about five minutes. It was on that day she wrote to her parents, and often got a golden sovereign or a Post Office Order sent to her for her wonderful cleverness. So, after all, in a way it was true.

But there was trouble at the end of term—after the examinations, when Polly Pretend always came out the very last.

Because, you see, she had to save money to buy her own prizes, get one of the charwomen to steal the school tickets that they stick in prize-

books, and print in her own name in capital letters as ‘first prize’ to show her parents.

Then she had to watch for the School Report, which comes a day or two after, and get it safely from the postman. She burned it, after trying to alter the figures, but, of course, was anxious all the holidays. Also she warned me to say nothing about it when I came to see her.

As if I would! I knew Polly Pretend too well. So I never said a thing about school, for fear Polly had been telling some lie about it, and I should be giving her away. The visit was an unhappy time for all of us—except, that is, for Sir Toady, who invented new and horrible forms of idolatry every other day, and scared the immortal soul out of Polly Pretend by putting on his day-shirt (the spare one) over his clothes, and letting on to be an Evil Spirit which haunted the gooseberry-bushes.

And I will say he did growl most fearfully—especially when he found a good ripe bush. But we knew that was only to keep the rest of us off. So Hugh John chased the Evil Spirit by the sound, and growled too. Because the bush really was a good one—thin-skinned ‘silver-greys,’ and quite ripe. I had some.

But you should have seen poor Polly. She was frightened till she nearly told the truth. I can't say more than that. Almost—but not quite. I do believe that she would have gone and confessed the most innocent of her lies to her parents, if it had not been for that young Imp, Sir Toady, who laughed out loud, and jumped up and down in the shirt like a white Jack-in-the-Box.

But perhaps it was as well that she did not. For they were just the sort of people not to

understand that Polly's lies had mostly been their own fault. But of course, as you may imagine, it was only putting off the day of reckoning.

It was in holiday-time—midsummer—when school-mistresses are just like other folk; only, if anything, a trifle nicer.

Now the head of our school, Miss Gray, came to Romano, which is the name of the town where Polly Pretend lived. And Miss Gray thought it would be a nice thing to call upon the mother of her pupil. Perhaps she might be able to give Mrs. Pretend a hint or two which would keep Polly from entirely wasting her time next term at Olympia.

Oh, Miss Gray meant it just as kindly as she could, and that's saying a good deal. She is a nice chicky-biddy, fussy, motherly sort of thing, and wears the nicest satiny gowns at dinner-parties. It was the last thing in the world she would have thought of, to give Polly Pretend away—even to her parents.

But it happened that on this day the Pretends had gone for a motor-ride. And as it was hot, Miss Gray said that she would be glad to wait a few minutes in the drawing-room. Because, you see, Mrs. Pretend was expected in every minute. The maid knew her business, of course; there was no 'pretend' about her. She brought a cup of tea, and left Miss Gray to do—what do you think?—look over the books on the table.

At first Miss Gray thought that something had suddenly gone wrong with her eyes. She opened a fine Macaulay, and saw 'First Prize for History, Presented to Miss P. Pretend.' Next came 'Special Prize for Good Conduct—Miss P. Pretend.'

There was a whole table covered with them,

laid out in the centre of the room, and more stuck in decorative oaken shelves, of fine old oak, made by the village handy-man.

Then Miss Gray understood, and her feelings were too much for her. But even then she did not give Polly away. You see, Miss Gray was a pretty good sort—that is, a good sort, and a pretty one too—which is the best sort of all, Hugh John says.

So she just rang the bell, and told the maid that she could not wait any longer to see Mrs. Pretend, but that she would write.

And she did. It was a little letter just saying that circumstances over which she had no control, etc., had caused such a pressure upon Olympia College that she was sorry there would not be a vacancy for Polly that year.

Well, you can fancy—Polly's mother and father were very angry. So much so that they determined to start off at once to call on the heads of the college and complain.

But Polly herself, as soon as she had heard from Ellen, the housemaid, what had happened, and how Miss Gray had been twenty minutes in the drawing-room, and gone away leaving her tea hardly 'sipped,' knew at once what was the matter.

So she dissuaded her father and mother from going to Olympia College.

She was not appreciated, she said. She had always known it. Even Miss Gray was jealous of her. And her mother said to her father, 'I do not wonder at it, dear. It is all the effect of our too careful bringing up of Polly. Truly we may say with the Psalmist— *"Than all her teachers now she has*
More understanding far!"

And in a way, do you know, she had. And it was the training that did it.

But later on, Dear Diary, I shall write more about Polly Pretend, when she got a governess. For then she pretended and the governess pretended, and instead of getting out of the habit, as Hugh John says, seven Pretending Devils worse than the first entered into her.

But of that another time.

5. PRINCIPIA

[*June continued, but nearer the end, and hotter.*]

Polly Pretend's governess, after she could not be received at Olympia, was Miss Principia Crow. She had more than three miles of testimonials, if all had been written out in a line in text hand and measured.

The only curious thing was that the dates of all these were old, and Miss Principia was still fairly young. Also, she admitted having changed her name ‘for family reasons.’

But she seemed just the sort of person for Polly Pretend. She did not know much arithmetic—just enough to cheat at tennis. She had certificates that reached as far as ‘trig’—the wonderful science which makes the boys stamp and throw their books about the room when they have to study it.

Now Pa and Ma Pretend had taken a great deal of trouble in providing a suitable companion for Polly, and in a way they had managed all right. Miss Crow pretended to teach, and Polly pretended to learn, and one knew as much about the matter as the other.

Miss Crow passed the time in telling Polly how many people had been in love with her, and the hopes she had of as many more. Polly begged the loan of a pier-glass from her mother, and thought, as she pretended before it, smiling at herself and sweeping imaginary trains, how soon her turn would come to have scores of lovers all willing and anxious to drown themselves for her sake, like Miss Principia Crow.

Fragments of conversation were sometimes

caught by Mamma Pretend, and she thought to herself, 'What strange authors they do set young people to study now-a-days! When I was a girl we had *Magnall's Questions* and *Little Arthur's History of England*!'

It was Miss Crow's voice, however. No mistake about that.

'Yes, and he said to me, 'I adore you with all the fervour of a free and untrammelled genius, with the noble indignation of a spirit on fire against wrong and oppression. It is true that in the meantime, though of an exalted race, I am poor, receiving only twelve shillings a week in one of the institutions of trust vulgarly called a pawn-broker's. But next year and every succeeding year I shall have my salary raised by the sum of two shillings—per fortnight. Oh, Principia, my Principia——''

At this moment, overcome by her own pardonable curiosity, Mrs. Pretend entered hurriedly to see what they were doing.

She found them busily employed, with head bent over an exercise in dictation... 'From Milton's Essay on Macaulay!' Miss Polly Pretend explained in answer to her mother's question.

'Dear me,' said Mrs. Pretend, as she went out, 'and I always thought that Milton wrote poetry. It's true I never could make out how they could say that blank verse was really poetry—not, I mean, like 'How doth the little busy' and 'Twinkle, twinkle'! But he wrote a long time ago, and perhaps then they had not learned to make the words at the end rhyme!'

But now I must tell how Polly Pretend corrupted the whole house. At first we had only called Polly's father and mother 'the Pretends' because they belonged to Polly, and so that we

might know who was meant.

But to begin with, Mrs. Pretend had to make up a lot of things to explain why, after all these prizes, Polly had not gone back to Olympia School. She had to think up something that people would believe. You see, Polly's inventions were really too daring—as that after a year abroad she and Miss Crow were going to set up a college of their own, a far better one than Olympia. And then she would show Miss Gray!

Now you will hardly believe me, but old Pretend, who was on the County Council and fussed about roads and drainage—'an innocent enough old duck,' Sir Toady calls him—took to magnifying Miss Polly Pretend and her governess. I think he actually began to count up his dollars to see if he had really enough money to start Polly Pretend in a school of her own. But one fine day he met old Lovell, of Castle Lovell, at some joint business meeting about a Combination Poorhouse, or something like that.

Now old Lovell is a fearful big-wig, and looked up to by everybody because he is too stupid ever to pretend the least little bit. He would get found out in a moment if he did. But solid as the Bank of England, and as conceited as Mir-row with a rosette tied to her tail last King's birthday!

And old Lovell said, 'I hear you have a Miss Crow to be governess to your little child! I think I ought to know her!'

'Ye-es!' said Father Pretend slowly. He did not like to hear a young lady who was going to set up a school next year to rival Olympia itself called 'your little child.'

But he could not afford to fall out with old Lovell, who always seemed as wise as a bench of

judges and as rich-looking as a jeweller’s shop which can afford to keep its blinds down. So he only said, ‘My daughter is not *quite* a child!’

‘Oh,’ said old Lovell, ‘then it can't be Lizzie you have for governess!’

‘Certainly not!’ said Mr. Pretend, much relieved; ‘her name is Principia!’

‘I thought that was a Latin Grammar or something like that!’ said old Lovell, scratching his head like a bald old parrot.

‘Well, perhaps,’ said Papa Pretend, ‘it is very likely. Miss Crow has been educated in all the languages that are—from her youth up!’

Now all would have gone well if only it had not happened that at that moment Polly and her governess came out of Parkins the pastry-cook's, where they had been stuffing fruit-cakes.

‘Why, Lizzie!’ cried old Lovell, shaking Miss Principia heartily by the hand, ‘now I am pleased to see you have got on so well. This is my butler's daughter,’ he explained, turning to Mr. Pretend, whose mouth was the shape of a capital O; ‘it does Lizzie much credit. Because, you see, she never got any regular schooling, being kept at home to help her mother in the still-room and with the jams. Good-by, Lizzie! I shall not forget to inform your father and mother that I have seen you—also John the gardener, with whom, I understand, you are keeping company, as they call it. Ah, ha! young people will be young people! Good-by, Pretend! Good-by! Congratulate you on having the daughter of a respectable man in your house. She will teach your little girl to make jams, and her gooseberry-fool will be a marvel, if she is a bit like her mother. Sensible man, Pretend! Far better to teach your

daughter to brew and bake than all the modern 'ologies' and fiddle-faddle in the world! Keeps their husbands in better temper. Ah, clever fellow, Pretend! But you couldn't take an old fellow in, eh, Pretend? I knew all that about learning Latin grammar was stuff and nonsense. Good-by, good-by! So long, Lizzie! Don't forget about that gooseberry-fool!'

So off he went, like the rough timber-sided old bargee he was, and left Mr. Pretend muttering angrily, 'Gooseberry-fool! Gooseberry-fool!' As if he knew very well who the 'Gooseberry Fool' was—knew, that is, but had promised not to tell.

But poor Principia went as white as a sheet and shook like a fly caught in a spider's web. I'm afraid in her heart she called old Lovell names.

How did it turn out? Oh, the best way in the world. You would hardly believe. At first, of course, old Pretend was all for packing off Principia for teaching his child deceit! But he calmed down when he thought of the lot of money he owed to old Lovell of Castle Lovell, and of the use that his influence would be to him. Besides, he had boasted so much about her. So had his wife.

So he not only let Principia stay on, but actually set her to teach Polly Pretend all she really knew. And she did know about cookery. That was the real college she had been at, and her mother was a better professor than all the ladies who gave lessons there. And Polly was obliged to learn, too, because her father ate all the things she cooked, and if he had indigestion, why, Polly heard about it, that's all. So she stopped pretending and really did learn.

And after a while they set up their college

with old Pretend's money—old Lovell's too, and it was called –

THE SCHOOL OF PRACTICAL COOKERY
Classes Afternoon and Evening
Household Cookery, Preserving, and
the Management of Families a Speciality

And that sentence was the last little bit of ‘Pretend.’ For neither Polly nor Miss Crow has any family. Nor, between ourselves, are they likely to have.

6. TORRES VEDRAS

[*July the first in the year when I was eleven on August tenth.*]

Father has seen the real place, and, of course, knows all about it. He says that it is just a lot of rough mountains, with bits of wall built into the open places to connect them and make them strong.

But *we* know that there are not one, but two Torres Vedrases—all on one bend of a river. The first one is quite near the Low Park, between the Weir and Jackson's Pool. It is a pebbly bar with a kind of green tufty island. From one side of it there is a rippling ford crossing slantwise, by which you can lose yourself barefooted in the woods on the other side.

The water only takes you to about the knee, even if you are pretty little. It is always one of the nicest places in the world. The water makes a soft tinkling over the ford. The grasses and bluebells wave, and the wind goes *sough* through the big solid walls of pine on either side.

Yes, it is first-rate to play there with your oldest things on, especially on a warm day about this time of the year. The river is pretty dry, and there is a great deal of pebbly bar, also the little green island with rough grass on it has grown to about twice the size.

You can fortify this island, and it is fine to dig channels through the bar for the water, with all sorts of lovely harbours and pleasure-lakes. Once the boys and I made a channel right from one end of the bar to the other, and father helped—and got wet too!

Yes, he did. We always encouraged him to get wet, by saying, ‘Oh, here is a place we can't reach!’ Because if *he* got wet, we knew very well there would be nothing said to us. Fathers are fearful nice and useful—sometimes. Ours particularly when he helps us to play, and forgets he isn't a boy. Oh, I can see quite well when he says to himself, ‘I ought to be working—*but*—oh, bother, how much nicer it is to dig in the sand with the other children!’

And then he took pictures of us—photographs, I mean—working at our engineering, and building and paddling—oh, whole albums full. They began when we were quite little tots. The best are of Maid Margaret and Sir Toady. For I was too old, I suppose, to look nice stuck among trees, and Hugh John hated so being photographed. When told to, he stood up stiff like a stork on one leg. But Sir Toady was usually as nice as pie, being made that way, and as for the Maid, she always looks natural whatever she is doing.

Father has a whole set called the History of a Biscuit. It is only the Maid eating one. But it is funny to see it getting smaller and smaller till it is all gone. They are flashed on quickly by our magic lantern, and we children go wild when it comes to the funny ones. The grand exhibitions are for winter nights. Then we are well wrapped up in grey Harris cloaks and come up, closely marshalled by Somebody to see that we don't snowball too much. They are quite lovely, these nights, with the snow crisping under our feet, and Somebody carrying a swig-swagging lantern before us—everybody's shadow swaying tipsily about, and the sky so near and so thick with stars that it seems as if you had only to put up your hand to catch a whole cluster.

There are usually many pictures of this first Torres, because we were younger, and it is a prettier place. We wore little red coats with big white buttons then, and marched regularly like soldiers. Hugh John beat us on the legs if we did not. He had a switch for the purpose, and he said that was the way the father of Frederick the Great did to make his son turn out a good soldier.

But we didn't care about such very practical history, and it made our legs sore—especially us girls, who wore thinner stockings. So there was a regular mutiny, and the whole army was degraded. You see, we were all generals—except Boss, our fox-terrier, who was named Inspector-General of Communications, because he ran from side to side of the road sniffing, and nothing or nobody could stop him. So, as Boss did not join the mutiny—not knowing how—he was promoted next in rank after the Commander-in-Chief, who was Hugh John. *He* was permanent Commander, because, you see, he could lick the whole standing army even if it attacked him on all sides at once.

Sir Toady and Bobby Coates were the ring-leaders of the revolt, and they called out, 'Hem him in! Hem him in!' But, you see, that was the very thing Hugh John wanted, and the more they 'hemmed,' the harder he laid into them till Bobby said he would tell his father, which he did. But Mr. Coates was a sensible man, and only said that he was all the better for a 'hiding,' and that if he came bothering him any more, he would give him another on his own account! So after that Bobby Coates became a good soldier, and lived long as an ornament to the service.

Yes, the nursery army was good fun while it

lasted, before we all split up and went to different schools. We tried it once after in the first vacation. But somehow it wasn't the same, and ended in a fight. You see, the boys especially had learned a good deal between them, and though it made no difference to Hugh John, the others kept squabbling all the time, and saying how much better they did things at their school than at any other—which was not at all the way they talked about their school in private.

Then ‘school was a beastly hole.’ The masters were ‘Old Buster,’ ‘Plummy,’ ‘Sick Cat,’ and ‘The Dishlicker’!

But to hear them talking to one another you would have thought that at least half what was said on the prospectus was Gospel Truth. Yes, and ever so much more. And it was ‘The Doctor,’ and ‘Mr. Traynor, the Head of our House, who made a double century in the ''Varsity' match, and is the best bowler in the whole world!’

Going down by Torres there is a darkish place, all yew-trees, very ancient, and there sometimes we would see one of the maids walking arm-in-arm with a young man. Of course, though we thought it very silly, we never told the Grown-ups. We knew by instinct that we must not. Then after a month or two the cook or the housemaid or the under-nurse would come and say she was ‘leaving to get married.’

Of course we never let on that we knew it all before. But we thought her very silly to leave a place where she could have stayed for ever at good wages (ever so much better than our weekly ones) just to go and do housework for somebody who never paid her any wages at all!

All this comes into the history of the First Torres Vedras, and of course I ought to have done it properly, like in a school history, all in order, with dates at the sides and notes at the bottom of each page. But being only a little girl, it has got to be written just so, or not at all. I am so afraid that I shall forget these things as I grow up—so I put them down as I remember them in my Dear Diary.

7. TORRES THE SECOND

[*Written in the fourteenth year of my age.*]

[The date is July the Second—or Third. I am not sure which, for Mary Housemaid has burned yesterday's paper lighting the fire.]

We went to Torres Vedras the Second today. I don't quite know why—only there are bigger stones there, and the river rushes more rapidly. We often try to dam it altogether, but we have never quite succeeded. You see, just when we are getting to the last bit, the water always rises and sweeps it all away. But Hugh John said today he knew a way, and that was to make the dam like a very blunt capital V with its nose pointing up stream! The book on engineering he had been digging into said this was the proper right way, and it acted very well till the moment came when the very point of the V was put in. Hugh John was to do that, of course. He would yield the honour to no one else, and as for me, I did not want that kind of honour.

And, do you know, when he dropped in the big stone and stood on it to make it all safe by plugging up the 'interstices' with smaller stones and rubble, as the book said—lo! the river rose again and swept away the whole work from side to side, all except the big boulder Hugh John was standing on!

You never saw such a thing. Horatius, with the bridge going down behind him, was at least on dry land. But there stood Hugh John waving his arms to keep his balance, and crying out, 'Oh—I don't care—I don't care—I'll dam it yet!'

It was very ignoble, he said afterwards, of any

river to behave that way. Why couldn't it have stopped where it was put and done what it was told? Anyway, while we tried to get him a plank to crawl ashore on, the big boulder swerved, and toppled him right in, and he was wet up to his watch-pocket.

He had to go to the top of the Feudal Tower all by himself, and play at being the Lady Godiva riding through Coventry, while his things dried over the ramparts. But he took good care that nobody saw him. He dared Toady Lion to come within half-a-mile. While he was away, we made great excavations and navigable channels. One of these was so huge that Sir Toady says that the ruins will remain even when we are Grown-ups ourselves. But that is a long time yet, and I don't see how Sir Toady can possibly know.

He also says that, just as there are the ruins of Memphis, Nineveh, Rome, the Calton Hill, and the Portobello Brickworks, so there will be the ruins of the First and Second Torres Vedras. Digging people in future generations will wonder who made them, and so on each of the big stones he has placed an inscription in the Abracadabrian language to tell the explorers all about it.

Now I will tell you about the Abracadabrian language. We made it up ourselves, and we four in the nursery all speak it fluently. Only the curious thing about it is that none of us has the least idea what the others are talking about! This must be owing, says Hugh John, to 'some variation of dialect, such as creeps into all languages sooner or later.'

The Abracadabrian language has suffered *sooner* than most, that is all. In fact, it was born suffering. But it is the writing of it that is most difficult. It is founded on always putting a Z for an

A, and so back through the alphabet. And so difficult to read is it that not even the writer of any sentence in that language has ever been able to make out what he meant, twenty-four hours after!

Hugh John and I really laboured at it hard, and might have made progress if we had not squabbled about the grammatical rules. But Sir Toady said brazenly, '*Hinky-chinky-pin!*' And stuck to it that it meant, 'The enemy of the Nursery Commonwealth has arrived at Leith, burnt his ships, and is now marching on Peebles!' As for Maid Margaret, she said it was so, and would Sir Toady please come with her and fish for minnows with a tin can tied to a string?

This they did. They had no souls for true philology. They don't even know what the word means. (*I* have just looked it up.) After he was dried up all right alone in the Feudal Tower, Hugh John dressed himself, and signalled to me by waving his handkerchief three times, once with his right hand, once with his bare toes, and once holding it between his teeth—pretty intricate when you are not used to it.

This, when you can see it, is our fiery cross—that is, Hugh John's and mine. As I say, it takes a good deal of trouble, but it is a worthy summons—and the copy-book says that nothing truly noble is achieved without difficulty.

Well, when I got to him, he said that he would take me to his Cave of Mysteries. This was a great favour, for not even Sir Toady had ever been there before.

'Not a gamekeeper knows it,' he said, 'and Fuz says I can use his scouting-glass if I take good care not to drop it.'

There was a steep wood to climb, all among the fir-trees, some grass fields, then above and quite suddenly we came out on the side of a rugged mountain.

The cave was about half-way up, under a slanting rock. You turned quickly to the side, grabbed a little pine-root and swung yourself in. Then you saw the cave. It was not much of a place for size, not like the self-contained villas they have in story-books. Only you could not be seen. The rain did not come in unless it was driving quite level along from the north, which did not happen often.

But when I turned about—why, it nearly took my breath away. We could see half-a-dozen counties—Edinburgh dusting the little lion of Arthur's Seat with her smoke, the blue firth beyond, little and narrow, the toy towers of the Big Bridge to the left, and the green country all between dotted with towers and towns innumerable.

Oh, it was so unexpected and so fine that I nearly cried. And Hugh John lay watching me, his chin among the heather. But, more than all, he was pleased that his cave had taken me so much by storm.

Then he showed me with his glasses he could ‘spot exactly where each of the gamekeepers was, also the wood-foresters, and Sir Bulleigh Bunny himself, if he were at home.’

And indeed it was quite true. He could pick them all out one by one. Never once did he make a mistake. Then he would show me them, but often all I could see was no more than a little trembling among the green leaves of some far-distant wood.

It was not long till I found the secret of Hugh John's complete security in this his chosen Crusoe's

Cave. Chesnay the gamekeeper was passing far below, a gun over his shoulder, and as the wind was blowing off the hill into the valley, it was almost certain that his dogs would scent us.

But Hugh John had thought all this out. Trust him for that. He took a gnawed bone out of an inner pocket, removed the wrapping of newspaper, leaned far over, and threw it with the long, sweeping curve of a boomerang upon the path in front of the dog's nose.

John Chesnay's retriever made a rush, a snap, and then sidled sidelong into the thick copse-wood. The rest of the dogs were after him in a moment. I had seen him glancing from side to side as if to watch for the fall of the bone. He knew it would come, and that even if the devil took the hindmost, the foremost would be sure of the bone. Therefore he, John Chesnay's big black retriever, would be that foremost.

He was far too wise a dog to argue, or bother about where the bone arrived from. His business was to find it, and then—*crunch*—*crunch*—get it stowed away out of harm's way as quickly as possible.

Caesar Augustus (that was the dog's name) knew very well that though you may hunt out the causes of bad luck, it is better to leave good luck alone. So at least Hugh John said, and if anybody knew all about such things, *he* did. There was hardly anything he could not tell you the true explanation of, or, if in doubt, you had only to wait a moment and he would make you up one on the spot quite as good, every bit, as the real one. Furthermore, he would prove to you (and very likely to himself) that it might be, must be, *was*, the only

true and proper reason and explanation.

Anyway, reason or no reason, it was just as nice as ninepence in the Cave. Away down to the left where the sun was bright on the river we could see Sir Toady and the Maid, little black dots moving to and fro along the green edge of the river. Hugh John had the glass on them in a minute, and behold—they were squabbling! Sir Toady had tossed some of the Maid's fish out, and the Maid had promptly thrown the pail of water in his face.

He stood dripping and laughing. The Maid had gone for a fresh supply of ammunition. But war was over. Sir Toady had laughed. After that there was no more to be said.

It is different with Hugh John, when he sucks in his cheeks, clenches his fists, and laughs—well, look out for what you are going to get.

I asked Hugh John why he had never taken Sir Toady up to his Cave of the Winds, and he said, ‘Oh, Toady—he would be getting out boxes to stuff with beetles, and skirmishing for birds' eggs. He's all right in a wood, that Toadums—better than me—but no good on the hillside, and too larky all round in places where you can be seen miles off.’

‘And what do you do up here yourself?’ I said.

‘I am *by* myself,’ he answered. ‘I think—I read!’

‘But you have a room *to* yourself in the house. You can go there!’

For I thought he was exceedingly well off. Because I have to share mine with the Maid, who kicks like a young colt in her sleep. But Hugh John gave me a look of utmost contempt.

‘Did you never hear of Obermann?’ he said, ‘—the man who made a cave on the Pic de Jaman. I

showed it to you when we stopped at Glion on the way to Lausanne.’

‘It was a cow-châlet then,’ I reminded him. But he swept on without the least heed of details.

‘Yes, and Mr. Arnold has a lovely poem all about him, and 'the wild bees' hum,' and 'his sad tranquil lore.' This isn't quite the Pic de Jaman, of course, but it is just as lonely, if you don't tell anybody, that is, and I've only told you, Sis! Never mind!’

So I swore never to reveal his hiding-place, and he showed me all he had written about his observations. He had a shelf covered in with wood and a lot of copy-books. Here was written all he had seen through the glasses he had borrowed and the three-draw telescope of his own which he carried constantly in his pocket.

Oh, it was wonderful what he had observed—all about the changing seasons, the country people, the moor-birds, the gamekeepers, and the comings and goings of Sir Bulleigh Bunny.

‘Anybody can hide in a wood,’ he said, ‘but it takes Obermann and me to do it on a bare hill!’

Then he smiled a little and confessed.

‘I don't really know much about him,’ he said, ‘except that his name was Senancour. I got his book out of the library, all marked with father's scribblings, but I really couldn't understand much of it. Only this that I translated—you could do it better, of course. It is about himself when he was as old as we are, and felt just the same.

“I loved all manner of glades, valleys where it was always dusk—and thick woods. I loved heathery hills, ruined pleasaunces, and tumbled rocks fallen in avalanche. Still more I loved vast and shifting

sands which never ploughshare had furrowed nor human foot crossed—plains abandoned to the mountain doe or the frightened scouring hare. I never liked to sit amid the storming of cataracts, nor on a little hill overlooking a boundless plain. Rather I chose a hiding-place well sheltered, a block of stone wetted lip deep with the brook which glided through the silence of the valley, or better still, a mossy trunk, prone in the deeps of the forest, with the dry rustle of beech-leaves above me which the wind is getting ready to blow down when the time is ripe. Silently I march, my feet deep in last year's fallen leaves—the little worn footpath full of them from side to side.'

‘Oh, and this is finest of all,’ said Hugh John, hurrying on, ‘but don't tell any one. I make you a partner of my solitude. It lasts just a little while. It is selfish, if you like, but sometimes it is good to live alone! Do you know what Senancour says love is?’

‘No!’ I gasped, ‘how should I know?’

And in truth I was more surprised that already Hugh John should be thinking of such things. But when I told father, he just said to let him alone—that the boy was finding his soul.

Perhaps it might be in this old, sad, hundred-year-old book that he was to find it. For the soul, father says, is just the capacity a man has of thinking for himself.

But Hugh John went on joyously, with his firm, pale, clean-cut face looking out of the Cave's mouth towards the distant sapphire band of the Firth, with the three Lomonds in a paler row of blue mounds behind.

“Often on the breast of some mountain, when the winds, sweeping down from their wild ‘hopes’

and gorges, ruffle the little high-lying solitary lakes, the eternal clatter of the waves, heard only by myself, makes me feel the instability of things, and the eternal reconstruction of the earth out of her own *débris*.

"'Thus giving myself up to the influence of all about me, bending to the stoop of the bird which passes above me, thrilled by the falling stone, conferring only with the moaning of the wind, watching the oncoming mist, I become a part of the Peace of Things which is God. All reposes, yet all is in motion, and I become part of it—calm as that higher serenity, cool as that shadow—the hum of an insect or the scent of a trampled herb making my communion with Nature. I also am of the great sweet earth. I live its life, and in time I shall die its death.''

Now, for myself, I did not think that this was the sort of thing a boy ought to be thinking of at Hugh John's age. But, since father said he too had 'passed that way,' and since Hugh John could eat, sleep, run, and play as well as anybody, I did not say anything.

But I foresaw a day of reckoning—yes, I—because I am older, and a girl. And in the world there are other girls. One day Hugh John (or I am greatly mistaken) will turn the leaves of another book, and then Senancour the austere will be forgotten, passed by on his shelf like a chance acquaintance whose very name has become strange.

Perhaps I wrong him. But this is what I think. At any rate I resolved to try and guide his thoughts into more cheerful paths (it is a pity we have not Senancour's pretty word '*sentier*'; I have always loved it).

‘Do you never observe *people*?’ I asked him.

He stared at me in amazement.

‘Why, of course I do,’ he answered, and he got down two more thick copy-books. Everything Hugh John did about this time was original and unexpected.

‘People!’ he said, holding up the two manuscript books; ‘why, these are stuffed full of people. Enough to make a real book!’

Then I confided to Hugh John the great secret that *I* was making a book.

A look of joy flashed over his face.

‘Let's make one together!’ he said, ‘and not tell anybody!’

‘Let's!’ I answered.

Because I felt that I really owed Hugh John something for showing me the Cave.

And it was arranged that he was to tell me about his People and Things, and I was to write everything down with my thoughts planted in here and there.

8. HUGH JOHN'S PEOPLE

Through a glass clearly.
[*July, and hot.*]

If you put your eye to the glass (said Hugh John) you will see where one of my greatest friends lives—Mr. Butcher Donnan. Or rather he used to be a butcher. For now he has given up his trade to his son Nipper, and regrets it every minute of his waking day.

Yes, that two-storied cottage with the garden in front, ablaze with flowers, with creepers clambering as high as the roof, that is 'New Erin Villa,' and the home of the most discontented man in Edam. Butcher Donnan has nothing to do. He hangs over his gate, and almost prays stray passers-by to stop and gossip. He has nothing to say to them or they to him. But when they are gone, he will pull out his big gold watch with a cluck like the cork drawn from a bottle, and say, 'Thank God! Five minutes gone!'

Then he will stroll down the lanes towards Nipper's shop, making butcher's eyes at all the cows which look at him over the hedges. He is secretly calculating how they will cut up—jealous of Nipper, who has it to do really every day.

He lounges into his son's shop—where not long ago he ruled supreme. Nipper, serving a customer, nods cheerfully to his father, and the Butcher, whose fingers itch for the apron and the swinging steel, clutches the gold head of his cane more tightly to keep him from applying the supple part of it to 'every lazy man-Jack' in the establishment. Ah, things are not as they were in his

time. The floor is not so clean and cool, in spite of the black and white marble squares on which Nipper had insisted. The eye of 'Mister' Donnan could detect signs of wasteful cutting-up in the dismembered animals a-swing on the hooks. But Nipper was now 'Butcher' Donnan, while he is no more than proprietor of 'New Erin Villa,' with nothing to do, and too much time and too much money to do it on.

Sadly he goes out again. His place is not there. He could not stay in that shop ten minutes without breaking the head of one of these stupid 'assistants.' Even Nipper might not get off scot-free. But Butcher Donnan knows that his son Nipper is of his own temper, a true Donnan, and, young as he is, will be master within his own gates.

So he says sadly, 'So long, Nipper!' And, what is the greatest proof of his changed condition, goes out without offering any criticism. Then he 'troddles' round the village on the look-out for little jobs, which he considers as his specialities, or even perquisites—though he takes no money for doing them. He can graft rose-trees better than any gardener in the parish. At least he *says* he can, and by reason of his repeating it often enough and offering to fight anybody who thinks otherwise, people have got to say so too. You believe an old middle-weight champion when he tells you a thing like that, his little eyes twinkling out suspiciously at you, and a fist the size of a mutton ham thrust under your nose.

Just now—Watch him, Sis! he is on the look-out for wasp nests. Edam is the most wasp-free parish for miles, all owing to him. He marks them down in the daytime, and then in the evening he will come with his utensils and a dark lantern to make

an end. With hung nests under eaves, or attached to branches of trees, he deals by drenching them with petroleum and setting a match to them. Sometimes he will drop a big one into a pail of water and stand ready to clap on the lid. The swarming deep-sunk nests in dry banks he attacks more warily. He brings a little apparatus for heating pitch, and pours it, liquid and sinuous, into the hole till the startled hum sinks into silence. Since an accident which happened last year (owing to the wasp-nest operated upon having a back-door) Butcher Donnan has always taken a quick-sighted boy or two to spy out the land. I suspect our Sir Toady has acted as scout pretty often. Do you remember when he came home all bulgy about the eyes and with one of his ears swelled up double? *He* said he thought he must have taken cold, and I saw from the twinkle in Fuz's eye that he thought he had been fighting. But *I* took my magnifying glass and got out two of the wasp-stings. Sir Toady had been doing ‘scout’ for Butcher Donnan. He had not ‘scouted’ quite quick enough—that was all.

Butcher Donnan, born Irish, had spent some time in America. So he started politics here, and as he hoists the green flag with a harp, and hauls down the Union Jack on the occasion of every Irish debate in Parliament, you may be sure that he gets his windows broken.

He does not object. He likes putting the panes in again himself, because it is something for him to do. Sometimes he catches some local Unionist patriot and (what he calls) ‘lathers’ him! Afterwards he supports him liberally during a prolonged convalescence. It is counted rather a good thing to be loyal and get battered by that furious Irish

Revolutionary, Butcher Donnan. He has illuminations, too, and has stood for the School Board and County Council on purely Fenian lines. He said nothing, however, when young Nipper was elected instead of him, on that most popular of all municipal tickets which consists in 'keeping down the rates.'

In despair of other employment Butcher Donnan has married a second time, and his wife is a buxom woman, overcome with the glory of living in a villa. But she makes regular first-class custards, I tell you. And for toffee and shortcake there is not the like of her in the whole village of Edam. If it were not for Butcher Donnan's (senior's) dignity, he might be a happy man. For Mrs. Donnan could conduct the finest confectioner's shop that ever was, and if the Butcher could be kept from cutting up a mince-pie with a cleaver, and sharpening a jelly-spoon on a 'steel,' he might be the best of salesmen and the happiest of men.

Meanwhile, he has found the big wasp-nest behind the Mains entrance gate, and he will be off to get his pitch-kettle ready, the mask for his face, and the gloves for his hands. He does not mean to suffer if he can help it.

His wife, who cannot be all the time in the kitchen, is miserable because she has to do fancy work and receive callers (or at least sit waiting for them) in the fruit season, which is a clear waste of time. She has been so long making a green Berlin wool cushion for a bazaar—the 'Sons of Clan-na-Gael Mutual Assistance Sale'—that it is just chock-full of moths, and in time will pollute the entire household into which it is 'raffled.' It is wrong to raffle, anyway, says the chief of police, so it will

serve them quite right—*I* shall not take a ticket. Now (said Hugh John, shaking his wise head) if they would only listen to me and start a confectioner's shop, they would both be chirpy as the day is long, and in the winter time long after dark—she over her dishes and patty-pans in the kitchen, and he in a white cap and apron behind the counter, talking to everybody, busy as honey-bees in clover-time, radiating sweetness and coining money.

And underneath the white apron Donnan could wear the butcher's 'steel' if he liked, just to make him feel like himself.

Oh, I could arrange for people to be happy if they would only let me!

'And why don't you tell him?' I said to Hugh John, a little impatiently.

'Oh,' said Hugh John, 'you see, I have fought Nipper so long that there is a kind of hereditary household enmity.'

'Nonsense,' I said; 'why, I saw Fuz talking to the old fellow for an hour the other day, the two of them sitting and smoking as thick as thieves. Besides, there's Toady!'

'Yes,' said Hugh John. 'Father has no sense of the dignity of the house or of what a 'vendetta' means. He always says that if he has a chance of getting to heaven on that clause about forgiving your enemies, he does not care a dump. Or words that mean just the same. And as for Sir Toady—well, give him liberty to go into the woods at night—only an excuse, mind you, and there is no sin that he will not commit—short, that is, of mutiny. Neither of them knows how to conduct a family quarrel on proper lines. I—you and I, I mean, have to sustain the honour of the house, eh, Sis?'

'Oh, nonsense, Hugh John,' I said; 'you know you have always been good friends with Nipper. And it was you that brought the whole of them here to listen to the Scott Redcap Tales at the Feudal Tower!'

'*That* was quite another matter,' said Hugh John, hard pushed for an explanation. 'It was a sort of Ossianic gathering where all the chiefs came to Morven, and made truce to listen to the tales and songs of the minstrel!'

'Oh, very likely,' I said; 'but why not put father or Sir Toady on to advise Butcher Donnan? There is need of such a shop as that in Edam. I have often felt the want myself.'

Hugh John agreed, and added that he had too. But he said that Sir Toady could not be expected to act, seeing that he had already 'sucked up' to the maker of the strawberry shortcake, not to mention the maple-sugar toffee. He could therefore get as much as he wanted for himself without paying, owing to Mrs. Donnan's weakness!

'And do you think that a young dev—imp like Sir Toady does not know when he is well off?' concluded Hugh John. 'As for father, he has too much to do to bother his head about things like that—at least I shan't ask him; no, Sis, if anybody, it is you who ought to suggest to Butcher Donnan, or better, to Mrs. Donnan——'

'But,' said I, 'he is a violent man, and would not listen to a word his wife says. You know that very well!'

Hugh John considered, throwing his chin into the air with a gesture which, if he had not worn his hair of military shortness, would have cast it back elegantly and poetically. But he disdained such

things.

‘Oh, yes,’ he said, ‘Donnan makes a lot of noise, I know. He pretends to authority, but—don't tell anybody—he has it not. *His wife can wear him down!* She seems to submit. His authority at home is undisputed. So he tires of it, and finishes by letting her have her own way. That is the secret. Of course at the least word of objection it would be, 'What ho! my highest of high horses!' And crying aloud he would mount and ride. But Mrs. Donnan never gives him a chance. She knows better. And as he is really a good-hearted man—if he does bully, she just waits till he is sorry for it! It does not take long.’

Thus in the depths of the cave, his chin on his hands and his eye glued to the telescope, spake the Philosopher of Esk Water Side.

I could not but admit that in the main he was right. Hugh John follows a truth with a certain slow, patient, tireless, sleuth-hound trot, which never puts him out of breath. But in the end he finishes by getting there. And now without ever moving he extorted from me the promise that, when I could (and as soon as I could) I should take in hand the task of restoring the married happiness of Mr. and Mrs. Donnan—retired from business, and fallen into the practice of idleness as a profession, and unhappiness as the wages thereof.

9. THE NEW SHOP

Aged about Fifteen.
[*The Cave, in July.*]

It wasn't a job I liked. Nor would almost anybody. Still people can't *say* very much to a girl, and I had been at school and so had lost my—what shall I call it?—'sensitiveness.'

As Sir Toady says, the golden rule is a first-rate thing—when you leave school. Even with a little addition, it flourishes there too. But you don't want to set up as a Christian martyr at school, I can tell you. It was very noble in the time of St. Francis, and Dr. Livingstone, and these people, and now-a-days there are people to whom we have to send our sixpences—people we never see. Perhaps I shall be one when I am older, but at school—these are Sir Toady's words—you find out what boy has a down on you *and down him first*! It saves trouble.

Afterwards you can be as sweet and child-like as possible, and go about the world taking people in with blue Madonna eyes all your life. But at school, if you don't want to have the life of a dog, it has got to be different.

Hugh John, of course, says that the principle of school life is for everybody to obey one person. But, you see, that person is Hugh John. If they don't, most likely he will hammer them. And afterwards he will prove how they were wrong. He will do it at length, and at breadth, and at depth, and unto the fourth dimension, till even fellows who can stand up to his fists give in to him so as not to

get lectured—or 'jawed' as they ignorantly call it. For really what Hugh John says could be taken down and printed right off in a book.

And you have got to believe it, too. For he is always ready to support his opinion, in the same manner as the Highland chief in *Kidnapped*. 'If any gentleman is not preceesely satisfied, I shall be proud to step outside with him.'

Joined to this faculty for laying down the law, he possesses an admirable barbaric power of enforcing it, which would have been invaluable in feudal times, and is not without its uses even now.

Well, three days after I went and called on Mrs. Donnan. It came about quite naturally. She is a first-class person to call upon. No fuss or anything—only you have to catch her on the hop. This time I saw her in the garden gathering gooseberries, and in a moment she had her sunbonnet half off her head, and the basket dropped in the furrow, but I was upon her before she could get away.

'Oh, Mrs. Donnan, do let me help you!' I said.

'But, Miss——' she began, not knowing how to go on.

'I should love it,' I added quickly, 'and I promise not to eat a single one. In fact I shall whistle all the time!'

'Oh, miss,' she said, all in a flurry, 'you know it is not that! You or any of your family are only too welcome to come, and take as many as they like.'

'If you want to keep any for the preserving pot,' I said, smiling at her, 'I should advise you not to say that to my entire family. There are certain members of it who are capable of cleaning up the branches as your dog Toby there would clean a bone!'

‘Oh, you mean Master Toady,’ she said, all dimples in a moment at the recollection. ‘He comes here often. But the garden is large, and bless him! even he can't eat more than he can. More than that, he often leaves a rabbit, or even a brace—and my man havin' been a butcher, is remarkable fond of a bit o' game.’

‘Yes,’ I said, ‘my brother's shootings are like your garden, extensive. Still, it is a wonder how he can keep them up on a shilling a day, and all but twopence of it deferred pay!’

‘It is a wonder, now I come to think of it!’ said the good lady meditatively. ‘He must be a careful lad with his money!’

‘What I wonder at,’—I went on talking as soon as I had got her settled back again at the picking of the gooseberries— ‘is that you never thought of making the prettiest little shop-window in the world of your cakes and pasties and jams and candies. You know nobody can make them in the least like you. Besides, I have spoken to my father and others who know lots more about it, and every one is sure that such a thing would be a great boon to Edam, and that you are the very person to take it in hand. It would not be like an ordinary shop. For every one knows that your husband has made his fortune and retired. But it would give you something to do. Shall I speak to Mr. Donnan about it?’

The poor woman flushed with pleasure at the very idea. So much I could see. Yet she hesitated.

‘HE would never consent—his position—his politics—Oh, no!’ Mrs. Donnan considered that I had better not speak to the master—at least not then.

However, I thought differently, and it was after the good lady had asked me to stay to tea that

my chance came.

Donnan came in, fanning himself with his broad-brimmed Panama. Things had not been going well that afternoon. Nipper had been busy on account of a rush of trade, and had not welcomed his father's criticisms too gratefully. You see, the old man was accustomed to find fault with Nipper's management, and that day there had been a shortage of ice in the shop and a corresponding shortage in Nipper's temper.

Also, Mr. Donnan's more general perambulation had not turned out well. Some rude and vagrant boys had dug out the pet wasp-nest he had been saving up for the next dark night, and there were green flies all over his best Lasalle rose-tree. Two of his best Dorkings had ‘laid away.’

‘I don't want any tea today, Cynthia!’ he grumbled crossly. And without looking at me he went to the sofa and threw himself down with a heavy creaking of furniture.

‘My dear,’ said his wife, ‘surely you have not seen this young lady who has come to do you the honour of taking tea with you?’

‘Nonsense,’ said I, ‘as long as there are such cakes to be had at New Erin Villa, the honour is all on my side.’

But the polite Irishman was already on his feet.

‘Miss Sweetheart—Miss Sweetheart!’ he said, ‘what a blind old hedge-carpenter ye must have thought me! And you your own folks' daughter, and your father treating me like a long-lost brother, *and* instructin' me on hist'ry and the use of the globes!’

So we had tea, the prettiest little tea imaginable, with Mrs. Donnan going about as soft-

footed as a pussy cat, and purring like one too.

Butcher Donnan looked after her with a kind of sudden bitterness. 'It's all very well for *her*,' he said; 'she makes her life out of such things, but what is there for me to do? I'm about at the end of my tether!'

'Why, *help her*!' said I.

'Help her!' he muttered, not understanding. 'Me, Butcher Donnan—why, the girl is mazed! I can't do housework!'

But I soon showed him I was not so mazed as he thought. He was tired of doing nothing. He wanted a change. Very well then; here was this little house right at the top of Edam Common, with the railway station opposite, and everybody's business taking him that way two or three times a day. What Edam wanted was a confectioner's shop. His wife was dying to have one. He would look a fine figure of a man in a white overall and cap! Hugh John had said it!

He whistled softly, and his little, deep-set eyes twinkled.

'I might ha' known,' he said, 'when I saw that long-legged brother of yours looking at me as if to calculate what I was good for. He's the fellow to make plans. Now the other…'

Here he laughed as he remembered Sir Toady Lion.

'More like me when I was his age!' he said. 'But about the pastry-cook foolishness. What put that into his head?'

'It isn't foolishness,' I answered, 'and nobody that I know of ever puts anything into Hugh John's head!'

'He certainly is a wonder!' ('Corker' was what

he *said*.)

Then I explained. One side of the villa was certainly expressly designed for a shop, the drawing-room and back drawing-room having side connections with the kitchen, only needed to be fitted with shelves and counters. The other side of the house and all above stairs might remain intact.

To my surprise Mr. Donnan never said a word concerning his position, his political aspirations, his illuminations, and disporting of the green harp of Ireland.

'But what are we to do with Cynthia's parlour furniture?' he asked instead. I could see a look of joy flash across his wife's face.

'Donnan,' she said, 'we will make the empty room above into a parlour. It's a perfect god-send. That boy should be paid by Government to make plans for people!'

Butcher Donnan bent his brows a moment on his wife. 'Oh, you are in it, are you, Cynthia? Then I suppose I may as well go and order my white apron and cap?'

'Think how well they will become you!' said his wife, who also must have kissed the Blarney stone—the old one, not the new.

I agreed heartily. Butcher Donnan heaved a sigh. 'And me, that never was seen but in decent blue,' he said, 'me to put on white like a mere bun-baker—and at my time of life!'

I said that it was certainly scandalous, but seeing that he would have nothing to do with the work except to sell, and arrange the windows for market-days, it would not matter so much.

'I shall need a small oven!' said his wife, 'and a new set of French 'casserole moulds' (which is to

say patty-pans) *and* some smaller brass pans, also…’

‘Perhaps I was wrong,’ I interposed cunningly, ‘to lead Mr. Donnan into so much expense.’

I knew that, if anything, this would fetch him, and it did.

‘Expense, is it? Expense, Miss Sweetheart! Ha, Ha!’ He slapped his pocket. ‘Ask your friend Mr. Anderson down at the Bank (not that he will tell you!) whether Butcher Donnan is a warm man or not? *He* did not retire on four bare walls and a pocket-handkerchief of front-garden like some I could tell you of. Cynthia, you shall have all the brass pans you want, and as for the front shop—well, there won't be the like of it, not as far as Dumfries! We shall have a van too, gold and blue!’

Butcher Donnan was all on fire now, and when Nipper came in he clapped him on the shoulder, crying that he had better look sharp. He, Butcher Donnan, was going to set up such a shop as never was seen in Edam, and people would never be wanting ‘fresh meat’ any more, but live on pies and shortcake and sweets for ever and ever.

At this Nipper looked no little relieved, and even listened to the details with a secret satisfaction.

‘Father,’ he said, ‘the shop down town can run itself the first day of the opening of yours. I'm coming up to see you face the public in your new nursing togs!’

‘You're an impudent young jackanapes,’ said his father, clenching his fists, ‘and if it were not that you have to stick to business and pay me the money you owe me, I would thrash you on the spot, old as you are!’

‘Oh, let Nipper alone,’ said I, as cheerfully as I

could, ‘he has the sweet tooth. I know it well, and I will wager he will yet be one of your best customers!’

‘He will bring his money along with him then every time,’ growled his father. ‘And now I am off to see Mr. Hetherington, the architect. We must get things ship-shape!’

‘But,’ cried his wife, ‘you have never tasted your tea!’

‘Oh, bother my tea!’ said Butcher Donnan, flouncing out, having fallen a victim to Hugh John's dangerous imagination. But he looked in again, his topper hat of Do-Nothing Pride already exchanged for the cap of Edam Commerce.

‘Tell that young gentleman of yours,’ he said, ‘that, if things turn out well, he is always welcome at our shop, eh, Cynthia? And nothing to pay! And you, Miss Sweetheart, I hope to live long enough to bake your bride's-cake!’

‘There he goes!’ murmured his wife, ‘in a week Donnan will think that he has made every single thing in the shop, from the brass weights on the counter to the specimen birthday-cake in the window!’

10. NIPPER NEGLECTS HIS BUSINESS

[*August eighth. Aged Fifteen.*]

It is only a month since the Donnans opened their new shop up on the open square facing the market hill, and not far from the railway station. It was one of a row of villas, mostly tenanted by men who had returned from the 'pack'—that is, who had made a neat little fortune in the business which calls itself Credit Drapery, but which, perhaps undeservedly, is called much harder names by its clients, especially when its back is turned.

These, being the aristocracy of a Shilling-a-Week and Cent.-per-Cent., objected exceedingly to a mere confectioner's shop thrusting its nose into the midst of their blue-stone walls, picked out by window-sills and lintels of raw-beef Locharbriggs freestone. But they could not help it, and after the chief of them all, Oliphant McGill, had smelt the now floury fist of the Reformed Idler, and been informed what would happen if he 'heard a wurrrd out of the heads av wan o' them'—there fell a great peace on Whinstone Villas.

Some even became customers, and the new business increased with wondrous rapidity. Butcher Donnan became Sweet-Cake Donnan, but that made no difference to his force of arm, or to the respect in which he was universally held.

As he had prophesied, it was not long till he had a pale-blue-and-gold covered van on the road, dandily hooded in case of rain, and with two spy-

holes so that the driver could see for himself what was coming up behind him.

From the Cave of Mystery high up on Hugh John's hill we could see it crawling along the roads (really it was going quite fast), like a lumpy cerulean beetle, the like of which for brilliance is not to be found in '*Curtis*.'

And the driver was Butcher Donnan himself. He knew all the farmers, and as he had made one fortune already, as fortunes went in Edam, the people were the readier to deal with him. Sometimes even the poorest would save up a penny for one of Mrs. Donnan's sponge-cakes. It was soon called the 'Watering Cart,' because in hot weather you could tell when it had gone along the road by the drip from the ice underneath, by means of which the jellies and confections were kept cool, while in winter the blue-and-gold beetle steamed like a volcano with hot mince-pies. Oh, Butcher Donnan believed in delivering his goods to the customer in the finest possible condition!

But this same Butcher Donnan being now driver and salesman-out-of-doors, and Mrs. Donnan equally busy in the kitchen, it was obvious that some one must be found for the shop. How *I* should have loved the job! But a certain Eben Dickson, apprentice with Nipper at the down town business, was called in, and so thoroughly proved his liking for the place in the course of a single afternoon that a more permanent and less appreciative successor was sought for.

Eben was laid up for several days, owing to an accident which happened to him when Butcher Donnan returned from his journeyings afield. It is understood that Nipper also remonstrated with him,

without, however, the use of many words.

The van had therefore to be put out of commission for several days till another arrangement was possible. And again it was Hugh John who, with his eyelids half closed and looking at the bright landscape through the long three-draw telescope, cut the knot with a carelessly breathed suggestion.

‘*Why not ask Elizabeth Fortinbras?*’

‘They would never dare!’ said I. ‘Old Fortinbras thinks himself no end of a swell!’

‘Yes,’ said Hugh John, with tranquil irony, ‘he has failed in at least four businesses—last of all in a stamp-shop at East Dene, while the Donnans have only succeeded in one—and are on the point of making another fortune in the second. But let them ask Elizabeth. She will not say 'no'!’

‘What of her mother?’ I said—‘her father?’

‘Her mother cannot support her—her father won't. In six months she will have to support them both!’ said the philosophic Hugh John. ‘You ask Lizzie. Lizzie is a sensible girl.’

I asked Hugh John how he knew.

‘Oh, just—I know!’ he answered shortly. And in another than Hugh John I should have suspected something. Because, you know, Elizabeth Fortinbras is a very pretty girl—not beautiful, but with a freshness and charm that does far better, a laugh that is hung on a hair-trigger; not much education, of course, because her stupid old frump of a mother—yes, I can say it, though Lizzie would not—has never permitted her to be long away from her, but must be served like a duchess in her room on pretext of headaches and megrims.

Being without a servant, she leaves Elizabeth

to do all the housework, and all that she knows she has learned from the books I have lent her—and, as I now begin to suspect, Hugh John also.

'And where *is* Elizabeth?' I said, for I saw the three-draw glass hovering in the neighbourhood of the Fortinbras Cottage.

'Why, where should she be?' cried Hugh John. 'At this hour of Monday morning she will certainly be hanging out the week's wash! There, put your eye down, don't stir the telescope, and you will see her. Also her sister Matilda sitting under a tree doing nothing but reading the latest story her mother has got out of the library!'

Hugh John's grasp of detail was something marvellous.

And, indeed, as I looked, through the tremble of the heat-mist the slender figure of Elizabeth Fortinbras jigged into view. She was standing on tiptoe, like the girl in the old illustrated nursery Caldecott, when: *'By came a blackbird and snapped off her nose.'*

Which would certainly have been a pity in Elizabeth's case, for the nose was a very pretty saucy one, and worthy of a better fate. She had on a short skirt. Her feet were thrust into sandals, and her white working blouse, open at the neck, had red peas on it. Concerning all which points Hugh John had nothing to learn.

Now I had always liked Elizabeth. There was something wild-wood and gay as a bird about her. She wore the simplest dresses, made by herself, and when she played in our woods there was a good deal of tomboy about her. She was older than any of us, and had often been our leader in high-spy or at running through the wood.

I could run faster, but (as Hugh John said) I ran like a boy, with my hands clasped and my elbows in. As for the way that Elizabeth ran, that was quite different. She ran—just like Elizabeth.

But the way she tossed about the youngsters was a sight. She romped with them among the hay. She thought nothing of bringing back Maid Margaret on her back for miles and miles, with a hop and a skip at every second pace, as if only to show how lightly her burden sat astride her shoulders, and how entirely impossible it was for Elizabeth herself to walk along in a sedate and ladylike way. Like a questing collie, she constantly left the highway. You could see her mount a bank as if she had wings. She was wayward, uncertain as a bird, fitful as a butterfly, changing her purpose with the whim of the children. Indeed, there was no one, in the opinion of all of us when we were little, like Elizabeth Fortinbras.

It was like spying out some shy fleeing wood-nymph to see her, with a few long, easy movements, springing and bounding across the stepping-stones of the upper river—or, the petticoat held daintily high, all in a faint flurry of white spray and whiter feet, negotiating the shallow ford at the first Torres Vedras when we were paddling there in the hot days.

Yet, when once across, she never seemed to have ‘shipped a drop,’ as Sir Toady Lion asserted in his best naval manner.

Rather, be it said, she gave herself a shake like a scudding swallow that has dipped its wing a little too deep in the pond, and lo! our Elizabeth was dry again. She never had so much as to preen a feather.

They always tell me that I am a little in love

with Elizabeth myself, and I am not ashamed of it. Once, from his hiding-place, Hugh John showed me a young dainty fawn come stepping lightly through the wood. I saw it skip airily across the Esk below the second Torres Vedras, ascend the bank in three bounds, walk demurely across the road like a maiden coming out of church, look about her as if gathering her skirts for something daring, and then, with one sidelong bound, swift and light, lo, she was over the high paling and lost in the wood!

Elizabeth Fortinbras would have done it just like that, as gracefully and as unconsciously. But to think of her taking a place in the Donnan's Confectionery shop—surely his good angel had for once forsaken Hugh John—plan-maker to the world in general, and private domestic Solomon!

'Go and *ask* Elizabeth Fortinbras!' said Hugh John—and he said it as if he had good reason to know that Elizabeth would accept. Though that might only be his usual accent of quiet certainty. You see, Hugh John compels belief. Confidence accrues to his lightest guess, which is not accorded to Sir Toady on his oath. It is a shame that any one should be so favoured by nature in the matter of his word. I, being a girl, am suspected of inaccuracy, Sir Toady of 'monkeying,' and Maid Margaret of knowing nothing about the matter.

But Hugh John may be inaccurate. He may be 'monkeying' in secret, and he may know less than any one else about any matter. Nevertheless he is accredited like a plenipotentiary. He moves like Diogenes, his tub unseen about him. A calm certainty accompanies him. He inspires confidence, blind as that of a bank cashier in the multiplication table. All, too, without break, without insistence. To

look at, he is just a tall lad, with singularly quiet manners, who looks at you fixedly out of grey eyes very wide apart. Only—you believe him.

But that is the reason why, in my secretest heart, as soon as Hugh John said, ‘Ask Elizabeth Fortinbras!’ I knew that Elizabeth Fortinbras would accept.

I had to ask her myself. Or rather I took Mrs. Donnan with me, who did as she was told, smiling and stammering apologies in the proper places. As for me, I said what Hugh John had advised me to say, in our last long talk together up in the Cave.

Of course it was no use in the world consulting Elizabeth's parents. Her father was lost in dreams of making another fortune by a new and original butter-cooler which would put all others out of the market. Her mother, fretful and fine-ladyish, would declare that she could not do without her. But I knew that it would be an exceedingly good thing for her younger sister to get her nose taken out of the *Penny Novelette*. If Elizabeth went, she would have to do the housework, and so might yet save her soul—though as yet she had shown no signs of possessing any.

We talked to Elizabeth, however, or at least I did, without any mention of this. There were many knick-knacks about, on the mantelpiece, on the tables, on brackets set in corners—all the work of that ingenious, useless man, Mr. Robert Fortinbras. As we talked, Elizabeth moved gracefully about among these, her duster never hurried, never idle.

I never saw any one who could ‘play at work’ as Elizabeth could. Any one else would have sat down and received her guests. Not so Elizabeth. If we chose to come at eleven o'clock in the morning—

well, we must take her as we found her. In another quarter of an hour, if we stayed, we would be asked to come into her kitchen, and watch her peeling potatoes. And that would have seemed quite natural—not only to Elizabeth, but to us.

Elizabeth did not reply hastily. She heard me out without sign either of consent or of refusal. Mrs. Donnan, stout and motherly, purred acquiescence. Yes, they would give her the warmest welcome—if she cared to stay, the happiest home. But no doubt she would prefer to return to her own home at nights.

The next words which reached our ears were Elizabeth all over. 'If I come, I shall stay,' she said, 'because if I went home, the work of the house would simply be left till I got back!'

The reason was clear, and almost the consent.

'Had you not better consult your father and mother?' I said, a little breathlessly, having been brought up in the faith of obedience to parents.

But in this matter Elizabeth, taught by long experience, had evolved other methods.

'I will *tell* them,' she said simply. 'When do you want me to begin? Monday? Very well!'

And it was on Tuesday that Nipper Donnan began to neglect his business.

11. ELIZABETH

[*September 11 of the same year. Going Sixteen now.*]

Now I suppose you think this is going to be a love-story. But it isn't—at least not so far. And I am sure the hero won't be either of the two *you* think—not, that is, Hugh John or Nipper Donnan.

But I am going to tell the story of the strangest, the delicatest friendship I have ever seen—that of Hugh John, my brother, and Elizabeth Fortinbras.

He is the youngest hero you can imagine, but somehow is much more like a young man who has shaved himself very close than the schoolboy he is.

Nothing puts Hugh John out. When he has some big festival to attend along with father, he sits quiet and self-possessed, doing his part without a quiver on his face. As far as looks go, he could easily be the chairman. The clean-cut outlines of his face do not denote hardness. Only he is of the Twentieth Century, and an adept at concealing his sensations—even from his parents, with whom he is great friends.

But, for all that modernity, there is something essentially knightly, and even knight-errant, about our Hugh John. An elder time has touched him. Ideas growing, alas! extinct—are natural to him. A chivalrous Cromwellian is perhaps the nearest I can come in the way of definition. For years he was the only one in the house (except Fuz, of course) who sustained Roundhead as against Cavalier. Yet all his

outer man (surely a boy has an ‘outer man’ when he is six feet high) is that of the Collegians who rallied about the King at Oxford, and swept away the train-bands with Rupert the Prince at Marston Moor. But Hugh John agrees with Mr. Prynne as to the Unloveliness of Love-Locks, and no Sergeant-Major could carry a closer cropped head of hair.

Also the mind within him is one that abhors restraint. That is, in thinking. In acting, he obeys as a principle all justly constituted authorities. Also, if *he* is in authority, he will insist upon obedience even unto the shedding of blood.

Only the mind is free and untrammelled. Obedience includes only acts. Thought with him is free, liberal, critical, large.

But Hugh John is generally shy with the girls who come to our house. He retires to one of his fastnesses, a lonely David in some unknown Engedi. He blots himself out. Simply, *he is not*—so far, that is, as the rest of the house is concerned. But he has the most sharply defined and sudden affinities. He will see a girl for the first time—the most reserved, unlikely girl, shy as himself. He will go up to her, and lo! as like as not, five minutes afterwards they will pair off like two schoolboys arm in arm.

Grown-up People, after a certain while, forget how their own friendships were formed—how much was chance, how little intention, and they judge *us* in the light of what they now *think* they were. They are ‘out’ every time with Hugh John.

For instance, I know Somebody who was afraid he was going to fall in love with Elizabeth Fortinbras. No such good luck! *I* knew. The first time I surprised them having a good talk together I saw that Elizabeth would take advice from that grey-eyed

boy with a man's thoughts which she would scorn from any one else.

It was the day after we had been to see the Donnans. When I got home, Hugh John had merely said, 'When does Elizabeth begin?'

'Monday,' said I; 'but how in the world did you know?'

'I did not know *that*!' he answered gravely, as usual.

You simply can't surprise Hugh John. A momentary glitter in a pair of rather close-lidded grey eyes—that is the most you can expect from him.

It was at the stile at the entrance into the High Wood that I found them. Elizabeth Fortinbras was seated on the top spar nursing her knees, and sucking the sorrel stems which Hugh John handed up one by one. They never looked at one another, but I saw in a moment (trust a girl!) that I would interrupt their talk. Just fancy *me* playing gooseberry! No, thank you, kind sir, she said! Besides, I knew very well that Elizabeth did not consult her father—and her mother was not worth consulting. There remained only Hugh John. Of course she could have asked me, but what girl would have taken my advice when she could get Hugh John's?

I don't know what they said—of course not. I did not ask. But what I *do* know is that Elizabeth and Hugh John talked just as he and I would have done when taking counsel together up in the Cave or at the Feudal Tower.

Sir Toady was better advised than to attempt to make fun, and though the Grown-ups might lift their eyebrows, even they had confidence in Hugh

John. Sometimes they asked his advice themselves—though I never heard of their going so far as to take it. Grown-ups, to my thinking, get narrow-minded. Perhaps Hugh John will too some day. But now at least he always just sees the one thing to do, and does it—the one thing another ought to do, and tells him of it.

Well, he never went to the new confectionery shop. He would pass it without lifting an eyelid—though I will wager that each time he did so Elizabeth Fortinbras saw him—and Hugh John knew that she did. And each was the happier for the knowledge.

To me Elizabeth's determination seemed to brighten all that part of Edam. It was quite near our house, only just outside the gates. Behind the counter Elizabeth made a slender figure in black and white. Black dress well fitting, a present from Mrs. Donnan, large turn-back cuffs, and a broad Eton collar. It was no wonder that the business throve—I mean the business which was under the charge of Elizabeth Fortinbras. The other 'down town' suffered exceedingly.

You see, Nipper Donnan could not be in two places at the one time. And he found he had innumerable occasions to consult his father, or to have something mended by his mother. He could not possibly obtain the information or the reparations down town. Hence he spent much of his time hanging about the new confectionery shop opposite the Market hill. He became learned in the semaphore signalling of the trains on the two little railways which diverged at Edam Junction. These he explained to Elizabeth.

His step-mother secretly encouraged him.

Nothing would have pleased her better than for Nipper to ‘settle down’ with such a daughter-in-law. But she knew, perhaps better than his own mother would have done, that this strong, incult, fighting Nipper had little chance with a girl like Elizabeth Fortinbras, whose chief friend and confidant was a certain grey-eyed lad with a perpendicular frown of thought between his brows.

But Nipper kept on. He thrashed one Hector McLean for blowing a kiss towards the shop-window from the far side of the Market dyke. All day long he thought what high and noble thing he could do for Elizabeth's sake—such as having marble slabs, and water running all the time between double plate-glass, or dressing all his assistants in blue, fresh and fresh every day! You see, Nipper's imagination was limited.

But once or twice his father came in and surprised him leaning over the counter. He regarded his son for a moment with dull, murky eyes; and then, quite abruptly, ordered him out. The third time this happened he followed Nipper outside and explained to him the consequences of this malingering—*imprimis*, he would get his head broken. *Item*, he would be ‘backward with his term instalment’! *Tertio*, if he were, he need expect no mercy from his father; and in conclusion, he had better ‘get out of that, and stay out!’ He, Butcher Donnan, was not a fool. He knew all about what he was after, if the womenfolk did not! And he was not going to have it! There! Nipper was warned!

His comings and goings did not, indeed, make much difference to Elizabeth. Often he was a nuisance, ‘lounging and suffering’—looking, as she said afterwards, ‘like a blue undertaker attached to

a steel-yard.' His expression spoiled sales. He looked acid drops. His jealousies poisoned the very strawberry shortcake on which Mrs. Donnan's heart prided itself.

On the other hand, he was useful when there were heavy weights to be lifted, boxes of materials for the little store-room at the back. Elizabeth could not move these, so she had either to unpack them on the street, or wait till Butcher Donnan drove his blue-and-gold wagon into the yard.

But Nipper delighted to show his strength, and would pick up a huge case, swing it on his shoulder, and deposit it wherever told. These were his moments of great joy, and almost repaid him for not being able to eat.

For Nipper's appetite had suffered. He indulged himself in startling neckties, and, as his girth shrank, the waistcoats which contained it became more and more gorgeous.

Poor Nipper! He could only gaze and wonder—that is, when there was no lifting to be done. His tongue forsook him when called upon to answer the simplest remark. When Elizabeth, taking pity upon him, asked about his week's receipts, he answered vaguely that he did not know.

Hearing this, she turned about, bearing a tray full of almond-cake fresh from Mrs. Donnan's hand, and said, 'Nipper, do you mean to say you do not keep track of your sales? Why, you will get cheated right and left. Bring the books up tonight and I will go over them for you!'

To Nipper this seemed an opportunity too good to be lost. He imagined their two heads bent over the records of the down town shop, and perhaps also in time a corresponding approachment

of ideas.

Beautiful dream! Foredoomed to failure, however. For Elizabeth, after a few questions, took up the books to her own room, and on the morrow furnished the disappointed Nipper with a few startling statistics as to receipts and expenditure.

‘And what would you advise me to do?’ said Nipper humbly.

‘Oh, I don't know,’ said Elizabeth. ‘Ask Hugh John from the House in the Wood. He will tell you, if anybody can. He advised me to come to help your mother. If it had not been for him, I should not have been here now!’

The gleam of jealousy (which is yellow, and not green) in his eyes altered Nipper's countenance completely.

‘Ah, Hugh John indeed!’ he thought. That, then, was the explanation, was it? This coldness was owing to Hugh John—a boy, little more than a boy—while he, Nipper, was a man, a Councillor, with a shop and income of his own!

Yet he remembered, when he was already well-nigh Hugh John's present age, and the cock of all Edam, tying a pale-faced, determined little boy to a ring in a wall down in the dungeon of an ancient castle. He had determined then to make the cub give in, and there had been some sick work with string-twisting and wire-pincers. He did not care to think about that. But even then the cub had beaten them all. They had been good friends since—that is, in a way. But was it written in the Book of Fate (in which Nipper believed) that they should fight for the mastery on another and far more dangerous arena? It seemed preposterous, but still—well, he would see Hugh John and put the case to him, as Elizabeth

had said.

Then, so Nipper told himself, he would know! Well—*he might*—supposing that Hugh John had been even as the young butcher, blushing half-a-mile away when a lissom, upright form and gait as of wind-blown corn told the world the important news (for Nipper Donnan) that Elizabeth Fortinbras was coming up the street in a hurry.

Hugh John listened quietly. Bygones were long bygones between him and Nipper. The ‘smoutchies’ smoutched no more, but were (most of them) good servants of the King or honourable citizens of Edam. Already one wore the V. C., and for his sake and in the general interests of peace Hugh John tolerated those who remained. He even liked Nipper Donnan, and had no idea of the gusts of angry fury that were tearing his poor ignorant heart to pieces.

‘Advise you—well, I don't know much about it,’ said Hugh John. ‘If it is a matter of your books, you had better show them to your father. No? You don't want to do that. Very well, then, tell me what Elizabeth Fortinbras said—exactly, I mean.’

‘Said I was to come to you—tell you about the week's deficit, and ask your advice.’

‘Then you must tell me *all* about it!’ said Hugh John, calmly impartial. Nipper gave some figures of entrances and exits, marts and sales, gross, retail, and monthly book-debts.

‘Hum!’ said Hugh John, after a minute's thought, ‘if I were you I should get rid of the whole indoor crowd, and work the business myself for a month or two, with a couple of 'prentices *and* the toe of my boot!’

Hugh John's eyes were distant, grave,

thoughtful—Nipper's little, black, and virulent with suppressed anger. But the Thinker had grown man of action also, and Nipper felt no security that he could win a victory against Hugh John even with his fists. As to the mind, he felt instinctively the grip of his master. *That* was not to be gainsaid.

'Yes,' he said, jerking out his words like leaden pellets on a table, 'I suppose that *is* the plan. I will fire the whole lot this very night!' Hugh John nodded quietly.

'It will be best!' he said, and the advice once given, his mind would have passed to another question had not Nipper recalled him suspiciously.

'Has my father not been speaking to you?' he growled ungraciously.

'Your father? No, not that I remember!' said Hugh John, staring in wonder.

'Nor my—Mrs. Donnan, I mean?'

'Never spoke to her in my life, I believe—Sis has, though!'

'*Nor Elizabeth?*'

Nipper's eyes were like gimlets now, but the calm serenity in those of Hugh John baffled them.

'Elizabeth Fortinbras? Oh, yes,' said Hugh John tranquilly, 'when she wants to ask me about anything—as you are doing now—then she speaks to me.'

'*Is that all?*' Nipper's face worked. His lips were bitten so close that the words had almost to force themselves between the clenched teeth. Hugh John regarded him a moment gravely, as he did all things, with gaze unhurried, undismayed. Then he put his hands in his pockets and turned his back on Nipper with only the words, 'Enough for you to know, anyway!'

And if ever Nipper came near striking any one a dastardly blow from behind, it was Hugh John who was in danger and at that moment.

12.FIGS AND FIG-LEAVES

[*September 23. And my Age still going Sixteen.*]

It was the week before Hugh John went to college that what I am going to tell took place. September is almost always nice about Edam—with the corn standing white in stooks all down the valley, waving blonde half-way up the sides of the wide glen, and looking over into it from the heights of Kingside still as green as grass. Yes, in our part September is wonderfully quiet and windless—generally, that is. Yet withal, there is the stir of harvest about the farm-town, the merry whirr of the 'reaper' over the hedge, and always the clatter of voices as the workers go homeward in the twilight. The big scythe is now only used about our house for 'opening up' a field. After that the horses pull the red-and-blue 'McCormick' round as neatly as a toy. The squares get less and the yellow stooks rise, as it were, out of the very ground.

This year it was a specially gay time for us all. Mr. Ex-Butcher Donnan had more customers. His wife had taken a laboratory assistant in the shape of an apple-cheeked lass, Meg Linwood, the daughter of the station-master at Bridge of Edam—honest as the day, but at first incapable in the kitchen as a crossing-sweeper of goldsmith work.

Mrs. Donnan told me of Meg's iniquities in her frank impulsive Irish way.

'There's not a thing breakable the craitur has not broke, or at least tried her best to break. And what she can't knock to flinders with one skelp, she will fall over like an applelaunche (avalanche?) and rowl out flat like so much sheet lead. I dare not

show the master the tenth of her breakages, or there would be bloodshed and wounds. And yet she is the honest, well-meaning craitur too, and would not hurt a fly. Only it is the heaven's pity she has no power of her feet! Hear to that now!'

Poor Mrs. Donnan ought, of course, to have remained unmoved where she was and entertained me with a stomach-aching smile so long as I chose to stay. But, being an Irishwoman and natural, she sprang up and ran forthwith into the kitchen.

She came out with tears in her eyes.

'It's the épergne,' she said, 'I might have known it. The green figs is just come in, and as they are a new thing in Edam I thought to make a kind of trophy out of them. And now——!'

Mrs. Donnan's motherly eyes overflowed, good, kindly soul, without very much anger at the breaker, but with real grief for the loss of the 'trophy' she had counted upon to display in her plate-glass shop window.

I patted her on one plump shoulder, and she murmured my undeserved praises—undeserved, I mean, at that moment. But I had remembered that there was in our china-closet at home a huge épergne of many storeys, which Somebody had taken a prejudice against, because when loaded it shut off the entire view of the people at table, and they played at 'Bo-peep' all the time around it and about—all right for us little ones who, unseen, could convey extra fruits and comfits to our plates, but abhorred by Somebody who was thus prevented from keeping a kindly, governing eye upon us. So the tall épergne was banished—a life sentence firmly expressed.

I went quickly home and excavated it from a

general ruck of odd plates and cupless saucers. In triumph I carried it to the good mistress of New Erin Villa.

'Oh, Miss Sweetheart,' she said, 'I cannot—I cannot indeed...'

'Suppose that your—that 'Somebody' were to come along and see that épergne in my window—sure they might have in the police!'

Finally I satisfied Mrs. Donnan that though I had not asked special permission, it was only because there was no need, and that Somebody, if duly approached, would be the first of her customers, and the most helpful of her friends. *I* said so because I knew.

'It *would* look like all Dublin Castle and Sackville Street!' said Mrs. Donnan, visibly flinching as her own inner eye built up the green figs, and decorated the épergne with the leaves that had proved so useful early in the history of the world.

'Well,' I answered, taking my leave, 'Hugh John and I will be round about four to see if it is as fine as you say.'

'It will be finer,' cried Mrs. Donnan eagerly; 'I have got another idea entirely since I set eyes on it.'

But after all it was the deft hands of Elizabeth Fortinbras which decorated our long-condemned and dusty épergne. She polished it, she set it on foot again as good as new, mingling the tawny-red-bitten oak-leaves and acorns with the deep green figs, and making the thing a joy, if not for ever, at least for as long as it remained in Mrs. Donnan's window.

This, however, was not for long.

For Fuz—yes, the very old Fuz as ever was—coming home from a tramp with his eyes apparently mooning, but really registering everything as

remorselessly as a calculating machine marshals figures, spied the green figs in Mrs. Donnan's window. Hardly in Edam was there any one else, at that date, who so much as knew what they were. He saw. He admired. There was a little dinner at our house that night to which just a couple of neighbours were coming. The idea of a surprise germinated in the mind of Fuz, and he came home the happy possessor of his own épergne, with the green and yellow leaves cinturing it round!

Poor Mrs. Donnan dared not say a word, and as for Elizabeth, it was not her business. Moreover, she had far too great a sense of the ridiculous. You see, Fuz carried his own parcel off, with his invariable remark that ‘it is a proud horse that will not carry his own corn!’

Nothing like Fuz's pride that night! Nothing more knowing than the smiles of the initiated! Only Hugh John did not consider it ‘quite the square thing,’ and obstinately refused to attend the banquet, which, however, passed off very well without him. Fuz became quite poetic over his new acquisition. To find such a thing in Edam! These cherubs' heads now! Just look at them. They reminded him of—I think, something in the Cathedral at Florence which you had to strike matches to see—little cublets squirming about a font or something. He had quite forgotten having ordered the identical thing into the ignominy of a dungeon for obscuring the prospect. Now it was the finest piece of ‘Dresden’ he had ever set eyes upon.

And he promised—if I were a good girl—to give it to me as a wedding present.

That is Fuz all over. He says he is Scotch, but his part of Scotland is so near Ireland that

(according to the best authorities) Saint Patrick swam across with his head between his teeth. Perhaps Fuz did too. But don't tell Hugh John that I said so.

Well, when Hugh John would not dress and come for dinner on account of us letting Fuz be taken in about the épergne, he went off on one of his long rides. Or so at least he thought. For really he got no farther than the Gypsies' Wood, and then that took place which was bound to take place sooner or later.

For, you see, Elizabeth Fortinbras owned a cycle also, and she used it to run home to see her people—even during her short half-hour in the afternoon she would go, no matter how hot it was. And she was teaching her sister Matilda to house-keep. She had had a row the first time or two, of course. But that was to be expected. Once she had gone back between two or three of the afternoon—which was slack time at the confectionery shop opposite the Market Hill, and when she arrived, lo! her mother was deep in one ragged volume, Matilda sat crouched in a corner of the sofa with another, and from the garret came the sound of hammering, where Mr. Fortinbras the unfortunate was working out another epoch-making invention.

Flies buzzed about the greasy, unwashed plates and dishes where breakfast had been pushed aside to make way for early dinner.

Elizabeth thrust her head into a bedroom. The clothes trailed on the floor, and the very windows had not been opened. The air of night, warmed through blindless windows by an autumn sun, had produced an atmosphere which might have been cut with a knife. Elizabeth shuddered. She

demanded the reason why the house had not been 'done up.'

'Well,' said Matilda, lifting her head languidly, 'you had hidden the knife-board when you went away, and as to the beds, I knew you were coming home today, and you might just as well help me as not.'

Elizabeth helped her by going out without a word, and not returning till her father, who at least could not be called idle, had intimated to her that Matilda was beginning to take her household duties seriously.

From the first Elizabeth had given half her wages to her father, on the distinct understanding that the money was to be used for housekeeping, and not for perfecting any new invention which was to alter the centre of gravity of the earth, and give back equal rights in sunshine and moisture to all the world.

Well, it chanced that this evening of the September dinner Elizabeth Fortinbras was returning from her daily visit of inspection. She was in a happier mood than usual. For Matilda had really made a start, and at home she had discovered less to find fault with than usual. She was reckoning up her wages, which the Donnans, generous in all things, were freely advancing—perhaps even too frequently to suit Elizabeth's spirit of independence. Some day she might manage to let her people have a servant!

From the first the two old folk of Erin Villa—old only in the number of their years—had looked upon Elizabeth Fortinbras as doing honour to their business, almost, indeed, as a daughter born to their old age.

Hugh John had leaned his bicycle against a tree at the corner of the Gypsies' Wood. Far above, his keen grey eye caught the slight purple stain among the rocks of the hillside which marked the mouth of his Cave of Mystery. For a moment he had an idea of climbing up there and watching the twilight sinking into dark, as he had done so many times before. But the instinctive respect of a good rider for his cycle restrained him. He knew of one or two hiding-places safe enough, it was true. But on such a night, immediately before the Edam September fair, who might not be abroad? All the gypsies of three counties were converging on Edam, and so, with a sigh, Hugh John abode where he was.

Now of course anybody who did not know both Hugh John and Elizabeth Fortinbras would have come to a wrong conclusion. For Elizabeth, after a day in the shop followed by an evening visit of inspection and assistance to Matilda, took it into her head that a spin round by the Gypsies' Wood would freshen her up, and so put her in trim for a good day's work on the morrow.

That is why she encountered Hugh John, stretched long and lazy by the side of the stream. He rose as soon as he saw Elizabeth. They did not shake hands. They did not say, ‘How-d'ye-do—Very-well-thank-*you*!’ which is the correct Edam fashion for all concerned.

But Hugh John indicated the most comfortable portion of an old half-submerged trunk, and Elizabeth sat down without dispute. Hugh John disposed himself where he could see her profile without looking at her. It was only when he was making up his mind about you that Hugh John regarded you fixedly. He had long made up his mind

about Elizabeth.

‘Well, Elizabeth?’ said Hugh John (I will tell you afterwards how I know).

‘Well, Hugh John?’

Then ensued a long pause. The water sang its lucid continual song. How many had sat and watched it, thus singing, glide on and on? Well, as Hugh John says, that did not matter. He was only occupied in finding ‘*soorocks*’ for Elizabeth Fortinbras, and Elizabeth busied herself in eating them.

‘About Nipper?’ said Elizabeth softly. ‘I can't have it, you know.’

‘No, of course not!’ said Hugh John.

Having known *him*, it was impossible that Elizabeth could decline upon Nipper Donnan. Hugh John did not, as you may well imagine, put it that way. The thing was simply unthinkable, that was all. He could no more let it happen than he would to his sister. He turned ever so little, and saw Elizabeth Fortinbras' face pale against the sunset.

Elizabeth looked at the boy, and her lips quivered a little. Hugh John became a shade more rigid.

‘Let *me* speak to Nipper Donnan!’ said Hugh John in a level tone.

‘No,’ said the girl, ‘I do not wish to go back home again—to *that*!’

She meant to slatternly makeshift and lightly disguised lying.

‘*No need!*’ said a fierce voice immediately behind them, and Nipper Donnan leaped the stone wall from behind which he had been watching Elizabeth and Hugh John.

‘Ah, Nipper!’ said Hugh John lazily, handing

up another sorrel stem to Elizabeth; 'glad to see you, Nipper. Sit down and help to look for fat ones!'

'You are mocking me, both of you!' cried poor Nipper blackly. His face was hot and angry, his eyes injected like his father's when in wrath, and his hands were clinched tight.

'You came here to talk about me,' he said hoarsely, bending forward towards them like a beast ready for the spring.

'Nonsense!' said Hugh John; 'we met by pure accident. I did not want any dinner, and Elizabeth wanted a breath of fresh air.'

'You lie! I do not believe you!' cried Nipper.

'You will have to, Nipper,' said Hugh John, who had not moved an inch.

'*And* why?'

'Because *I* say it!' said Hugh John quietly. 'I do not tell lies!'

'A likely story!' growled Nipper. 'You were talking about me! I heard you. You will have to fight me—Hugh John Picton Smith!'

'That we shall see,' said Hugh John coolly. 'What must be, must be. But there is a word or two to say first.'

'Talk!' cried Nipper. 'Oh, that does no good to a fellow like me. You shall fight me, I tell you!'

'Not before Elizabeth Fortinbras!' said Hugh John, taking off his cap with a quick, instinctive gesture of respect. 'You and I can't behave like two angry dogs before her!'

'You're afraid!'

'Possibly,' said Hugh John, 'but not in any way *you* would understand.'

Then Elizabeth Fortinbras took up speech.

'Nipper Donnan,' she said, 'I won't pretend I

don't know what you mean. You are driving me from the single happy place of refuge I have on earth. I cannot stay with your father and mother unless you stop pestering me. And then you talk about fighting. Why, Hugh John is nearly five years younger than you are…'

'He is as tall!' growled Nipper.

'Taller!' corrected Elizabeth coolly. 'But if you behave like a whole menagerie of brutes, that won't make me care more about you. Hugh John is my brother; I have no other!'

'*Umph!*' snorted Nipper, 'he doesn't come and sit out by Esk-waterside with his sisters.'

I know that at that moment Hugh John's eye sought the deep purple stain of the Cave of Mystery, where he and I so often sat together. But he said nothing at all to his adversary. It might have been mistaken. It was to Elizabeth he spoke.

'I have something to say to Nipper which you had better not hear,' he remarked quietly. 'Here is a special handful of sorrel to take home with you. Let me see you as far as the first lamp-post on my cycle. Then I will come back and speak with Nipper.'

They went, and Nipper sat on the empty log, gloomily cursing fate—but, educated by the experience of many years, never for a moment doubting that Hugh John would keep his word.

He even timed him. He knew to within half-a-minute when the bright bull's-eye of his acetylene lantern would turn the corner of the Gypsies' Tryst. He saw it come. He stood up on his feet, and jerked his clenched hands once or twice forward into the gloaming.

Then Hugh John leaped from his cycle by the wall.

‘Sit down, Nipper,’ he said. ‘I have something to say to you.’

‘Oh, I dare say,’ said Nipper; ‘you want to get out of fighting.’

‘Very well—you think so. I shall show you!’ said Hugh John. ‘But first you have got to listen. You are troubling Elizabeth Fortinbras. She does not mean to be troubled. She will go away if you do not stop going into the shop. She told me so. She has always been my friend, and my sister's friend. Her father and mother are no use to such a girl. That is why I have tried to be a brother to her…’

‘Brother, is it?’ shouted Nipper, clenching his fists. ‘I will show you what it is to take a girl from Nipper Donnan. You were making love to her.’

‘I am her brother. She is my sister,’ Hugh John repeated, with his usual quiet persistency. ‘She is not yours in any way. Therefore I cannot take from you what you never possessed.’

‘I love her, and I will kill you, Hugh John Picton Smith!’ moaned poor Nipper, his whole body shaking with impotent anger.

‘Very well, you can try, though you are older,’ said Hugh John; ‘only, if I win, you will let Elizabeth Fortinbras alone.’

‘All right,’ said Nipper, ‘I agree. And if I lick you, you will stop prejudicing her against me!’

‘You won't win!’ prophesied Hugh John still more quietly.

And that is why Elizabeth Fortinbras' afternoons and evenings at New Erin Villa were thenceforward full of peace. Also why no young butcher hung any more over the counter, and why Mr. Nipper Donnan spent his evenings in the kitchen with Meg Linwood. It explains also why,

when he came to say good-by to Elizabeth Fortinbras, Hugh John had a split lip.

Yet the girl asked no questions of her champion. She did not appear to notice the slight wound, and she sent away Hugh John with a single token of (sisterly) gratitude, and the curious reflection that a split lip does not spoil kissing nearly so much as a fellow might think.

13.UNTO US AS A DAUGHTER

[*November 2. The same Age.*]

(It is really the first of the month, but I date it the second, because the first is a Sunday, you see.)

After the fine weather of July came a horrid rainy spell. Now I don't mind so much when the days are short, the trees bare, and the time for winter lamps and winter fires is come. Then you can just shut yourself up, get some books you have been promising yourself for a long time to look at—and there you are.

But deluged park, dripping shrubbery, Esk-water growling turbidly at the foot of the Low Park, all the noble marine architecture of the two Torres Vedrases deep under swirling froth—that is what I hate, and especially with light to see it by—oh, good fourteen to sixteen hours of it. Pitter, patter on the roof, a sprinkle of broad drops on the window-panes from the trees swishing in the wind outside. After the first three days it grows unbearable.

It was a weary time, and a mockery for any one to call 'holidays,' especially after such a noble summer and autumn. But it cleared after Hugh John had been a week or two at college. During the wet weather I often went into the shop to see Elizabeth Fortinbras. I could now, you see, because Nipper Donnan was not always there.

More than once, however, I encountered his father, Butcher Donnan, who went about smiling and rubbing his hands—as if *he* had stopped the whole business. Of course I let him think so. For it is no good setting Grown-ups right. They always

know better.

Well, and do you know, every time I went Elizabeth asked all about Hugh John, and if I had heard from him. At first I thought, as, of course, any girl would, that Elizabeth was only foxing to take me in. But afterwards I found out that they really did not write to one another. She owned, though, to having kissed him good-bye. But that was only on account of his split lip and what he had done about Nipper.

Hugh John's explanation of his silence, given later, was that there were no sorrel stalks near the college, and that if Elizabeth really wanted anything, he knew that she would write and ask him.

Now, on the face of it, you would never believe this. It simply could not be, you would say. Yet it was. Even Nipper, who held out longest, ended by believing it. I, who had a sneaking liking for a love-story, of any sort, was secretly disappointed. Mrs. Donnan could not move in her kitchen for Nipper, who came home early now to talk to Meg Linwood.

Have you ever noticed that when any one has got a back-set in love, or what they think is love, they are quite apt to fly off at a tangent, and marry the least likely person in the world?

To the common eye, no one could have been less likely to engage Nipper's attention—with his lost love still in the front shop—than Meg Linwood in the back.

She was plump, rotund, rosy, where Elizabeth Fortinbras was slender, willowy, like Diana in the pictures and statues of her in the old *Art Journals* and *Illustrated London News* of the Exhibition year—I mean 1851. (As a child I always liked those volumes. There were such a lot of

pictures in them, and so little reading.)

But it was lost labour advising Nipper Donnan. He would show Elizabeth Fortinbras what she had missed. He would have the finest shop, the best meat, the most regularly paid monthly accounts, the biggest, squarest stone house with stables for the smartest trap to drive out his wife in. And then Elizabeth would awake to her folly. But too late! Too late! Elizabeth's goose was cooked.

Nipper avoided the first outbreak of parental wrath by running off with Meg Linwood, and Mrs. Donnan consoled her husband by her usual reflection that all was for the best. There are, indeed, very few things breakable about a butcher's shop, and if Meg had stayed at New Erin Villa, a complete set of crockery would have been required at an early date.

From Dumfries and Glasgow, Nipper sent very brief letters expressive of a desire to come to terms with his father. He was married. That could not be altered or amended. Meg came of a respectable family, and (save the breakages) no fault could be found with her.

True, Mrs. Donnan sighed. She would rather have seen Nipper going proudly down the aisle with another than Meg Linwood on his arm. As for Butcher Donnan himself, as soon as he got over dwelling upon the thrashing he meant to give Nipper when he caught him, the outlines of a broader, farther reaching, less arbitrary settlement began to form themselves in his mind.

He saw his lawyer, Mr. John Liddesdale, and what they said to one another bore fruit afterwards. But it was a busy ten days for Butcher Donnan. He had to spend the early morning of every day in the

down town shop. He had the rooms above it cleaned out, new furniture installed—and he abused his son as he went.

'The young fool!' was the best word for Nipper, forgetting that he himself had married at eighteen. Each afternoon he was out in the blue and gold van with the collapsible rain-hood. In the evenings he looked into the ashes of the kitchen fire and thought. It was then that Elizabeth proved herself above rubies to the old folks of New Erin.

'Faith, didn't I tell ye, from the first,' cried Butcher Donnan, slapping his thigh mightily, 'that's the girl, Cynthia! Nothing she will not turn her hand to—as smart as a jay, and all as sweet and natural as the Queen of Sheba coming it over Solomon!'

'It strikes me, Butcher Donnan,' said his wife, 'that for an old man you are getting wonderfully fond o' the lass!'

She was smiling also, a loving, caressing, motherly smile, showing mostly about the eyes, as she spoke of Elizabeth Fortinbras, which was very good to see.

'Fond of her, is it?' cried Donnan. 'I declare, I'm as fond of her as I wad ha' been o' my own daughter, if it had pleased Mary an' the saints to give us one!'

'*And why not?*' said Mrs. Donnan, bending suddenly towards her husband, and startling him with the earnestness of her regard.

'Why not—Cynthia, woman? You have been talking to Mr. Liddesdale?'

'Not I,' said his wife, smiling. '*You* should not talk in your sleep, that's all, Butcher Donnan, if you want to keep your little secrets.'

'Ah, wife, wife, it's you that are the wonderful

woman,' cried the Butcher-Pastry-Cook; 'but if that be so, faith, it's just as well I don't sleep with that Thief-o'-the-Wurrld Kemp, our sugar merchant. But what say you, wife?'

'I say what you say, Butcher Donnan!'

'Do you think she would accept? Would she come to us and be our daughter?'

'By this and that,' said his wife, 'mind, I take it for granted that you have done what is right by Nipper, and that he and Meg may come home when they like?'

'Not before Saturday!' said the Butcher; 'furniture and all won't be in. And if I saw Nipper for the first time on any other day than the blessed Sabbath, I might be tempted even then to break his silly head!'

This from Butcher Donnan was equal to a stage benediction from another. But his wife looked for more light, and in answer to the question in her eyes he told her all.

'Oh, Nipper is all right. He gets more than he deserves, the rascal. I will let him off what he still owes me on the business. The shop and dwelling-house shall be put in his name, and that's a deal more than ever I dreamed of having at his age. As for the dollars—well, we will see about those, when you and I have done with them!'

'What do you think about asking Elizabeth?' said his wife.

It was at this moment that I chanced to come in, and had the whole story told me by Mrs. Donnan. Elizabeth had cycled down to her father's house, and so was safely out of the way. Only our conference was interrupted by the various calls upon Mr. Donnan to answer the sharp '*cling*' of the

bell in the outer shop.

One after the other I heard them in silence, and at last I gave my opinion—which was that they might make their own arrangements, with the help of Mr. John Liddesdale, but that they would do well to wait the return of that long-legged, Minerva-eyed brother of mine, at present engaged in colleging it as hard as need be, to obtain the means of passing with credit through the world.

‘He may very well be taken in the same way as Nipper!’ said the father of the latter grimly. ‘She's a mighty fine girl, this Elizabeth.’

‘He might, indeed, very well,’ I answered. ‘I am sure *I* should, if I were a man. Only, he isn't, and he won't. I can promise you that. He will advise Elizabeth for the best, with less thought for himself than if *I* were concerned.’

‘Then he is a most unusual young man!’ said Butcher Donnan.

‘Hugh John *is* somewhat unusual,’ I said. ‘He does not let many people understand him.’

‘No,’ said Butcher Donnan; ‘that other young gent now—him with the uniform! Why, he is up to more tricks than a prize monkey with an Irish mother. As I said before, he is more in my own style about his age. Any one can see what *he* is driving at. If he does not break his neck off somebody else's apple-tree, or get shot in a poaching accident, no doubt he may live to be a great and good Admiral of the Fleet. But this here Hugh John—he is always as quiet as pussy, and as polite as a parliamentary candidate come last night from London. Yet he licked my Nipper, licked him good and square—*and* said nothing about it. Nipper told me, though. And now he can be a real safe brother to the prettiest girl

in Edam—beggin' your pardon, young lady, but *you* live out o' the town!’

Mrs. Donnan reminded her husband that it was owing to Master Hugh John that Elizabeth Fortinbras had come to them first. Also that it was certainly the least they could do to give him the chance of putting the matter to Elizabeth in his own way.

Thus, pending the Christmas holidays, Elizabeth Fortinbras became a child of adoption without knowing it.

Curiously enough, no one seemed to take into consideration any rights of pre-emption which her own father and mother might be supposed to possess upon her.

14. THE HARVEST FAIR

[*Written at the Age of Sixteen.*]

Of all the local events which upheaved the world of children in Edam, undoubtedly the greatest was the Harvest Fair. This happened somewhat late in the year. For Edam lay high on the mountain slopes. Only the herds and the sheep went higher. The harvesting lands were mostly in the valley crofts, in the hidden 'hopes' and broad waterside 'holms.' But here and there a few hundred acres of oats lay angled up against the steep side of a mountain, and in late October afforded a scanty, stocky harvest, '*bleached*' rather than ripened by the slant, chill sun and sweeping winds of the uplands.

In brief, then, the Harvest Fair was late in Edam. We were near enough to the Borders, however, to be overstocked with gypsies. And it was after them that the Gypsies' Wood and Tryst had been named.

A fine sight was Edam Fair. Far and wide it spread over the green, right down to the verges of Esk-water. Ours was a Fair of the old-fashioned kind. Rustics still stood about unhired with a straw in their mouths—ploughmen and 'orra' men they! Maidens wore their breast kerchiefs unknotted, and as soon as the bargain for six months was struck, and the silver shilling of 'arles' had passed, they knotted it firmly about their throats. They were no longer 'mavericks'—masterless cattle. They had the seal of a place and an occupation upon their necks.

It was 'Bell, the Byre Lass at Caldons'—'Jess Broon, indoor lass at the Nuik'—'Jeannie Sandilands, '*dairy*' at the Boreland of Parton.' These

were the proud titles of the 'engaged' ones who wore the knotted neckerchiefs.

But the 'shows' were, after all, the most taking and permanent feature. There was the continual joy of 'Pepper's Ghost,' where (as Fuz has related) on a certain occasion the hero, new to his part, first of all transfixed the ghost, and then threw down his clattering sword, with the noble words, 'Cold Fire is Useless!'

There was 'Johnston's Temple of Terpsichore,' on entering which you always looked over your shoulder to see if the minister or any of the elders were in sight. But how the girls danced, and how difficult it was to stop watching those who danced on their hands with their feet in the air, in order to observe those who danced on their feet with only their hands in the air! Thus we lost distinction in our joys.

However, both sorts were applauded, and when the people in tights leaped up and stood on each others' feet in order to form a pyramid, the general feeling was that if indeed we were selling our souls to Satan, at least we were getting the worth of our money!

We did not care much, after this, for the legitimate drama—though it was funny, certainly, to see Othello's 'livery of the burnished sun' grow patchy, and the grease trickle down from the left corner of Desdemona's nose—which, being naturally rubicund, had been worked up for the occasion.

I was, of course, too much of a young lady to be allowed to visit the Fair under any available escort. In the evening I might possibly, in company with Somebody, be permitted to peruse the outsides of the booths. But the real delights were for the

children. Strong in the possession of a half-crown apiece (to be spent as you please without accounting), Sir Toady and the Maid made havoc among the Aunt Sallies and the Cocoa-nut shysters.

A plan of campaign was evolved, simple but effective. Sir Toady, who was a good shot, took over the Maid's half-crown, and bound himself by a great oath to deliver up half the proceeds.

As for me, I caught glimpses of His Majesty's uniform darting from stall to stall, from range to range, followed by a butterfly figure in skimp white. This was the Maid, keeping track of profit and loss. She had good cause. Was she not involved to the extent of two-and-sixpence, her maiden mite?

Sir Toady appeared to be reckless, and put wholesale propositions before the Cocoa-nut shysters, as thus—‘Suppose I give you two shillings cash, how many throws can I have for it, and can I pick my own nuts if I win?’

Some refused and some accepted. Those who refused were, commercially speaking, the lucky merchants. Sir Toady's aim was deadly. He did not mind throwing at an Aunt Sally, though this he considered rather old-fashioned play. A bull's-eye trap-door, which opened at the smack of the ball, was his favourite. And he cleaned up one merchant from whom he had secured the easy terms of forty throws for half-a-crown. So completely did he do it that the fellow, who saw his pile of nuts rapidly wasting away, brazenly repudiated his bargain, and would even have tried to lay hands on the pile already in the bag over the Maid's shoulder.

But the shyster reckoned without a knowledge of his Toady. You see, there was not in Edam man, woman, or child who did not know Sir

Toady. And though at one time or another most had had their private disagreements with that youth, he was still an Edamite of the Edamites. Stained with early (orchard) crime, he yet retained the sympathy of gentle and simple. The very 'smoutchies' of a younger time rallied at his call, and if the nuts had not instantly been paid over, the overturned 'gallery' would have been sacked on the instant by promiscuous brigandage, the very police looking on with broad, benignant smiles.

'Such a young codger as he were!' grumbled the man afterwards, half in anger, half in admiration. 'I had made a bad bargain. I see *that* at once. 'Give me back them nuts. You've 'ad 'em on false pretences!' sez I.

''Sorry! So I have!' says he, smooth as butter. And with that he outs of his breast-pocket with his lanyard and blows a whistle like a bo'sum's mate! Then they ran from every quarter. My poor ole stall were on its back in half a jerk, and if it hadn't been for my young gent, so should I—*and* mauled into the bargain!

'Served me right, you say, for shovin' of my head into such a wasp's nest! But how was I to know?—I puts it to ye, mates. How was *I* to know?—*me fresh from London*!'

I had gone up to the Cave of Mystery, armed with the three-draw telescopes, which Hugh John had left behind him as too precious to be risked in the give-and-take of school—though, according to information received, it was mostly 'give' with Hugh John.

I saw a procession detach itself from the dense flow of the crowd, led by the white-frocked Maid and a dark blue Sir Toady, both laden down by

sackloads of cocoa-nuts. It was impossible for them to carry them all the way home to the House in the Wood. Equally impossible to trust the youth of Edam, satisfactory enough when fighting was on hand, but unreliable when it came to division of the spoils.

The Imps staggered across the road, pursued by a riotous tail of infantry of no known line. Arrived at the shop door of New Erin Villa, they were met by Mrs. Donnan—who, on such a busy day, had come out for a breath of fresh air.

'What in the world have you got there, children?' cried the Dame, holding up astonished hands to heaven.

'Cocoa-nuts! Wads and lashings of cocoa-nuts!' cried Sir Toady. 'I shot for them all. I threw for them. I won them. And when the man would have cheated me, I whistled the whole Fair Green down on him. *Then* I saved his life! But I don't know what to do with them now I have them! They won't hatch out, and if they would, I haven't got a big enough hen! Here, you!'

And opening one of the bags, he bowled half-a-dozen of the nuts among the crowd of smoutchies, who instantly became a swarming, fighting anthill on the plainstones of the street.

'Stop, Master Toady,' said Mrs. Donnan, 'do stop! I will show you what to make of them. Some of them will be good——'

'All are good,' asserted Sir Toady; '*I* picked them! At college they teach us, over at the canteen, how to know the good ones from the bad!'

By this time I was down at the shop door, having struck the main road near the Station Bridge. I fled to meet them, passing on the way

Butcher Donnan, who for the day had turned the blue and gold van into a fine selling booth on the Market Hill, where he presided over half-a-dozen temporary assistants, keeping a wary eye on all, both buyers and sellers.

The children were tired, and stood panting. Sir Toady was unexpectedly pessimistic. Maid Margaret looked rather world-weary. Both had begun to think that, after all, there were better ways of spending five shillings than shooting for cocoa-nuts.

‘What rot!’ said Sir Toady, shaking one disgustedly close to his ear. ‘Can't eat them all—make us ever so sick, and I have to join on Friday! No time to get better! Bah!’

‘It was all your fault, Toady,’ moaned the Maid, ‘*and* I want my half-crown back!’

‘Nonsense!’ cried Toady. ‘I never will go into partnership with a girl again. They always are sorry afterwards, whatever a chap does for them! There is your bag full of nuts, good and sound. What more do you want?’

Maid Margaret wanted much more. She began to express her wants in terms of candies and chocolates.

‘Candies!’ cried Mrs. Donnan; ‘why, if I weren't so busy, I would make you two candy to dream about—and of those very cocoa-nuts too!’

‘Do—oh, do make us some!’

‘Well, come into the bakehouse, and we shall see!’

They went, Elizabeth Fortinbras and I smilingly assisting with the bags of nuts. Elizabeth could not be spared out of the front shop, but I stopped to watch, and of course Sir Toady and Maid

Margaret pushed and elbowed for good front seats.

Mrs. Donnan, quietly smiling as ever, seized a skewer, and with several skilful taps made a hole in the end of the nut through which she let the milk drop into a basin. Then with a heavy hammer she smashed the shell into pieces.

It was a good nut, even as Sir Toady had prophesied. He had been well taught at the canteen.

'Now,' said the *cordon bleu* of Edam, 'who wants to do a bit of grating for me?'

'*I*'—'*I*,' shouted the children, and though I did not shout, I was really as ready as any one. The white inside was dealt out to us, and while the Maid and Sir Toady went at it (sometimes scraping their fingers by way of variety), a respectable pile of soft flaky nut, cream-coloured and nice, began to appear.

When we were finished, Mrs. Donnan went to a bag, and measured out two tablespoonfuls of white sugar to each one of the nut-flake, dropped the whole into a sizeable patty pan, and poured the milk of the cocoa-nut over it.

With Mrs. Donnan stirring hard, the whole was soon bubbling away cheerfully—indeed, boiling like what lava does in a volcano (*ought to*, at any rate), the bubbles bursting, and the nice smell making your teeth water, so that it did not seem that you could ever wait for it to cool.

Then, just when the bubbles began to burst with a warning 'pop,' Mrs. Donnan turned everything into a well-buttered shallow dish. It made a cake about as thick as your finger, and oh, but the smell was good! But she laid the dish away in the ice-house—as she said, to cool. Really, I think, to keep us from temptation, and prevent too early

experimenting upon the result.

Elizabeth Fortinbras would have none of us (not even me) in the front shop that day. She was too busy. So, after one question put and answered (it was about Hugh John), the three of us went out and walked in the garden till the ice-house had done its work.

Well, do you know, that candy was famous. Just you try it, with the explanations I have given you! It goes all right, you will find, and no mistake.

Indeed, so well did it go that a bargain was soon struck, and Elizabeth's clever fingers were busy printing out a placard:

FOR THIS DAY ONLY
CANARY ISLANDS COCOA-NUT CANDY
A SPECIALTY.

Cut into cubes, the result was certainly fascinating. Even Fuz was tempted to try. He came to scoff, but he remained to suck.

'*Now*, didn't I tell you!' said Sir Toady, when on the morrow he received twelve silver shillings as his share of the venture from the careful hands of Mrs. Donnan. 'Never you grumble about your Admiral Tuppens again. There you are! More cocoa-nut candy than we can eat before next Friday, warranted wholesome by Fuz, and six bob apiece to do what we like with! How about your old half-a-crown now?'

And the Maid was properly subdued, as, indeed, she ought to have been. Sir Toady did not mention that without Mrs. Donnan he would have been a very sorrowful investor indeed.

But then, male things love to take all the credit to themselves. Bless you, they can't help it! It's born in them, like polywogs in ponds.

15.QUIET DAYS

[*November 23.*]

We have had our first frost early this year—four days' skating on the High Pond before the middle of November! But it was sad to see the poor folks' corn still out, the stalks, stiffly frozen, piercing the couple of inches of frozen sleet that covers the ground.

They have had harvest festivals down in the town churches. But Fuz said that if they had taken up collections to help pay the farmers' rents, *that* would have been the best sort of festival, and he would have attended. As it was he stopped away, so as to let in somebody who was grateful for a late harvest and spoilt crops!

Fuz says that it is no use sending the *Monthly Visitor* to people who don't have a daily dinner, and that anything he has to spare will go towards the dinners. But then, Fuz does not mean all he says. For though he growls at the Tract Distributors, he always finishes by giving something so that they will not go sorry away.

Elizabeth Fortinbras goes to the shop opposite the Market Hill every day. She has a nice grey dress now which she made herself, a water-proof cloak, and a pretty canoeing hat. She is quite ignorant of all that the good people are getting ready to offer her. Will she accept? Possibly Hugh John could tell. Certainly *I* can't.

The young couple down town have come home—Meg Linwood and her husband Nipper, I mean. His father has explained the situation very sharply to him—that is, in so far as the business is concerned. I think he is waiting about the house and

furniture till Elizabeth has said 'yes' or 'no.'

It is a good time to tell about our churches. Ours is the nicest. For though we are not compelled to go to any particular one, yet Somebody thinks it is a kind of point of honour to attend the one in which we were born and brought up. There are all sorts of things going on, too, and young people who don't have parties and dances get to know each other at *soirées* and social meetings. It acts just the same—even quicker, I have noticed. They get married to each other all the same.

Hugh John, who has studied the subject, says he can stand all sorts of 'flirts,' except the one who asks you about your soul before she knows whether *she* has got one herself!

Now there is Thomasina Morton, the doctor's daughter, and a smart girl too. Only she never could get away from two or three catchwords, caught up from all sorts of people. She got fearfully anxious about the souls of all the good-looking young men, and made them come into her father's consulting-room so that she could 'plead with them.' Of course it was all very good and, I dare say, most necessary, but I *don't* think it was fair on Dr. Morton. You see, he is a good man, but much exposure to all sorts of weather has told on his temper, and really I can't blame him for what he said when he stumbled upon one of these reunions in the dusk of a November afternoon. It was Billy Jackson's legs he fell over, and they say Billy has had to walk with a stick ever since.

But Thomasina declared that her father was hard-hearted, and even went to consult her minister about it. But Mr. Taylor is a sensible man, and said that thirty years of Dr. Morton's life would weigh

against a good deal of strongish language in the archangel's scales! He also asked Thomasina where her father had been that day, and she said, 'Out seeing his country patients, since eight in the morning!' Then Mr. Taylor asked who they were, and Thomasina told him.

'The Doctor knows as well as I do,' he said, 'that he will never see a penny of fees from any of them. Don't you trouble, my young lady, about the hardness of your father's heart. And tell Mr. William Jackson that it will be more suitable for him to come and see *me* about his soul. I am at his service from eight till ten every evening—except Wednesday and Saturday!'

I don't know if Billy Jackson felt that this was not quite the same thing, or whether the minister's hours did not suit him. At all events he never went.

Thomasina Morton, however, was not pleased with Mr. Taylor, and left his church. She joined the Salvation Army, but soon left it, because she found the costume unbecoming. She did better as a nurse, and had splendid chances there. Because, you see, the dress was all right, and her patients could not get up and run when she had them good and safe within the four walls of an hospital!

I dare say, however, it helped to pass the time for the poor fellows. For, you see, Thomasina was pretty, and knew it. She would sing sad, faint, die-away hymns in the twilight, till she made these bad young men just lie down and cry. They were generally pretty weak, anyway, especially when Thomasina used to talk to them about their mothers. (When they were well, you might have talked those mothers' heads off without reforming their sons the value of a row of pins.) But

Thomasina talked to them in a dreamy voice, till they all were willing to go out as missionaries to the most cannibal-haunted regions—that is, if only Thomasina would come along with them.

But when they asked her, as they mostly did, Thomasina said she was very sorry, but she had never meant it that way. She was 'vowed to a vocation,' and mere commonplace marriage would be sinful. Besides (mostly), the young men had nothing to keep themselves on—much less a wife.

Oh, Thomasina made the winter very cheerful at Edam, especially after the Cottage Hospital was opened, and the cutting of the new railway brought a good many into the accident ward.

To listen to Thomasina (and believe her), all these, though mere '*navvies*' now, were Oxford or Cambridge men, and either the sons of purple Indian colonels, very peppery, or (which she preferred) of white-haired old clergymen, who were never known to smile again after their only sons had left the family roof-tree.

Surely there was a lack of imagination in that accident ward. Hugh John would have made cartloads of plans, and as for Sir Toady—well, he could have evolved something fresh each journey, and never charged a penny extra. He would have been ashamed of so many colonels and white-haired clergymen.

But Thomasina was quite content, and read all manner of nice uninteresting books to the poor storm-stayed ones, who sometimes looked at the angelic expression on her face, and sometimes had quite a decent little sleep on the quiet. Her voice was naturally soothing.

Thus time passed none so evilly in the

Cottage Hospital accident ward, and Thomasina came and got nice jellies from Mrs. Donnan, very sustaining, and 'let on,' as Sir Toady asserted, that she had made them all herself! But there is more—oh, ever so much more about Thomasina Morton. I hope you are not tired hearing about her—I am not of telling.

But you will see the funny thing that happened. Among all the imaginary sons of purple colonels and sad, saintly clergymen whom Thomasina had corralled into her hospital ward, there happened to be a real one. His name, he said, was Henry Smith—which is just one of those names that people take, like Jones and Wood and Robinson in England, and Dubois, Durand, Duval in France, thinking to be unknown, and lo! every hotel-keeper and policeman immediately is on the qui vive to find out what bank they have robbed.

Well, this young fellow's real name did not matter to anybody. Thomasina called him 'dear Harry,' and had him to sit beside her in the dining-room of the convalescent home (one of her pet hunting-grounds). And one day after he had been in training to be good for quite a while, he came in to dinner as usual, and, just as he was sitting down at the table, up jumps Master Harry Smith and bolts out of the room! Naturally enough, Nurse Webb thought there was something wrong with him, and would have gone to see, but Thomasina restrained her with a motion of the hand—very solemn, impressive, and 'I-know-all-about-it-if-*you*-don't!'

'He has forgotten to say his prayers!' she whispered. 'He promised me!'

And Nurse Webb sank back appalled, wondering what they would have said at 'King's.' But

Thomasina was quite calm, and laid her hand soothingly on that of ‘dear Harry’ when he returned from his (very short) devotions.

And do you know, all the time he was what Sir Toady calls ‘a regular rip.’ Only he was a real colonel's son, and had been tried everywhere—only no one would have him about on any account.

But old Dr. Morton did what Thomasina said, and got this young fellow dressed out in new clothes, till he looked as smart as a paper of new pins. Then who so proud as Thomasina! She was so glad that Harry had turned out so well that she said she would marry him. Then he was fearfully noble, and said that he wasn't worthy of her, but that he would wait for the day when he would lay the world at her feet. Oh, he said ever such a heap of what the boys call, with a certain rude correctness, ‘tommy-rot.’

And old Papa Morton got him a place in a ginger-beer factory, to manage the accounts, where Mr. Harry Smith behaved pretty well for three months. But on the eve of his marriage with Thomasina he disappeared, taking with him a whole fortnight's wages of the ginger-beer factory workmen.

Instead, he left a letter full of consolatory texts for Thomasina, which I would quote, but Fuz says I must not. Only he concluded by saying that his dear Tommy was not half a bad little thing, only her company and conversation were wearing for a man of his tastes and antecedents. If she had only seen her way to giving him a ‘let up’ every ten days or so, he might have stayed on. But as it was, there was nothing left for him but to borrow her father's fur-lined overcoat, and bid Thomasina a long, last

farewell through floods of burning tears. She was to remember, however, that, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, he was ever her own Harry. Also that the next time he needed nursing and advice, both of superior quality, he would not fail to think of the happy days in the convalescent ward of Edam Borough Hospital.

‘Harry Smith’ was seen no more on Esk waterside, and by last accounts Dr. Morton is still awaiting the return of his fur-lined overcoat.

16. HUGH JOHN, AMBASSADOR PLENIPOTENTIARY

I don't think that Dr. Morton ever really got over the loss of his fur-lined overcoat. You see, it gave him a tone, making many a suffering household feel quite chirpy and consoled only to see him getting carefully out of his gig, and laying back the lapels so as to show the best pieces of fur. But he was never the same man in plain tweed, even when he took to a high velvet collar. People had not the old confidence. He had two favourite methods of treatment—leeches and fly-blisters—and when he began to leech the blister people and blister the leech people, all felt that the end was near.

So Mr. Liddesdale persuaded him to sell his practice while he had one to sell—the stock of leeches and Spanish flies being taken at a valuation. So there came a young doctor to Edam, and his name was Dr. Weir Douglas. At first it was feared that he would not be a success, because he went about in grey tweeds and a straw hat. Worse than all, he made 84 in the cricket match against Lockermaben. This showed how little serious he could be, and how little he had to do in his profession. Dr. Morton was often called out of church twice on the same Sunday, and though everybody knew that he kept a boy for the purpose, yet, after all, the summons might be real. No one could tell. At any rate it waked up a sleepy congregation better than peppermint drops, and people whispered that it must be Sandy Paterson's wife, or that loon of Jock Malcolm's who was always climbing and coming to grief.

However, when Jock Malcolm did fall from the

scaffolding of the Established Church (then being repaired parsimoniously by reluctant heritors) Dr. Weir Douglas saved the boy's life by carrying him to his own house across the way, and, after setting the shoulder, sent to ask Miss Thomasina Morton to come over and nurse Master Jock Malcolm.

Then the whole village of Edam began to respect Dr. Morton, calling him ‘cunning old rascal,’ and other terms of admiration. Indeed, they respected him for the first time in their lives. Had he not got a good price for his practice, and would not Thomasina do the rest? Indeed, the marriage of Thomasina and Dr. Weir Douglas was regarded on all hands as a settled thing. Any one else in Edam (except perhaps our Hugh John) would have been considered fair game for jest, and congratulated fifty times in a day. But somehow Dr. Weir Douglas did not look the kind of man to be too familiar with, even in a straw hat and grey tweeds—just as no one would take a liberty with our Hugh John in a clown's dress at a fancy ball, if the mind of man can conceive such a thing. Even there, he would probably be found in a retired corner with the prettiest girl (if she were tall and pale and willowy), instructing her on the chances of Siam becoming a second Japan, the resurrection of the Further East, the probability of a Russian Anarchist Republic, and other topics especially adapted for a ball-room. Whereas Sir Toady—but perhaps the less said about that the better. If he had not told at least five girls that they were the prettiest in the room, the young man would have felt that he had thrown away his chances, an accident against which he carefully guarded himself.

But to return to the nursing of Master Jock

Malcolm—now become so important and necessary a link in the chain of events. Edam gave Thomasina twenty-four hours to bring the young doctor to his knees. But Dr. Weir Douglas spoiled all calculations by charging his coachman's wife to look after the comfort of Miss Morton, and taking up his own quarters for the time being at the Edam Arms, opposite!

The entire village agreed that this was not playing the game, and as for Thomasina, she felt that never in the world had there been such a reprobate. She placed tracts in his way. She scattered them all about the house, and neglected her patient to think out plans for wrestling with this stiff-necked and rebellious young man.

In the meantime, however, Dr. Weir Douglas began to gain on Edam. Certainly he made a wonderful cure of Jock Malcolm, junior—a young rascal who deserved no such spoiling as he was receiving. He even asked the advice and assistance of his distinguished colleague Dr. Morton, making it a favour that in the meantime he should return to the house which had been his own for so many years. It was really much too large for a bachelor, and Dr. Weir Douglas would consider it a favour to have it taken care of. He himself was perfectly comfortable at the Edam Arms. This, however, could not last for ever.

The whole village was more certain than ever that Thomasina and he were 'going to make a match of it.' It was just at this critical time that Hugh John came home on holiday for Christmas and New Year.

I was exceedingly interested to see how these two would get on—the Doctor and Hugh John, I mean. Because my brother is by no means

universally amiable, and the new arrival, for all his generosity, carried a good deal of 'side'—or at least what seemed so to the Edam people. They did not understand his 'antiseptics,' the boiling of his medical scissors, his multipled sprayings, and *minima* of medicines. A whacking black draught, and a fly-blister the size of the *Scotsman* newspaper, were the popular idea of what a real doctor ought to prescribe. Who would pay a man just to come and look at them? Certainly not the people of Edam.

I was present when Hugh John and Dr. Weir Douglas met for the first time. In fact, I made the introduction. I was interested to see what Dr. Douglas would make of Hugh John. For if he treated him like a schoolboy, all was over.

It was in our drawing-room. Somebody had had his little afternoon nap over Froude's *History of England*—volume eight. Now if you ask Somebody how long Somebody has slept, Somebody will answer that Somebody *may* just have dropped off for five minutes. The Doctor had come in to call socially. You see, I had met him at the Tennis Club. Well, Somebody was quite pleased with him because he had read 'Froude,' and for a while he did not notice the big, grey-eyed boy on the window-seat who had risen at his entrance and then as quietly sat down again.

But I said, 'Doctor—my brother Hugh John!'

Then Hugh John loomed up, with that quiet gravity which deceives strangers sometimes, his finger still keeping the place in William's *Middle Kingdom*, and his eyes meeting those of the Doctor level as the metals on a straight run of the railway line.

The Doctor was ready to pass the lad in order

to talk with Somebody—who, as usual, lay back looking amused. But that arresting something in Hugh John's eyes, a mixture of equality and authority, halted him, as it has done so many others.

'You are reading?' said the Doctor civilly.

'Oh, no,' said Hugh John, 'just picking out favourite bits. Do you know *The Middle Kingdom*?'

Now *The Middle Kingdom* is an exceedingly fine book, highly technical in parts, and has to do with China. So it is no wonder that it was not so familiar to a man who for years has had to specialize on surgery as it was to the omnivorous Hugh John.

Dr. Weir Douglas shook his head as he glanced over the volume.

'It looks very stiff,' he remarked; 'are you getting it up for an exam?'

Hugh John looked at him curiously. He did not approve of jests on such subjects. 'I read it first when I was about ten,' he said. 'I only wish exams were as easy.'

'Is it 'math'?' the Doctor inquired sympathetically.

'Yes,' said Hugh John, 'that—and the idiocies of English spelling!'

All this as from man to man, unsmiling, unwinking, each taking the measure of the other.

It came to an end in a mutual self-respect, neither yielding an inch. But the boy knew how to make himself respected as well as the man of thirty. That night they took a long walk together in the crisp black frost, while Dr. Weir Douglas talked of 'microbes,' and Hugh John expounded Chinese transcendental medicine. But the real respect did not arrive till, passing the darkened library as they

returned, the Doctor said, 'I hear you do something with the gloves. What do you say to a turn?'

'Step in!' said Hugh John.

What passed I do not know, but when he went away the Doctor said, 'I really think those gloves of yours are two or three ounces too light!'

It was the next day that Hugh John, summoned into solemn council by Butcher Donnan and his wife, was informed what was expected of him in the matter of Elizabeth Fortinbras. Luckily I was again present, and so can tell all about it.

Hugh John was not surprised. He was the Red Indian of the family. He took it as quite natural that he should be called in, quite natural that such good luck should befall Elizabeth Fortinbras, and entirely reasonable that he should be chosen as plenipotentiary.

Now and then he asked a question, unexpectedly acute, as to Nipper's financial position, and how the proposed arrangement with Elizabeth would affect him. You would have thought it was Nipper's case he was advocating. Only I know that he was anxious to keep clear of all injustice before taking the matter in hand.

'*And suppose Elizabeth gets married?*'

I saw the two Donnans look one at the other. I don't think either had yet considered the matter in this light. To adopt Elizabeth meant to adopt any possible husband Elizabeth might take to herself. I could tell from Butcher Donnan's twinkle that he was envisaging the possibility of having Hugh John as a son-in-law—by adoption. Hugh John was still an unknown quantity to the good pastry-cook. He would never understand the delicate detachment of the friendship of Elizabeth Fortinbras and my

brother.

'We hope,' said Butcher Donnan cunningly, 'that you will let us keep Elizabeth for a long time, Mr. Hugh John?'

The boy took the words perfectly seriously and with no personal bearing.

'Elizabeth,' he answered, 'is a very pretty girl, but I shall do my best. At any rate she is sure to consult me before doing anything rash—like getting married, I mean!'

There was something about Hugh John which kept any one from laughing at him, and accordingly Butcher Donnan refrained.

'You are a confident young man,' he said; 'at your age I might have had an eye a little wider open for my own good fortune.'

'Elizabeth trusts me, and I am her friend!' said Hugh John, as if that settled the whole matter.

'Well, may I be ... blessed!' cried Butcher Donnan. 'Off with you, and let us hear what Elizabeth says.'

'No,' said Hugh John, 'it must *happen*, not be dragged in by the collar. Tonight, after shop-shutting, Elizabeth will go home to see that all is right with her people. I shall walk with her, and tell you what she says in the morning.'

'We would rather hear tonight,' cried Butcher Donnan, hotly impatient after the manner of his kind.

'No—tomorrow!' pronounced Hugh John. 'She ought to have the night to think it over. It wouldn't be fair unless!'

'No more it would, young fellow!' cried Butcher Donnan, clapping Hugh John on the shoulder. 'You found us a new business. You are

finding us a daughter—perhaps some day——'

'Hush now, Butcher,' said his wife, anxious as to what he should say next.

But Hugh John, already deep in his mission, took no offense at Butcher Donnan's *innuendoes*. Elizabeth Fortinbras and he were the best of good friends. And when the time came he would stand by the right hand of the bridegroom of her choice and witness his joy.

So at least he thought at that moment.

17. THE LITTLE GREEN MAN

[*Written the Summer we went abroad for the first time.*]

It was about then that Hugh John suddenly grew up. He had been threatening it for a long time, but had always put it off. This time, however, it was for keeps. We noticed it first when we made Father tell us stories. Hugh John had grown tired of the 'Little Green Man'! Now this was a thing so terrible to us that we hardly dared to face it. For, you see, we had been, as it were, brought up on the Little Green Man, and this was like being false to the very salt we had eaten. And the crime was specially bad on Hugh John's part. For, you see, he ate such a lot of salt that the Doctor told him it was bad for his health. However, because there is no chance of Hugh John reading this book, I will try to tell the tale just as Father tells it even yet to Margaret the Maid—and the rest of us who have not grown too old to like such stories.

THE TALE OF THE LITTLE GREEN MAN.

'Of *course* it is true,' Father always began, 'because you know yourselves that you have seen the very place and the Bogle Thorn and all. No doubt everything has shrunk a good deal since the time the story tells about. But that is only because you have grown out of all knowledge, and so everything

seems smaller to you.'

'I know,' cried the Maid, 'last year when we came back from the seaside, the Edam Water looked quite small and shallow, even at the first Torres Vedras!'

But Sir Toady nipped her good to make her 'shut up'—yes, he had grown so rude in the use of words that that was what he said. But then, most boys are like that. It is school that does it, and, do you know, when they come back they even pervert us girls. That this is true was immediately proved by Maid Margaret giving a fierce kick under the table to Sir Toady, and whispering back, 'Shut up yourself!'

But Father went on, never heeding in the least. A father who can be conveniently deaf at times is the best kind. Be sure and take no other! The only genuine has a twinkle in his eye, and a dimple instead of smiling. You will know by that.

'Well, the Little Green Man,' Father went on, 'lived in the Bogle Thorn on the road between Laurieston and the Duchrae. I used to go that way to school long ago, and at first I was frightened of the Little Green Man. I used to climb the dyke and go right up by the loch on the moor where the curlers played in winter, so as not to be compelled to pass that way. But after a while I got not to mind him a bit. For, you see, he was a good little man, all clad in green velvet tights, and with a broad green bonnet on his head like a peaky toadstool. Once or twice when I caught sight of him up among the branches, he popped into his little house just as quickly as a rabbit into its hole when you say 'Scat!' And, you see, when once I was sure that he was frightened of *me*, I used not to mind him a bit. Then by and by I used to sit down and swop currants and

sugar which I had 'found' at home for some of the nuts and lovely spicy fruits that the Little Green Man had stored away. He had the loveliest little parlour and bedrooms all in the inside of the tree, everything finished neat as cabinet-making, and the floor carpeted—you never saw the like—and there were little windows, too, with glass in them, and shutters that shut with the bark outside, so that you never could tell there was a window there at all.'

'And how could you see all that, Father?' asked the Maid, who, as usual, was immensely interested, not having heard it above a thousand times before. So it stayed quite new to her.

'Oh,' said Father, 'the Little Green Man touched a spring, and let me look through the windows. Of course I was too big to get bodily into the inside of the rooms, or run up and down the stairs. But when the Little Green Man got married, he made a beautiful pleasure-ground at the top of his house, with a clipped-hedge parapet all round to keep the Little Green Children from falling over.'

'Whom did he marry, Father?' said the Maid though, of course, she knew.

'Why, he married the Little Green Woman,' said Father in a tone of surprise mixed with reproof.

He had been asked the same question at least a hundred times before, but he always answered in the same tone of grieved astonishment, which showed how clever he was. For he could not have been astonished—not really, of course. Then he went on with the story of the Little Green Man. The Little Green Man (said he) had a lot of children. There were Toppy, Leafy, Branchy, Twiggy, Flowery, Fruity, and Rooty. That made seven in all, and as they grew up, the Little Green Man made the playground on

the top of the Bogle Thorn ever so much bigger. And he built the retaining walls higher, so as to keep them from falling over. Not that that was a very serious matter. For, you see, they could all of them hang on like monkeys. The only two who really ran some risk of danger were Toppy and Rooty. For Toppy, of course, had to stay on top, where he was safest, and knew his way about; and as for Rooty, there was something in his blood that made him want all the time to worm his way down into the hidden places under the earth where nobody but he ever went, and where the corkscrew staircases got perfectly breakneck with steepness. Then, when he found out this, the Little Green Man took Rooty, and gave him regular sound lectures about his 'habits'—you know the kind of lecture—you have all got some on your own account. He said that away off on the face of the wild moor, a good bit back from the Bogle Thorn, was the cave of the Ugly Grey Dwarf—so called because that was what he was. He was ugly as a gnarled bit of oak-trunk that they dug up out of the moss. He was grey because he hid among the stones and rocks of the moorland, and, worst of all, he lived on what he could catch to eat—for choice, Little Green Children who had fallen out of tree-tops, or missed their hold of branches, or been naughty and wandered out when a root came to the surface. He had a horrid den where he used to take his prey, and would either roast them before a slow fire, basting them all the time, or else put them into a cauldron of cold water, hung on three sticks, and *boil them alive*! (Here the Maid always grew very pale, and edged as thickly as she could among the crowd of us, while the boys fingered their (unloaded) revolvers.)

So you can well imagine that it was not always the greatest fun to wander over the face of that moorland, while this cruel monster, dry as a chip, still as one of the boulders among the heather, and invisible as Will-o'-the-Wisp by day, lay watching the Bogle Thorn and the Little Green Man's Well, to which some one had to go at least once a day for water. Several times already the Little Green Man had had to fight for his life. But he was a good shot with the little fairy bow-and-arrows—the ones tipped with chips of flint—*you* know? (‘We know!’ came from all the children in a breath.) Besides, Father Green Man was so tough when you had him that the Ugly Grey Dwarf thought twice, and even three times, before tackling him. For although he had no heart to pierce, but only a cold, cold stone out of the bottom of a well instead, the heads of the tiny chip arrows came off where they hit him and annoyed him fearfully, wandering about his system and tickling up unexpected organs. So that at long and last he got to know that he had better give the Little Green Man a wide berth.

But when he got married, and children began to patter up and down the dainty little turning staircase of the Bogle Thorn, the Grey Dwarf rubbed his knotted clawy hands together, and grumbled over and over to himself—‘Fresh Meat! Fresh Meat!! Fresh Meat!!!’ And if he did not laugh, it is certainly reported that he chuckled to himself, like thunder among the hills very far away.

But of all who went about the passages and ups-and-downs of the Bogle Thorn, there was none so reckless as Little Rooty. He was just as rambling, rampageous a boy as any I know! (Here Father looked at us, and Hugh John nodded at Sir Toady,

who nodded back, to show that both considered the other as 'catching it.') More than once the Little Green Man had even taken a little green switch, and—well, it just happened the same, so there is no use entering into *that*. But, in spite of all, Rooty would go off foraging where he had no business to, and that came quite near to being the end of Little Rooty, who would not 'take a telling,' and forgot all about the little green switch as soon as he had stopped smarting—where he frequently smarted.

But one dreamy afternoon, when even the bumble-bees fell asleep and only gurgled in the deep fox-glove bells, when his father was lying on the green couch in the parlour, and his mother was telling the others tales about 'humans' in a shady green place on the tree-top, Little Rooty slipped away off down-stairs, twenty-five flights to the cellar door where they took in the winter's fuel—that is, fir-cones chopped small, which make the best fires in the world, especially in Green Tree-top Land where fuel is a scarcity, and one has to be careful not to overheat the chimney, because of the insurance people. Well, Little Rooty found the door all right, and after having touched the spring, he went out on the face of the moor. The loch was shining beneath him, but sleepily too. And it looked so warm and bright that Little Rooty forgot all about what he had been told—the Ugly Grey Dwarf, the big black pot swinging on three poles in front of the Grisly Den, with the water just coming to the boil within it. And Rooty ran as hard as ever he could, without ever taking a minute to shut the cellar door. He jumped and shouted, and almost tumbled into Woodhall Loch just as he was, which would have spoiled his clean new suit of gossamer green velvet

that his mother had finished that morning, and given him because it was just six months to Christmas, when he got his thicker winter one.

However, he did manage to get them off, and was just getting ready to plunge into the nice cool water, when the stranded log, on which he had been sitting taking off his stockings, sat up in its turn and stretched out a kind of wizened claw that caught Little Rooty by the middle and held him in the air, kicking and screaming. Then two horny warty lids winked up, and two eyes like cold gravy looked at him—oh, so coldly and hatefully! It was the Ugly Grey Dwarf, and he had been lying waiting for Little Rooty all the afternoon. Then Rooty thought of everything his father had told him, and wished it had never felt so hot and stuffy and bumble-bee-y inside the house, and he resolved that if he got off this time, nothing would ever induce him to disobey his parents again. He even wished he was back in the wood-cellar, with his father getting the little green switch down off the shelf. Positively he thought he could have enjoyed it. Of course Rooty was the first little boy who ever felt like that, but he did not have a very long time in which to repent, and, indeed, it mattered very little to the Grey Dwarf whether he did or not. That hideous brute just pinched him all over to see how fat he was, gurgling approbation all the time of Little Rooty's ‘ribs’ and ‘chines’ and ‘cuts off the joint’—all of which Rooty had always liked very much, but had never before thought of in so intimate a connection with himself.

Meanwhile, in the little house of the Bogle Thorn, its walls wainscoted with green silk from a fairy Liberty's, its ceilings done in Grass of Parnassus with sprigs and tassels of larch, the

afternoon world slept on. But the Little Green Woman paused in her long drowsy tale-telling to the children in the shady corner of the Roof Garden. She thought she heard a cry, so faint and far away that it might have been the squeak of a field-mouse scuttling away from a weasel among the grass roots.

Then a sudden thought struck her like a knife.

‘Where is Rooty? Who saw Rooty last? Toppy, you run and look over the pricklements and see if you see Rooty. I thought I heard him cry.’

Toppy ran to the green wall of thorn, and was just in time to see the Grey Dwarf toss poor Little Rooty over his shoulder (or at least the knotted crotch of a tree which served him as a shoulder), and away with him to his Grisly Den on the face of the moorland. Toppy just managed to scream, and then his mother ran and caught him, or it might very well have been all over with Little Toppy. By the time the Little Green Man was wakened off the green sofa, and had understood what they were saying (for the entire family talked at once, as is mostly the case with united families), he ran hastily up to the Roof Garden, and saw the Grey Dwarf, very little and flat on the face of the heath, just like a splotch of mildew. And on his shoulder there was a spot of green, hardly visible, which the father knew at once for his Little Rooty. But he did not scold—at least not then. He went for his fairy bow, made tiny like a catapult—not hurrying, you know, but going so fast that it felt as if the wind was rising all over the house of the Bogle Thorn. The Little Green Man dipped each arrow-point—that is, the flint part of it—into a kind of green stuff like porridge, made from hemlock and the berries of deadly nightshade,

with other pleasant and effective things only known to the Little Green People. He took great care not to let any drip about, and looked closely to see if there were any scratches on his hands. For it was quite unusual stuff, and precious. So he did not want to waste any of it. He needed it all for that mildewy spot crawling over the moorland towards the Grisly Cave with the green dot on its shoulder which was his own Rooty.

Perhaps, being exceptionally good children, *you* are not sorry for naughty Rooty. ('Oh, yes, we are! We are!') But, anyway, his father was sorry for him, though all the time he was promising him the best 'hiding' he had ever had in his life when he got him safe back again. ('Bet he never got a whack!' said Sir Toady, who is an authority on the subject.) So, locking the children in and putting the key in his pocket, the Little Green Man and his wife went away over the moorland to look for the Ugly Grey Dwarf. The man did not want the woman to come. But she begged of him, weeping, saying that she would go 'human' if she were left (and among the Green People that is a terrible word, and a yet more terrible thing). So in the end the Little Green Man let her come.

Then she wanted to go direct to the cave, but her husband, who had had a lot of experience, showed her how impossible and foolish that was. For the Grey Dwarf would just lie down behind a big boulder and wait for them. Then he would stun them with a log or strangle them with his long twisty fingers as they went by.

So instead they went all the way round by John Knox's Pulpit and the Folds Firs, that they might turn the flank of the enemy, and so come at

his cave by a way he would never expect. It was a narrow cleft between two rocks up which they had to come—the Little Green Man and his woman. They crawled and crawled, noiseless as earth-worms on a ploughed field. All the while the eyes of the Little Green Man shot out small sparkles of fire, though the lids of them were closed so that they showed like slits in a drying plaster wall.

After a long climb they looked over a ridge of many boulders and much heather—the Little Green Man and his woman close behind him. And at the sight they saw there the wife would have screamed out and run forward. For she was a real woman, you see, though little and green. Only her husband was prepared for her, knowing, after so many years, exactly what she would do. So he first put the palm of his hand across her mouth to keep in the scream, and next gave her the pouch of arrow-heads to hold. Then with a pair of tweezers made of bent wood he lifted the little poisoned flakelets of flint and dropped each into a split in the arrow-head. Then his wife deftly bound each of them about with green cord—for that was *her* part of the business. She forgot about screaming when she had anything to do.

Then the Little Green Man peered cautiously from behind a rock, first giving his wife a good push with his foot as a warning—but, of course, you know, kindly.

He found himself looking down into a dell surrounded by many high granite rocks, which made access difficult to the Grisly Cave. The Dwarf was busy about the great black iron pot in which he was getting ready to boil Little Rooty. The Green Man saw his boy stripped of his suit of velvet, and trussed up neck and knee ready for cooking, while

every time the Ugly Grey Dwarf approached he gave him a kick in passing to make him more tender, grinning and whetting a carving-knife all the time on a monster ‘steel’ that hung by his side.

So you may believe that in a moment the Green Man had his bow strung taut, and his heart beat as the dull glitter of the arrow-point, from which the green stuff was still dripping, came into line with the hairy throat of the wicked Dwarf.

‘*CLIP!*’

That was the smacking sound of the bow-string going back to the straight.

‘*IZZ—IK!*’

That was the sound of the little elf arrow, dropping green juice from its willow-leaf-shaped head, every drop of which was death.

The ‘*IK!*’ was when the elf shaft struck the Grey Dwarf and the point broke off in his throat. He said nothing for a moment, but the knife that was in his hand to cut up Little Rooty with clattered on the stones, while he himself fell with a ‘squelch’ like a big heap of wet clothes thrown down on the laundry floor on washing-day morning.

Then they cut Little Rooty's bonds, and took him home on his father's back, his mother carrying the bow and the precious bag of arrow-heads. But instead of the sound beating his father had promised him, they gave Rooty (and all the other children) corn-cake and bramble jam, nut paste, raspberry short-bread, and heather honey made into toffee. They danced on the tree-tops all the night long, and illuminated all the windows of the Bogle Thorn with glow-worms—who, in consideration of the circumstances, gave their services *gratis*. As for the Grey Dwarf, they never bothered any more about

him, and I dare say if you care to go up by the Grisly Cave at the end of Deep Dooms Wood on the right, as you turn to the Falls of Drumbledowndreary, you may find his bones unto this day.

The end of the story of the Little Green Man, as Father told it for Fifteen Years, anyway.

18. THE BEAD CURTAIN

Hugh John set about his task of seeing Elizabeth Fortinbras in his own way. He chose his own time—a pleasant blowy afternoon when in all the vale of Edam there was nothing much doing. A sleepy place, Edam, on such a day—the morning calm, the forenoon disturbed only by a rattling red farm cart or two come in to bring meal and take back guano, then the afternoon drowned in the Lethe of a Scottish village in full summer-time. Hugh John looked in at the shop to inquire about the wasps. They had bothered Elizabeth a good deal at first, but Hugh John had devised traps with great ingenuity, though little success, before he thought of a hanging curtain of blue and green beads in the doorway which his father had brought back from Spain. It had lain in the garret ever since, and Hugh John simply appropriated it for the use of Elizabeth Fortinbras.

But Butcher Donnan, returning to a waspless shop, was brought up standing on the threshold—his mouth agape, his eyes stocky in his head, and his hand mutely demanding explanations from 'Mary-and-the-Saints.'

I think in her heart Elizabeth Fortinbras was a little afraid. Not only had no such article ever been seen in Edam, but it was out of the power of Edam and the Edamites to conceive such a thing as a door made of large blue and green beads, which they had to lift up and let down behind them, with the clashing of castanets before a play-acting booth.

Happily Hugh John was there, sitting calmly in the back kitchen watching Mrs. Donnan making currant short-bread.

'Hugh John!' Elizabeth Fortinbras called out, with, it must be owned, a little trouble in her voice.

'Certainly; come in, Mr. Donnan!' said Hugh John courteously, running to hold the trickling, clicking curtain aside for the ex-butcher to pass. 'A little curious till you get used to it, don't you think, Mr. Donnan? But it will stir Edam. It will draw custom, and—what I put it up for—keep out the wasps and bluebottles! Oh, yes, my father brought it from Spain. It is quite an ordinary thing there. Indeed, I got the idea from him.'

'But,' said Butcher Donnan, slowly recovering his speech, 'I must see your father about the price of it tomorrow—if I am to keep it.'

'My father—sell *that*?' said Hugh John, coldly surprised. 'He would as soon eat it!'

'But I can't take it from you, young master. It may be a valuable article.'

'Take it—who asked you to take it?' demanded Hugh John. 'I gave it to Elizabeth Fortinbras myself as a present on the occasion of her adoption, and if you want her as a permanence, I am afraid you must take the bead curtain along with her!'

'What, she has consented?' cried Butcher Donnan, forgetting everything.

But Mrs. Donnan, who was listening, put the short-bread into the oven quickly, and came out. She had begun to learn the tones of Hugh John's voice. She understood at once.

'My daughter!' she cried, and, opening wide her arms, kissed her. Butcher Donnan paused a moment, uncertain, and then, nudging his wife: 'I ought to, I know,' he said, 'but just you do it for me—the first time.' So Mrs. Donnan kissed Elizabeth

again, and the Butcher wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, as if he had just had something good to drink. Then they looked about for Hugh John to make him share in the family joy, but that young gentleman, guessing ahead something of their intention, had disappeared with his usual thoroughness and absence of fuss. Some recognition from Elizabeth, privately bestowed, he was in no way averse to, the time being dusky and the place far from the haunts of men. But at mid-afternoon, opposite the railway station, and behind a green and blue bead curtain to which Edam had not yet awakened—on the whole, it is small wonder that Hugh John decided upon the better part of valour.

Safe in his cave on the hillside, he wiped his heated brow and congratulated himself on his escape. Perhaps he would not have rejoiced quite so much had he known that Sir Toady, entering at that moment in quest of gratuitous toffee scrapings, found himself at once heir to all the affection which was really his brother's due. Sir Toady accepted such things as they came in his way, much as a cat drinks from stray cream-jugs, but without giving particular thanks for them. His motto, slightly changed from the rhyming proverb, was ever—

‘He that will not when he can,
He's not at all my sort of man!’

19. THE DISCONTENT OF MRS. NIPPER DONNAN

When Mr. Robert Fortinbras heard of his daughter's determination, he declared that he renounced her for ever. But after thinking the matter over, and especially on being reminded by Hugh John that one day she would become heiress of no mean part of the Donnan wealth, he consented to a limited forgiveness, on condition that in the meantime she should do something for her father and mother. But her sister Matilda openly revolted, saying that *she* always knew Elizabeth meant to shove the housework off on her, and that she did not care if not a dish was ever washed in that house again. Elizabeth reminded her that, far from idling at New Erin Villa, she was on foot from morning till night. Also that nine times out of ten when she came home she found Matilda asleep on the sofa, with a penny novelette flung on the floor beside her. There was a feeling of strain for a moment, but Elizabeth presented her sister with a striped blouse and half-a-dozen stand-up collars, which promptly brought forth the declaration, ‘Oh, Elizabeth, you mustn't mind what I *say*. It is only mother's nagging that does it, but I do love you!’ Which may or may not have had to do with the striped blouse and the half-dozen collars. On the whole, there was a certain feeling of satisfaction in the house of Mr. Robert Fortinbras that Elizabeth was so well provided for, and that in a day of trouble she might even assist the brilliant adventurer with some of the gold of that unimaginative citizen, Mr. Ex-Butcher Donnan.

But Miss Elizabeth Fortinbras, though the best daughter in the world—with only one exception

that I know of personally—had no idea of encouraging the busy idleness of her father, or the foolishness of the rest of the family. She had found a business that suited her, and she would in nowise interest herself less in it now that she was, so to speak, the present partner and future heiress in the concern.

There was but one person discontented, Mrs. Nipper Donnan. She was jealous of the white-curtained cottage, the trim garden, which began to blossom where she had hung out her clothes. Chiefly, however, she hated Elizabeth Fortinbras and ‘that Hugh John Picton Smith,’ who, strangely enough, was her abhorrence—though it was not his habit to ignore any one, but only to pass on his way with a grave bow.

Hugh John was an uncomfortable person to quarrel with. His great bodily strength and long practice in the art of boxing rendered him a man of peace whose very presence made for reconciliation. In the neighbourhood of Edam he was President Roosevelt's ‘moral policeman with a big stick.’ Even at home he held over the head of an offender a baton of honour and ‘the right thing to do.’

At school, it is to be feared that his discipline was sterner. There he argued but seldom. He was the centurion who said, ‘Do this!’ and the other fellow did it. But then, it was a good thing to do, and the head master generally considered him as his best ally.

He was father's constant companion on his walks, and to hear them debate in that precious half-hour in the dining-room after dinner was to escape suddenly from the smallness of the world about, and find oneself on the high Alps of thought

where the sun shone early and late, where the winds blew clean and cold, and thought was free exceedingly. Neither counted anything as to be accepted merely because they had been told it upon authority. They searched and compared, the man and the boy, Hugh John's finely analytic mind steadied and gripped by the elder experience. Their talk was not the talk of father and son, but rather of two seekers—Hugh John declaiming high, direct, often fierce, while through the smoke of a contemplative cigarette father went on smiling gently, now waving a hand in gentle deprecation, dropping a word of moderation here, qualifying a statement there—the son holding strictly for law and justice, of the firmest and most inexorable, the father dropping counsels of mercy and that understanding which is the forgiveness of God, being, as always, a Tolerant of the Tolerants.

I know that those who have read the two books called after Sir Toady Lion may fail a little to recognize my elder brother. But nevertheless this is the same who in his time wept because as a little child with a wooden sword he had been saluted by the Scots Greys, the same also who fought the ‘smoutchies’; and if I have said nothing about a certain notable Cissy Carter, it is only because, though I know, in the meantime I have promised not to tell.

It will easily be understood that with such an adversary Mrs. Nipper Donnan, ex-kitchen-maid at Erin Villa, stood little chance. Hugh John listened patiently and gravely, his head slightly bent in the pensive and contemplative way which was then his principal charm. He heard that he had interfered where he had no business, that Mrs. Nipper Donnan

knew that he had always hated her husband, that, while as good as engaged to Colonel Carter's daughter, he was walking the lanes with Elizabeth Fortinbras—yes, and plotting and planning to get a fortune for her—a fortune which would make beggars of her husband and herself, and strip an only son of his inheritance.

To the angry woman Hugh John made no reply. He only kept silence, with that gentle irony which is his present manner with those who grow quarrelsome—that is, if they are not of his own sex and (approximately) age.

He only called Nipper—and by a series of questions ascertained from him that he knew how Hugh John had been the means of obtaining better terms for him than he had ever hoped for, since his marriage had so offended his father. Hugh John Picton Smith could speak no lie. He, Nipper Donnan, would uphold this against all comers. Even in the days of the smoutchies and the prison vault at the old Castle in the Edam Water he had known it. Even his very enemies had known it, and had taken Hugh John's word before the sworn oath of any one of themselves. He would take it now, and as to his wife, if she said another word—out of the shop she should go! She did go, slamming the door behind her. Nipper stepped across and shot a bar with a jarring sound heard all over the house. Then from behind the counter he thrust forth a hand, hard and massive, towards Hugh John, who took it in his strong grip. They looked at each other in the face, eye to eye. There was a slight shrug of Nipper's shoulders and a toss of his head in the direction of the barred door, which said that a man could not be responsible for his womankind, but as for

themselves, had they not fought far too often and too fairly ever to go behind backs to do each other an injury?

20. TREACHERY!

Today Hugh John let me see a letter which he had received from Cissy Carter in Paris. As no one will see my diary, and also because there is nothing very private in the letter, I have jotted down as much as I can remember in my locked book. It was written from number twenty of the Avenue d'Argenson, and the date was the day before yesterday. It began without any greetings (as was their custom).

‘Hugh John—People have written to me about you and Elizabeth Fortinbras—not nice people like you, me, and the Rat’ (this was their unkind and meaningless name for—me, Miss Priscilla Picton Smith). ‘I don't much care what any one writes, of course. For I know that if ever you change your mind, you will do as you said, and send back *your* half of the crooked sixpence. You need not put in a word along with it. Only just send the half of the sixpence by the registered letter post, and I shall understand. I promise to do the same by you.—Cissy.’

Now it must long have been clear that my brother Hugh John is as careless about his own concerns as he is careful for other people. He naturally took Cissy at her word, and having a conscience quite void of reproach with regard to Elizabeth Fortinbras or any other, very naturally thought no more about the matter.

But he should have been cautious how he disposed of the letter—in the fire, for choice. Only, you see, that was not Hugh John's way. He stuck it in his pocket-book, and pulled it out with his handkerchief just in time for Mrs. Nipper Donnan, on her way home with her groceries, to find it. In the

little skin-covered book (which had once been 'imitation shark'), wrapped in a piece of tissue-paper, was also the half of a crooked sixpence.

Next morning but two, in far-away Paris, in front of a tall plastered house with big barren windows, Miss Cecilia Carter, walking to and fro with two of her companions, had an odd-looking, ill-addressed packet put into her hand. She opened it with a little glow of expectation—and there in her hand lay the other half of the crooked sixpence!

Cissy Carter did not faint. She did not cry out. There is no record, even, that she went pale. At any rate the school registers bear out the fact that a quarter of an hour after she took her lesson in 'theory' from the music-master, Herr Rohrs. She only felt that something had broken within her—something not to be mended or ever set right, something she could not even have the relief of speaking about as the French girls did, rhapsodizing eternally about the officers who rode past the gate, slacking the speed of their horses a little that they might stare up the avenue along which the young girls walked two-and-two, also on the look-out for them.

She had told Hugh John often just what had happened. She had cast it in his face, when the pretty spite of her temper got the better of her, that, some day or other, it would come to this. But in her heart of hearts she had never really thought so for a moment.

Hugh John untrue! Oh, no! *That* was impossible! It did not enter into the scheme of things.

Yes, certainly, twice, in a fit of 'the pet,' she had sent hers back to Hugh John. But this was

different—oh, so different! How different, only those who knew Hugh John could understand. When *he* did such a thing, he meant something by it. Hugh John had no silly flashes of temper—like a girl—like her, Cissy Carter.

So she thought to herself as she went about her work, the rodent which we children call the 'Sorrow Rat' gnawing all day at her heart, the noise of the class-rooms, ordinarily so deafening, dull and distant in her ear.

All over! Yes, it was all over. Hugh John had wished it so, and from that, she well knew, there was no appeal! And there was (I know it well) one sad little heart the more in that great city of Paris, where (if one must believe the books) there are too many already.

But Cissy did not take offense, and I had my weekly letter as usual. Perhaps it was a little more staid, a little less 'newsy,' and her interest in Herr Rohrs not quite so profound. But really I put all that down to the cold and headache of which Cissy complained in a postscript—and, not even there, was there a hint as to the other half of the crooked sixpence! Which is a record for one woman—girl, I mean—writing to another.

Hugh John was anything but sentimental, and it was not his habit to take out the relic wrapped in the tissue-paper oftener than the rearrangement of his scanty finances compelled. He would just give his pocket a slap, and if he felt a lump—why, he thought no more about the matter. He was preparing for college, and, knowing no reason why he should be uneasy, he had immersed himself in his books. He had not the smallest idea that the sharkskin purse, empty, lay in Mrs. Nipper

Donnan's drawer, or that the two pieces of the crooked sixpence were wrapped together in the same tissue-paper in far-away Paris.

21. ADA WINTER AND 'YOUNG MRS. WINTER'

While these things were pending, I went one day to the north side of Edam Water to call upon Ada Winter. I had known Ada at school—not in the same class or term, of course, but just because we came from the same place we nodded, if we were not in too great a hurry, when we crossed each other in the playground.

It was not much, but I have noticed that you get more fond of school after you have left it a while. Before, it was 'the beastly hole,' 'Treadmill House,' and other pretty little innocent names. Immediately after leaving school, however, it became 'the dear old place,' a little walled Paradise; and we used to go regularly to the station to see the girls who were still there going off 'with smiling faces veiling sad hearts,' as Hugh John said—and, of course, as I know now, wishing us all at Jericho.

At any rate I called upon Ada Winter, and among other things we talked about the choir practice at our church, and I asked Ada why she did not go. You see, she had been with me in the school choir, where, as in most choirs, they put the pretty girls in front. (No, I shan't tell where I sat, not I!)

'Why,' said Ada, with an inflection which would have been bitter but for its sadness, 'why I can't go to choir practice is not because I have lost my voice, as mother tells everybody. But because mother wants to go herself! Some one has got to stay at home.'

'But Mrs. Winter—but your mother,' I began, 'she does not…'

'I know—I know—you need not repeat it,'

cried Ada, feeling for her handkerchief in a quick, nervous way she always had. 'Mother cannot sing a note, and every one there makes fun of the way she dresses! Oh, don't I know!'

And she dabbed at her eyes, while I tried to think of something to say—something that obstinately kept away. I wanted to comfort her, you see, but you have no idea till you have tried how difficult it is to comfort (or even to answer) a girl who talks about her mother like that.

Of course I knew very well that it was all true. Mrs. Winter's youthful toilettes and girlish airs were the talk of the 'visiting' good wives of Edam—and very respectable and noticing women these were, even beyond the average of a Scottish 'neighbourhood'—half village, half town—which is, they say, the highest in the world.

The men thought Mrs. Winter merely 'nice looking.' A few found her even 'nice,' and mentioned the fact at home! (Poor ignorant wretches, they deserved what they got!) Was it not evident to every woman (with eyes) in the congregation that Mrs. Winter was obviously, and with malice aforethought, setting her cap at the Reverend Cosmo Huntly, the newly-elected minister of the parish kirk in Edam?

No matter! I had been brought up in the ancient way, and (at least knowingly) I had not forsaken it.

I thought of the 'Honour thy father and thy mother,' and during the rest of my visit the words lay uncomfortably in the background of my mind.

But for the moment old comradeship prevailed. Even a queer little shamefaced tenderness somehow came over me.

'Poor Ada,' I said, 'it *is* a shame. You never get

anywhere! We have all the fun, and you have to stop on here in this pokey place!'

'Oh, no,' said Ada, dry-eyed, 'you forget. There are the hens. When any one calls, mother sends me out to the back to feed the hens!'

We were speaking quietly on the doorstep of a quiet old house in the little main street. The lobby was dusky behind, and the settled smell of ancient furniture, perfectly kept for generations, came through the open door to mingle with the sharp sting of tar, and boats, and the sea which breathed up from the tidal river as through a funnel.

As we stood together silent for a moment, both a little moved and strange, even with one another, we heard a quick, decided tread. And round the corner came Ada's mother, 'Young Mrs. Winter' as she was called, to distinguish her from Ada's grandmother, 'Old Mrs. Winter,' who lived in the little cottage by the Ryecroft Bridge at the other end of the town.

'Come, Ada,' said her mother, 'take Prissy in if you want to speak to her. I thought I had told you how much I dislike your standing gossiping on doorsteps like servant maids.'

'Thank you, Mrs. Winter,' I said very quietly. 'I must go home. Father will want me to pour out his tea.'

And Ada Winter did not press me to stay, but only shut the door, with a glance at me, and a sigh as her mother rustled upstairs to 'change for the evening.'

22. AN EVENING CALL

Now of course it is true that the people of Edam gossip about Young Mrs. Winter. But, to make things quite equal all round, Young Mrs. Winter can give any one of them points at their own game! And she has her own way of doing it too. She is never nasty about it, never spiteful. She looks far too plump for that. She is rather like those people in the Bible who make broad their phylacteries, and thank God in their prayers that they are not as other men are. It says ‘men’ in the text (I looked it up), but I think it must have been women who were really meant. For, about Edam at least, it is mostly *they* who give thanks that they are not as other women are!

Well, at any rate, Young Mrs. Winter was that kind of gossip—oh, far too good-natured ever to say an ill word about any one! But, on the other hand, always ‘so very sorry’ for the people she did not like that she left everybody with the impression that she was in possession of the darkest and deadliest secrets concerning them. Only she was *so* good and *so* kind that she only sympathized with these naughty people, instead of (as no doubt she could) putting them altogether outside the pale of society. She did this most often at afternoon teas. Then her sighs could be heard all over the room. They quenched conversation. They aroused curiosity, and in five minutes half tea-sipping Edam knew to how much original sin Miss So-and-so had recently added so many new and unedited actual

transgressions. But for the unfortunate impression thus unwittingly given of course poor Young Mrs. Winter was by no means responsible. Indeed, she gently sighed as she went away. 'It is *such* a pity!' she said feelingly, as her hostess accompanied her to the door.

Mrs. Winter the Younger dealt at Nipper Donnan's—both on account of the superior quality of the meat, and, still more, because there she encountered a kindred spirit—no, not the Reverend Cosmo Huntly, but Mrs. Nipper Donnan herself. It was not long before Young Mrs. Winter knew all about the abominable devices of Elizabeth Fortinbras, the terrible loss to the legitimate heir, Nipper, brought about by the cunning of a certain Hugh John, the weakness (if no worse) of the elder Donnans—in fact, all, and a great deal more, than Mrs. Nipper knew herself!

One evening, going into the shop during Nipper's absence on his 'cattle-buying business' among the farms, Young Mrs. Winter found still younger Mrs. Donnan in a state of great excitement. She had just been wrapping up a parcel, and was aching for a confidant.

No, of course Young Mrs. Winter would never, never betray a secret. Was she not known and noted for that one thing? Had she not suffered grievously and been much spoken against for that very fault, if fault, indeed, it were? Mrs. Nipper might ask all Edam.

There was not, of course, time for that, because Mrs. Nipper was so keen on the track of a confidant.

It had to come out. The dam burst suddenly. There was now no means of holding it back. Meg

Linwood's private sense of injustice was increased a thousandfold by the purring sympathy of Young Mrs. Winter.

No, indeed, she would not sit down under it. She was not now a 'slavey' to be treated like that. She had had quite enough! And so on and so on. Young Mrs. Winter incautiously suggested an appeal to Mrs. Nipper's husband, and so very nearly cut off the whole book of the revelation in mid-gush.

'Oh, no!' cried Mrs. Nipper, 'above all things Nipper must know nothing about it! *He* would not understand!'

Young Mrs. Winter threw up her hands with a little gesture of despair, as much as to say, 'I do not quite see, in that case, what is to be done in the matter!'

Then came the dread secret.

'I have paid them off myself. But oh—it is a great secret! Nipper would never forgive me—he thinks so much of that Hugh John Picton Smith!'

'Tell me all about it,' purred Young Mrs. Winter. 'You know I never speak again of things which have been told me in confidence!'

And, indeed, there was more of truth in the statement than the lady herself was aware of. For there were but few people in Edam so foolish as to tell Young Mrs. Winter even what their chickens had had for dinner!

'Oh, they shall not mock at me any more,' said Mrs. Nipper, half crying with anger, half trembling at her own temerity.

The Meg Linwood of the back kitchen had not got over her former wholesome dread of correction. And in her secret heart she always feared (and perhaps also a little hoped) that one day Nipper, put

out of patience by her tricks, would snatch up a stick and give her the same sort of moral lesson by which the late Mr. Linwood had recalled his family to a sense of their duty. 'They shall not mock at me—yes, I know they do—because I was once a servant.' (How little she knew either Hugh John or Elizabeth, if the accusation were made seriously!) 'But I have shown them that they cannot tamper with me!'

'But how—tell me how you did it?' said Young Mrs. Winter, sinking her voice to a whisper.

'I found a letter,' said Meg in a solemn whisper, and putting her mouth close to the ear of her listener, 'yes, a letter—from that Carter girl in Paris to Hugh John Picton Smith.'

'Never!' cried Young Mrs. Winter, clasping her hands together in a kind of ecstasy. Then, fearing she had gone too far, she said, 'I should like to see it, but I suppose you sent it back immediately.'

'I did nothing of the kind,' Meg Linwood giggled. 'I would not be so soft, though I have only been a servant—a common slavey, washing pans in the scullery, while my lady, all dressed up fine, sold candy in the front shop, and talked to *that Hugh John*!'

Thus innocently did poor Meg Linwood lay bare to the experienced eyes of Young Mrs. Winter the secret springs of her jealousy.

'It *is* a shame,' murmured that lady sympathetically but vaguely.

And so, with a little persuasion, Meg Linwood told the whole story of the twin halves of the crooked sixpence as related in the letter found in the sharkskin purse.

Young Mrs. Winter felt that perhaps never

had virtue been more its own reward. She was in sole possession of a secret that would assuredly set all Edam by the ears.

Presently she made her excuses to Mrs. Nipper Donnan, all simmering with sympathy till she was round the corner. And then she actually picked up her skirts and ran.

She had so many calls to make, so much to tell, and so little time to do it in. No wonder that Young Mrs. Winter was almost crushed by the weight of her own responsibilities. Suppose that she were to fall sick, or get run over, dying untimely 'with all her music in her,' as the poet says.

Unfortunately nothing of the kind occurred. The people she called on were at home. Nay, more, they had friends. These friends, as soon as they had heard, jostled each other in the lobbies. Nay, so great was their haste to be gone that they made the rudest snatches at each other's umbrellas!

Thus quickly was the tale of the crooked sixpence spread about in Edam. You see, the Davenant Carters were the greatest people in the parish, all the more so for not living in the town. And as for Hugh John, he also, though less known, was a citizen of no mean city.

I think it must have been about eight o'clock of a summer night—it was after dinner, anyway—when a ring came to the door bell, and Cairns went in the dining-room where Hugh John was rearranging the universe with father while he smoked. I was at the organ looking over some music, and trying over little bits very, very softly. Because at that time it is not allowed to interrupt the talk.

'A young lady on a bicycle to speak to Mr. Hugh John!' said Cairns.

Luckily I had turned a little on the music-stool, so I did not lose a faintest detail of what followed. I saw the single mischievous dimple come and go at the corner of father's cheek, but, as is his silent way, he only flicked the ash off his cigarette with his little finger, and said nothing.

'Will you excuse me for a moment, father?' said Hugh John, always master of himself, and consequently, nine times out of ten, of the other person as well. Father nodded gravely, and Hugh John went out.

I would have given all I possessed—not usually much at most—to have accompanied my brother. But a look from father checked me. As you can see from his books, it is not so very long since he was young himself. Though, of course, he seems fearfully old to us, I know he does not feel that way himself.

So perforce I had to wait patiently, turning over that dreary music till somebody came into the room, and then I was released. I knew it was Elizabeth Fortinbras who was outside, but for all that I did not even go to the door to see.

After what seemed a very long while Hugh John came in. He was looking rather pale.

'Can I go to the Edam Post Office?' he asked. 'I shall not be long.'

But though he asked politely, he was gone almost before permission could be given.

He told me all about it when he came back. I had been at the window, and had seen Hugh John and Elizabeth Fortinbras ride off together. For any one who saw them there was but one thing to think. They looked so handsome that any other explanation seemed inadmissible. Only we at home

knew different.

'Sis,' he said, when at last we got out to the gun-room, which father uses occasionally for smoking in, 'there never was a girl like Elizabeth Fortinbras!'

At this I whistled softly—a habit for which I am always being checked, and as often forgetting.

'*And what about Cissy Carter?*' I asked.

He looked at me once with a kind of 'If-you-have-any-shame-in-thee, girl, prepare-to-shed-it-now' manner, before which I quailed. Then he told me how Elizabeth had ridden out to tell him of the treachery of Meg Linwood. Together they had made out an urgency telegram, had found the post-master, and had dispatched it to Paris that very night.

It said: '*Half silver token lost. If sent you by mischievous persons, please return immediately to its owner, Hugh John Picton Smith.*'

'And that, I think, covers the case—she will understand!' said Elizabeth Fortinbras.

But low in her own heart, as she rode up the long steep street to New Erin Villa, she added the rider, 'That is, if she is not a goose!'

23. HONOUR THY DAUGHTER!

But, alas! Cissy Carter *was* a goose! In the well-meant telegram she saw only a new machination of the enemy—perhaps even of Elizabeth Fortinbras. And the heart in the Boulevard d'Argenson became, for the moment, sadder than ever. Also Madame asked for an explanation in a tone to which the proud little daughter of Colonel Davenant Carter had been quite unaccustomed. She resented Madame Rolly's interference rather more sharply than wisely. Whereupon she was told that her father would be requested to remove her, if, on the morrow, she was not ready with an explanation, in addition to the apology which Madame, perhaps correctly, considered her due.

Now it chanced that Colonel Carter, finding himself with a weekend to spare in London, had crossed the Channel to give himself the treat (and his daughter the surprise) of dropping in upon her unexpectedly. He could not have come more to the purpose so far as that daughter was concerned. Or more malapropos from the point of view of Madame Rolly.

As many people know, the good Colonel, once the devoted slave of Sir Toady Lion, was occasionally exceedingly peppery. And when he arrived with his pockets bulging with good things, only to find 'his little girl' in tears—and, indeed, brought hastily down from the room in which she had been locked—his military ardour exploded.

'If, Madame,' he is reported to have said, 'I am to understand that you cannot keep discipline

without having resort to methods more suitable to a boy of eight than to a young lady of eighteen, it is time that I undertook the responsibility myself! Cecilia, go up to your room. I will settle with Madame. And by the time that is done—the—ah—baggage-cart will be at the door—as sure as my name is G-rrrrrumph—G-rrrumph—G-rrrummph!'

And, indeed, the 'baggage-cart' (in the shape of a small omnibus) was at the door. Although really, you know, the Colonel's name was not as he himself affirmed.

'And now, Missy,' growled the Colonel in his finest Full-Bench-of-Justices manner, 'kindly tell me what you have been doing!'

For, very characteristically, the Colonel, though entirely declining to listen to a word of accusation against his daughter from Madame Rolly, reserved to himself the right of distributing an even-handed justice afterwards. His method on such occasions is just the reverse of father's, as we have all learned to our cost. Our father would have listened gravely to all that Madame had to recount of our misdeeds. Then he would have nodded, remarked, 'You did perfectly right, Madame! In anything that you may propose, I will support you—so long, that is, as I judge it best that my child shall remain at your school!' For father's first principle in all such matters is, 'Support authority—receive or make no complaints—and, above all, work out your own salvation, my young friend!'

And though it sometimes looks a bit hard at the time, as Hugh John says, 'It prepares a fellow for taking his own part in the world, as you soon find you have jolly well to do if you mean to get on.'

But Cissy knew her father, and promptly set

herself to cry as heartbrokenly as she could manage on such short notice. Colonel Davenant Carter gazed at her a moment with a haughty and defiant expression. But as Toady Lion had once said of him, 'I teached him to come the High Horsicle wif ME!' So now, as the rickety omnibus jogged and swayed over the Parisian cobbles, Cissy wept ever more bitterly, till the old soldier had to entreat her to stop. They would, so it appeared, soon be at his hotel. Even now they were passing his club, and 'that old gossiping beast, Repton Reeves,' was at the window. If it got about that he, Colonel Davenant Carter, had been seen driving down the Rue de Rivoli with a damsel drowned in floods of tears—why, by all the bugles of Balaclava, he would never hear the end of it. He might as well resign at the club. All which, as Cissy sobbed out in the French language, was 'exceedingly equal' to her! But it was very far indeed from being 'égal' to the peppery Colonel. And at last, as the sobs increased in carry and volume, he was reduced to the ignominious expedient of personal bribery.

'Look here, Cissy,' he said in tremulous tones, 'we absolutely *can't* go into the courtyard of the Grand Hotel like this! Now, if you will be a good girl, and will stop this instant, I will drive you up the Rue de la Paix, and there I will buy…!'

'*What?*' said Cissy, looking up with eyes that still brimmed ready for action.

'A gold bracelet!' said her father tentatively, but still quite uncertain of his effect.

'Boohoo!' said Cissy Carter, dropping her face once more between her hands.

'Goodness gracious,' cried the Colonel, invoking his favourite divinity, 'what can the girl

want? A gold watch, then?'

'Real gold this time, then!' said Cissy, who had been 'had' once before, and, even with an aching heart, was properly cautious.

'You shall do the choosing yourself!' said her father, thinking that he had conquered. But Cissy knew her opportunity—and the relative whom fate had given her. The tears welled again. Her bosom was shaken by timely sobs.

'Well, what then, Celia—really, this becomes past bearing! Why, we are nearly at the hotel!'

Cissy glanced up quickly. 'A gold bracelet *with* a gold watch, then!' she sighed gently.

And this is the truth, and the whole truth, as to why Colonel Davenant Carter gave his arm to a radiant and beautiful daughter in the courtyard of the Grand Hotel—a daughter, also, who lifted up a prettily-gloved hand (twelve buttons), and at every fourth step *looked at the time*!

24. CISSY'S MEANNESS

Miss Cecilia Davenant Carter had been at home a good many weeks before she came to see me. Of course Hugh John was now at college, and doubtless that made a difference. But she had never stayed away so long before, and whatever reason Cissy might have to be angry with Master Hugh John, she had not the least right to take it out on ME!

However, she came at last—chiefly, I think, to show me the gold watch on her wrist. This she wanted so badly to do that it must have hurt her dreadfully to stay away as long as she did. So she sat fingering it, but not running to ask me to admire it, as a girl naturally does. Of course I took no notice, though it made me feel mean. We talked about the woods and the autumn tints (schoolgirls always like these two words—they remind them that it is the season for blackberries and jam), till at last I was thoroughly ashamed of myself. So I went over to Cissy, and said, 'I think that's the prettiest bracelet I ever saw in all my life!'

And she said, 'Do you?' looking up at me funnily. 'Do you really?' she repeated the words, looking straight at me.

'Yes, I do indeed!' I answered. And—what do you think?—the next moment she was crying on my shoulder! Of course I understood. Every girl will, without needing to be told. And as for men (and 'Old Cats'), it is no use attempting to explain to them. They never could know just how we two felt.

But Cissy had really nothing in the least 'catty' about her. 'Quite the reverse, I assure *you*!' as the East Country folk say. She even took it off and

let me try it on without ever warning me to be careful with it. And that, you know, is a good deal for a girl who is ‘not friends’ with your own brother, and has only had a new ‘real-gold’ watch-bracelet for three or four weeks.

But then, Cissy could never be calm and restful like Elizabeth Fortinbras. Cissy did everything in a rush, and so, I suppose, got somehow closer to the heart of our impassive Hugh John just on that account. Elizabeth Fortinbras was too like my brother to touch him ‘where he lived,’ as Sir Toady would say.

Well, after a while Cissy stopped crying, and took my handkerchief without a word and quite as a matter of course (which showed as clearly as anything how things stood between us).

Then she said, ‘Priss, do you know, I did an awfully mean thing, and I want you to help me to make it all right again!’

In a book, of course (a proper book, I mean), I ought to have asked Ciss all sorts of questions, and said that in everything which did not affect the honour of the house of Picton Smith I was at her service. And so on.

But of course ordinary girls don't talk like that now-a-days. If you have what our sweet Maid calls a ‘snarl’ against anybody—why, mostly every one plays hockey now, and it is the simplest thing in the world to ‘take a drive at her shins, and say how sorry you are afterwards’! So at least (the Maid informs me) some girls, who shall be nameless, have been known to do at her school.

I waited for Cissy to tell me of the dreadfully mean thing she had done. But of course I assured her first that, whatever it was—yes, *whatever*—I

should do just what she wanted done to help her. For I knew she would do the same for me.

Then she told me that in her first anger about the telegram—for she had been far more angry about that than about the sending back the other half of the crooked sixpence—a thing which really mattered a thousand times more (but of course that was exactly like a girl!)—she had put the telegram, and both parts of the crooked sixpence, and all of Hugh John's letters she could find—chiefly the short and simple annals of a Rugby ‘forward’—in a lozenge-box—and (here Cissy dropped her voice) *sent them all, registered, to Elizabeth Fortinbras*!

25. 'NOT EVEN HUGH JOHN!'

'To Elizabeth—Elizabeth Fortinbras!' I cried. Here was a new difficulty. If only people would not do things in a hurry, as Hugh John says, they would mostly end by not doing them at all!

'What sort of a girl is this Elizabeth Fortinbras?' Cissy Carter asked. 'She is only a shop-girl after all, isn't she?'

I set Cissy right on this head. There were shop-girls *and* shop-girls. And this one not only came of a respectable ancestry, but had been well educated, was the heiress of Erin Villa, and would succeed to one of the best businesses in Edam!

'Is she pretty?'

Oh, of course I had foreseen the question. It was quite inevitable, and there was but one thing to say—

'Come to the shop and see for yourself!'

But Cissy hung back. You see, she had done a perfectly mad thing, and yet was not quite ready to make it up with the person concerned—especially when Cissy was Colonel Davenant Carter's only daughter just home from Paris, and when, in spite of my explanations, Elizabeth was little more to her than a 'girl behind a counter'!

You may be sure that I put her duty before her—yes, plainly and with point. But Cissy had in her all the pride of the Davenant Carters, and go she would not, till I told her plump and plain that she was afraid!

My, how that made her jump! She turned a little pale, rose quietly, adjusted her hat at the mirror, took off her watch-bracelet and gave it to me to keep for her.

'I will go and see this Elizabeth Fortinbras now—and alone!' she said, with that nice quiet dignity which became her so well. I would greatly have liked to have gone along with her. But, first of all, she had not asked me, and, secondly, I knew that I had better not.

Cissy Carter had to see Elizabeth alone. Only they could arrange matters. Still, of course, both of them told me all about it afterwards, and it is from these two narratives that the following short account is written out.

Elizabeth was in the front shop, busy as a bee among the sweet things, white-aproned, and wearing dainty white armlets of linen which came from the wrist to above the elbow. Then these two looked at each other as only girls do—or perhaps more exactly, attractive young women of about the same age. Boys are different—they behave just like strange dogs on being introduced, sulky and ready to snarl. A young man seems to be wondering how such a contemptible fellow as that other fellow could possibly have gained admittance to a respectable house. Only experienced women can manage the business properly, putting just the proper amount of cordiality into the bow and handshake. Grown men—most of them, that is—allow their natural feeling of boredom to appear too obviously.

At any rate Cissy and Elizabeth took in each other at a glance, far more searching and exhaustive as to 'points' than ever any man's could be. Then they bowed to each other very coldly.

'Will you come this way?' said Elizabeth, instantly discerning that Cissy had not come to New Erin Villa as a customer. Accordingly she led the way into the little sitting-room, all in pale creamy

cretonne with old-fashioned roses scattered upon it, which her own taste and the full purse of Ex-Butcher Donnan had provided for her.

'Be good enough to take a seat,' said Elizabeth Fortinbras. But she herself remained standing.

Now you never can tell by which end a girl—or a woman, for that matter—will tackle anything. All that you can be sure of is that it will not be the obvious and natural one—the one nearest her hand. So Cissy, instead of coming right out with her confession and having done with it, began by asking Elizabeth if she knew a Mr. Hugh John Picton Smith.

'He is my friend!' said Elizabeth, very quiet and grave, standing with one hand in the pocket of her apron and the other hanging easily by her side.

'And nothing more?' said Cissy, looking up at her very straight.

'I must first know by what right you ask me that question!' said Elizabeth. And then, her lips quivering (I know exactly how) a long minute between pride and pitifulness, Cissy did the best thing in the world she could have done to soften Elizabeth Fortinbras. She struggled an instant with herself. Her pride gave way exactly as it had with me, and she began to sob quietly and continuously.

Elizabeth took one step towards her. Presently her cool, strong arms were about Cissy's neck, who struggled a second or two like a captive bird, and then the next Elizabeth was soothing her like an elder sister.

'Yes, dear, I know—I know! You did a foolish thing. But then it was to me. I understood! I understand! It does not matter! No one else need

know!'

Then, in a voice quiet as the falling of summer rain among the misty isles of the West, Elizabeth added, '*Not even Hugh John!*'

26. HAUNTS REVISITED

I think we were all a bit unstrung after this. It was a good many weeks before Cissy could bring herself to speak about Elizabeth Fortinbras, and then it was in a rush, as, indeed, she did everything. It was one afternoon, over at Young Mrs. Winter's. Mrs. Christopher Camsteary (who always was as superior as a pussy-cat with a new blue ribbon about her neck, all because her husband kept three gardeners, one of whom blacked the Camsteary boots) happened to remark that there was 'a rather ladylike girl' in those butcher-people's sweet-shop opposite the station.

'She *is* a lady!' said Cissy Carter, lifting up her proud little chin with an air of finality.

And, indeed, there was, in Edam at least, no discussing with Miss Davenant Carter on such a matter. Mrs. Christopher Camsteary, whose husband, greatly to his credit, had made a large fortune in cattle-feeding oilcake ('in the wholesale, of course, you know, my dear!'), could not, even if she had wished, contradict the daughter of ten generations of Davenant Carters as to who was a lady and who not! So it was settled that, whenever Cissy Carter was in the room, Elizabeth Fortinbras was a lady. Which must have been a great comfort to her!

Well, the following summer-time when the good days came—perhaps because everybody, including even Hugh John, was a little tired and 'edgy'—father took us all off to his own country.

I was the one who had seen the most of it before, as you may see if ever you have read the book called *Sweetheart Travellers* that father wrote

about our gypsyings and goings-on. Of course (all our family say 'of course'—and it all fills up first-rate when the man comes to count the pages up for printing)—well, of course I had forgotten a good deal about it, only I read over the book on the sly, and so was posted for everything as it came along.

This time we did not go on 'The-Old-Homestead-on-Wheels,' as we called the historic tricycle, but in the nicest and biggest of all wagonettes, with two lovely horses driven by a friend of ours with a cleverness which did one's heart good to see. His name was 'Jim.' We called him so from the first, and he was dreadfully nice to all of us, because he had been at school with father. This made us think for a good while that it was because of his superior goodness and cleverness there that so many people were glad to remember that they had been at school with father. Jim, when we asked him, said that it was so, but Hugh John immediately smelt a rat. So he asked another and yet older friend of father's, named Massa—because, I think, he sang negro melodies so beautifully. (Who would have thought that they sang 'coon' songs so long ago?—but I suppose it was really just a kind of 'boot-room music,' or the sort of thing they play on board trip-steamers, when the trombone is away taking up a collection, and everybody is moving to the other side of the deck!) Well, Massa came along with us and Jim one lovely Saturday to see the place where my great-grandmother had kept sheep 'on the bonny banks of the Cluden' a full hundred years ago. Somehow I always liked that. It means more to a girl than even father's misdeeds, the hearing about which amuses the boys so.

However, it really was about those that I began.

So, reluctantly, I must leave the little hundred-year-old girl keeping her sheep on the green holms of Cluden, and tell about father and his wonderful influence. Massa said that we were not to tell on him, and of course we promised. This is not *telling*, but only writing all about it down in my Diary—quite a different thing. Well, Massa said that when 'Mac' and he had 'done anything,' they used to climb up different trees as quickly as they could, and then, when father came after them (he was not our father then, of course, but only Roman Dictator and Tyrant of Syracuse), he could only get one of them. For while he was climbing the tree occupied by one, the other could drop out of the branches and cut and run. It was a good way, especially for Number Two, who got away—not quite so fine, though, for Number One, who was caught. Whenever a new boy visited the town and the Dictator was seen coming along, they ran the stranger up a tree and introduced him from there, as it were, lest, by mistake, a worse thing should befall him! Really it is difficult to believe all this, even when Massa swears it. Because father, if you let his pet books alone and don't make too big a row outside the *châlet* when he is working, hardly minds at all what you do. We don't really recognize him in the Roaring Lion, going about seeking whom he might devour, of Mr. Massa's legends.

So Sir Toady, in the interests of public information, asked Mr. Massa if the boys of that time were not pretty bad. And Mr. Massa said that they were, but that 'they were not a patch on your…' He stopped just at the word 'your,' for father was coming round the corner. And, do you know, I don't believe he has quite lost his influence with Mr.

Massa even now. It is a fine thing, Hugh John says, to be such a power for good among your fellows. He had that sort of power himself at school, and he managed to keep it, even though fellows ever so much bigger came while he was there.

Well, no matter; what I keep really in my heart, or maybe like an amulet about my neck, is the memory of the little hundred-year-old girl (that is, she *would* be if she were alive now) tending sheep and twining daisy-chains on the meadows by the Water of Cluden, with the Kirk of Irongray glinting through the trees, and Helen Walker (which is to say Jeanie Deans) calling in the cows to be milked at the farm across the burn.

Now I don't know how *you* feel, but the story of this great-grandmother of mine always seems sort of kind and warm and sacred to me, a mixture of the stillness of an old-fashioned Sabbath and the first awakening hush when you remember that it is your birthday—a sort of religious fairyland, if you know what I mean—like ‘playing house’ (oh, such a long time ago!) with Puck and Ariel and the Queen of the Fairies, while several of the very nicest people out of the Bible stories sat in the shade and watched—perhaps Ruth and, of course, her mother-in-law, and David when he was very young, and kept sheep also. He would certainly come to see our play—his shepherd's crook in his hand, and his eye occasionally taking a survey of great-grandmother's flocks and herds to see that there were no lions or bears about!

Yes, I know it's fearfully silly. Of course it is. But, all the same, I have oftener put myself happily to sleep thinking about that, and with the music of the Cluden Water low in my ear, than with all the

wisdom that ever I learned at school! So there!

Of course you mustn't suppose that at the time I said a word of all this even to the Maid, much less to the others. Though I do think that father, who knows a lot of things without being told, partly guessed what I was thinking of. For once when we had all got down to gather flowers, he led me down to the water's edge, and, pointing across the clear purl of the stream to the opposite bank (where is a little green level, with, in the midst, a still greener Fairy Ring), he took my hand and, standing behind me, pointed with it. 'It was there!' he whispered.

He did not say a word more. But that was enough. I understood, and he knew that I understood. It was like the old days when we made our travels together, he and I, with the Things of the Wide World running back past us, all beautiful and all sweet as dreaming of plucking flowers in the kindly shade of woods.

Soon after this, on our journey through father's country, we came to a little village—the cleanest and dearest that ever was seen. It was the one after which father had called one of his early books of verse—'Dulce Cor.' Here we were very happy, for there was a lovely old Abbey, roofless, of course, but all blooming like one great rose when the sun shone on it at evening and morning. The colours of the stones were so rich with age and mellowing that from the little walk on the other side of the valley it seemed as if the whole had been dipped for a thousand years in a bath of sunset clouds, and then left out among the cornstooks to dry! Even more beautiful and kindly was a certain nice Doctor—only he wasn't the sort that come to see you when you are ill, to tap you on the back and

write prescriptions. He took me to see the Abbey, and told me about the Last of all the Abbots, who was so kind that the people would not let him be sent away, but kept him always hidden here and there among them. And about how he died at long and last, 'much respected and deeply regretted,' as the papers say, even by those who did not go to his church—which, indeed, very few in these parts did.

And though it was, of course, foolish, and I would never have said it to the Doctor himself for worlds, I could not help thinking that this Last of all the Abbots (Gilbert Brown, I think his name was) must have been a good deal like this friend of mine, with his beautiful silvery head, and maybe the same gentle break in his voice when he gave out such a text as 'I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.'

We went through the cornfields very early next morning, father and I. It was Sunday, at dawn or a little after. The dew was still on all the little fairy cobwebs, but the sun had been before us in getting out of bed, and now was busy as he could be, drinking up the dew. We had to cross the churchyard under the big eastern side of the Abbey, all drowned in level sunshine, yellow as primrose-beds. We crossed a stile, and there, pacing slowly, his hands behind his back, saffron cornstooks on his one side and five centuries of well-peopled holy ground on the other, was the minister. He did not see us—lost in high thoughts, his lips moving with the unspoken prayer.

'Come away,' whispered father, hurrying me along. 'He speaks with his Master! A stranger intermeddleth not therewith!'

Then I did not know very well what he meant,

nor did I ask. Only the two of us slipped down where, beyond the cornfields, a little road, all fern-grown, saunters half hidden; and where, a bit farther on, there is a bridge and a burn in which, in the daytime, children play and women wash their linen. But this morning all was still and quiet—as father said, 'with the Peace of Jubilee, when all the land had rest!' I like to hear things like that—things I only half understand, but can think over afterwards. They make me feel all nice and thrilly, like after a shower-bath—only it is a mind-bath, and not a body-bath! Perhaps a soul-bath, if I knew what that was.

We came back another way by a higher path, and through a lane of tall old trees. When we got to our inn, the door was closed just as we had left it, and not a soul astir. We had seen no one at all that Sabbath morn except the silver-haired minister, his hands behind his back—perhaps, as the Psalm says, looking to the hills from which cometh his aid. Going upstairs, I opened my grandmother's Bible at the metrical Psalms, and the first words that met my eyes were these: 'In Salem is his tabernacle—in Sion is his seat!' Now I will confess again that I always like texts and poems out of which I can take my own meaning, without being bothered with notes and explanations. And so I thought how that morning I had surely gone out by Salem His Tabernacle and come back by Sion His Holy Seat!

27. SIR TOADY RELAPSES

Ever such a lot of children whom I don't know have written to me to say how glad they were that I made father take me with him on his cycle such splendid long journeys. Because, you see, *their* fathers read the book, and had a little seat fitted for them! On the other hand, I suppose parents write and abuse my father for putting such ideas into their little girls' heads. In fact, I know they do. Here is a true story. One irate old fellow wrote to say that ‘Sir Toady’ was quite unfit to associate with clean and properly brought up children! And he put down the references, too, where Toadums had misbehaved, like you find them on the margin of a Bible! How he had sat down in the dusty road at page some-number-or-other, where he had omitted to blow his nose, how he had fought, and thrown mud, and generally broken every law laid down for the good conduct of little boys in the olden times—just exactly what Sir Toady used to do! As if father was responsible for all that! Well, he *was*, in the old gentleman's opinion. For he ended with: ‘If only your little rascal of a hero were *my* son, sir——!’

This amused my brother Toadums for quite a long time, and one day he sneaked the letter, and wrote himself to the old gentleman to say how that he had reformed, and now always went about with two pocket-handkerchiefs; also how, at school, he had founded the ‘Admiral Benbow Toilet Club,’ to which the annual subscription was five shillings.

Further, he expressed a willingness to propose the old gentleman's name at the next

meeting, and in the meantime he suggested sending on the money! Yes—and would you believe it?—he actually got the five shillings, along with a very nice letter from the old gentleman, couched in a sort of Better-Late-than-Never strain. So Toady Lion, who can be honest when he tries very hard, wrote and asked the old chap whether he would prefer to have the brilliantine supplied by the club in bottle, or like paint in a squeezable tube. But the old gentleman replied that, being completely bald, Sir Toady had better consider himself as a new returned prodigal, and use the five shillings 'to kill the fatted calf'! So we killed him, and the noise we made on the top of Low-Hill was spread abroad over three counties. A 'gamey' came to tell us that we were trespassing. But we feasted him on the old man's five shillings, while Hugh John explained that there was no such thing as trespass, and Sir Toady, getting hold of the keeper's double-barrel, practiced on boulders till he nearly slew a stray pointer dog! Then, after braying ourselves hoarse, we had fights, rebellions, revolutions, cabals, which always ended in pushing each other into pitfalls and peat-bogs. We tripped in knotted heather as we chased downhill, skirmishing and yelling. Even Hugh John forgot himself, and all returned home, sated with the slaughter of the old gentleman's fatted calf, tired to death, not a shout left in any of us, but, as it were, stained with mud and crime!

Ordinarily now Sir Toady has grown too old for the 'sins and faults of youth' already set down against him. But sometimes he relapses—and then he has it bad. He does not say 'roo' for 'you' any more, but sometimes the house is afflicted for days with an exhibition of what Hugh John calls 'Royal

Naval Manners.’ Usually this occurs at table when father is absent, because Toady has a quite real respect for the Fifth Commandment, a respect gained at an early age, and ever since retained. But on this journey there were a good many opportunities. You see, we did not go to bed at the usual time. We got up when we liked, and I often had to say the prayers for the entire family. Because the boys shirked most shamefully, and the Maid was so sleepy with driving in the open air all day that she often would be found sound asleep on her knees when not carefully looked after.

‘The spirit was willing, though the flesh was weak!’ said our good old Doctor of the parish of ‘Dulce Cor.’ ‘I wish all my own prayers had as good a chance of being heard as this little sleeping child's!’ After this Toady Lion declared that he would always say his prayers in the same way—*asleep*!

Well, of course you could not imagine—nobody could—the new and peculiar wickedness devised by Sir Toady. It was simply *bound* to be a success. Besides which, it was perfectly safe; after what Mr. Massa had told up at the Communion Stones of Irongray, The Powers-That-Be could not say a word. Oh, the beautiful thing it is to have a friend of your youth with a good memory, and, above all, communicative and frank with your own children! Oh, I know that there are people who will say, with some outside show of reason, ‘Well, just be perfectly good when you are young, and then you don't need to fear the frankest of your intimate friends!’

This, of course, is rank nonsense, and nothing but! For that kind of very immaculate young person does not make the best sort of father or

mother when the time comes. They don't know anything. They are not up to things, and get 'taken the loan of,' as the boys say in that rude but expressive speech of theirs. But it is not accounted healthy to 'monkey' with ours, who generally can tell beforehand when you are going to do a thing, and after it is done (if you get the chance) will tell you—what very likely you didn't know before—*why* you did it. If, in spite of all, you get into scrapes, The Powers-That-Be usually sympathize. But (and this is the awkward part) they remember the remedy that proved effectual in former and more personal cases. That remedy is applied, and, generally speaking, the same result follows. With this experience we shall all make excellent heads of families, and shall hire ourselves out—if we do not happen to have any of our own! Only, we are glad that we came into the world too early to be part of Hugh John's family. His methods are altogether too Spartan. And we tell him that the plain English for the name of his favourite hero, Brutus (the one who cut his children's heads off), was just simply Brute!

To return to Sir Toady, we were at the time at the little seaside village of the Scaur. Mark Hill is behind it, and Rough Island in front. Nothing could possibly be more delightful. At every low tide, for two or three hours we could walk on a long pebbly trail which led seaward, the wash of the tides coming from two directions round the pleasant green shoulders of the Isle, epauletted with purple heather, and buttoned down the front with white sheep. What dainty coves! What pleasing, friendly-featured lambs with shiny black noses and goggle eyes! How tame the very gulls had become from never being shot at! There never was such a place as

Rough Island for us, or, indeed, any children. Away to the right you could see Isle Rathan, certainly more famous in romance. But to go there you had to get kind Captain Cassidy to take you in his boat. And generally it ended (because the Captain is a busy man) in your staying with his wife, and seeing—and being the better for seeing—how the threatening of blindness at once sweetens and strengthens the life of a delicate woman. But to Rough Island we could go by ourselves, so be that we returned with the first flowing of the tide. There is a certain Black Skerry to the south which, when covered, announces to all concerned that haste of the hastiest kind had better be made. Of course we called it Signal Rock. But one fine September forenoon, when the light was mellow and gracious even on the rough slopes of the Island of our choice, Sir Toady set us all (that is, all the children) searching in sheltered coves and little pebbly bays for 'leg-o'-mutton' shells—just, he said, what father used to do. It was the bottom of the 'neaps,' when the water does not go very far out—which, of course, every shore child would have known by instinct. But we were landward bred, and such distinctions as to the ebbing and flowing of salt water were too fine for us! But Sir Toady had had converse with the instructed. He had profited thereby. And so no one will be surprised that, by dint of keeping our backs to the Signal Rock, our noses pointing down, and our eyes well employed in the search for 'legs-o'-mutton,' we did not discover the treachery of Sir Toady till the Rock was covered, and there was no hope of return! None, that is, for most of us. But Sir Toady, already singing his song of triumph, had reckoned without his Hugh John!

That austere stickler for 'The Proper-Thing-To-Do-You-Know' made one dash for the rapidly covering causeway, over which the tawny Solway water was already lapping and curling in little oozy whorls, like a very soap-suddy pot coming to the boil. He had only time to shout, 'You, Sis, stay where you are! Take care of the Maid. I will make it all right with The-Folk-Over-There!'

And at first Toady Lion had laughed, thinking that for once the immaculate Hugh John would be caught along with the rest of us. He did not laugh, however, at all when he saw his elder brother take his watch out of his pocket and place it in his cap. He shouted out, 'It's all right, Hugh John; Mr. Massa told me at Irongray that he and father often did it—spent ''Tween-Tides' on the Island. He will know all about it. Come back, you fool, you'll be drowned!'

But our Old Ironsides only shouted back over his shoulder that father and Mr. Massa had not passed their words to be in for lunch, and that *he* had!

'If the People are anxious Over-Yonder, they can come and fetch us off in a boat. We can say that we forgot!'

But by this time Hugh John had made his first dash into the wimpling line of creamy chocolate, like a steamer's wake, which marked the causeway to the land. His last will and testimony came to us in the command to 'Stay where we were!' And in the final far-heard rider that, 'when he got him,' he would quicken Sir Toady's uncertain memory by one of the most complete fraternal 'hidings' on record.

All the same, as we watched him plod along, the tides sweeping in from both sides upon him, and

the struggle swaying him now to one side and now to the other in the effort to keep his feet, Sir Toady burst into a kind of roar (which he now says is a 'way they have in the Navy' for long-distance signalling, but which sounded to us very much like a howl). 'Come back, Hugh John,' he cried, 'and I'll take the best 'whaling' you can give me *now*!'

But out in the brown pother the struggle went on. Hugh John never so much as turned his head. We stood white and gasping, all pretty close together, I can tell you. And once when we saw him swept from his feet and only recovered his balance with an effort—though my heart was in my throat, I said out loud to comfort the others, 'Well, anyway, he has taken the school medal for swimming. He has it on him now!'

Then Sir Toady turned on me a face of scorn and anger. He pointed to the gush and swirl of the currents of Solway over the bank of pebbles. 'Swim in that!' he cried, 'no, he can't! No, nor nobody can. I tell you one of the best swimmers in Scotland was drowned over there in Balcary, within sight of his own house, and a man in a boat within stonethrow!'

But for all that, Toady himself pulled off his coat and waistcoat, and made him ready to go to the rescue (oh, how vainly!). So that in the long run the Maid and I had to hold him down on the beach, half weeping, half desperate, calling on Hugh John, his Hugh John, to come back and slay him upon the spot. As if he was *his* Hugh John, any more than anybody else's Hugh John—and the two of them fighting like cat and dog nine-tenths of the time! But at times, when his elder brother is in danger or ill, Sir Toady is like that. Janet Sheepshanks speaks yet about his face when he came back from Crusoeing-it

with Dinky and Saucy Easedale—all drawn and haggard and white it was. Well, it was like that now. I declare, he turned and struck at us every time that Hugh John stumbled, or looked like being carried away.

‘See here, Sis,’ he gasped, ‘you let a fellow go, or I'll kill you. I will, mind—if anything happens to My Hugh John—I'll kill you for holding me back like this.’

But at this very moment we began to see the lank figure of Hugh John rising higher out of the swirling scum. Presently he scrambled out on the steep beach of pebbles, all dripping. Then he gave himself a shake like a retriever dog, shook his fist at the distant Sir Toady, now sparsely equipped in fluttering linen: ‘Wait till I get you, you young beast! Just you wait!’

That was what he was saying as plain as print. But Sir Toady, completely reassured, only heaved a long sigh, murmuring, ‘That's all right!’ And went on calmly putting on his clothes, and laughing at the Maid and me for having been frightened. He actually had the cheek to ask us what we had been crying about!

28. TWICE-TRAVELED PATHS

Then we went to Kirkcudbright, where there is an old castle, very dirty, but where we stayed in the loveliest old inn. It was so 'comfy' and home-like at the 'Selkirk' that it seemed as if the hostelry had wandered out into the country one fine day and—forgot the way to come back again! We liked it so much because it was kept by a nice jolly man, whose mother had been good to father once when he was ill, and who made the nicest cakes. We were in clover there, I can tell you. Specially because 'Mac' (the painter whom, when I was very little, I once named 'The Little Brown Bear') came for walks with us, and made us laugh at dinner till we youngsters nearly got sent from the table. Yet it wasn't a bit our fault. He told us a lot of things, and I could see father listening with all his ears, and not even checking Sir Toady when he stole the sugar, though he saw him. I was sure that something would come out of that. You see, I know father's ways. And so it comes about that I don't need to write any of the funny things that we heard that night, or the nights that followed. You have only to read them in the chapters of *Little Esson*, the part all about Ladas II, and the trip in the caravan. I think that father ought really to have sent some of the money he got to 'The Little Brown Bear'—but I don't believe he ever did.

'Mac owes me more than that!' he said, when I asked him about it. 'I brought him up by hand!'

I presume he meant the way Hugh John, my brother, brings up Sir Toady—though that is with both hands, sometimes feet too.

There was one Sunday that I remember very well; at Newton Stewart it was. There had been (or was going to be) a kind of circus in the town. Or maybe they were only resting, as even circus folk must do sometimes.

Anyway I looked out at the window in the early morning, and if I had seen a ghost I could not have been more surprised. And so would you—for there, calmly grazing on the field just under my window, as quietly as if it had been a cow, was a huge elephant! I did not see any circus vans, nor the tents, nor anything—save and except this great Indian elephant in the middle of the green field! You may imagine I thought that I was still dreaming. I watched it pad-padding softly about, taking the greatest pleasure in rolling like a donkey when the harness is taken off. It also rubbed the big soft spreads of its feet on the softer grass. I suppose its poor soles were sore with travelling over our hard cycling roads, and now it was keeping Sunday after its kind, doing its best to obey the commandment. And, as father says, what more can any of us do than be fully persuaded in our own minds? One thing I noticed which astonished me, and I think it will most people. The big beast must have weighed a ton, I should think, at the least. And yet, as it went here and there over the field of nice Galloway grass, it walked so softly that the grass 'rose elastic from its airy tread.' Yes, it actually did. Even Mr. Sherlock Holmes himself could hardly have found a footmark in a quarter of an hour. Why, even the Maid, not to speak of myself, could not get so lightly over the ground as that. We watched the elephant all that day, whenever we could, that is—and thought of him in church, though the minister was a nice man,

nice-looking too, and did not preach too long. It was, of course, frightfully wicked of us. Because it was in one of the old 'Kirks of the Martyrs' that the service was held. But when the minister came to see us in the evening, we showed him the elephant still grazing away, wig-wagging its long trunk like a supple pendulum, and switching away quite imaginary flies with its tiny tail! The minister was such a very good sort that we thought we ought to own up why we had been restless in church. (He might have seen us, you know.) So I said we were ashamed that we had not attended better to his sermon. And do you know what he answered back, after seeing the elephant take a double donkey roll, with its great sausagey legs in the air? 'I'm glad,' he said, 'that I did not see the elephant do that *before* sermon. For if I had, I don't believe that I could have preached!'

'A pretty nice sort of a minister, that!' said Hugh John afterwards.

'I should go to his church myself,' cried Toady Lion, and then, checking himself suddenly under the gaze of Hugh John, he added, 'I mean, when I had to!'

There—that is quite enough to put in my Diary about a circus elephant, though I will admit that it was about the very queerest thing that ever happened to me in all my life—I mean the most unexpected, of course, for when explained it was all perfectly simple.

But I must get on with my Diary of this Galloway journey, and the 'Sweethearty' things we saw there. Dear me, I had meant to tell about Gatehouse too (which happened before Newton Stewart, only I forgot). There was a nice minister

there too, who went about without his hat, and smoked, and called out nice things across the street to Tom and Dick and Harry. Altogether we were fortunate in the ministers we met all through the trip. And I think the children of Gatehouse must have benefitted too, owing to the nice bareheaded minister. For certainly they are not nearly so rude and pesterful as I remember them when father and I stopped there—oh, how many years ago? Ten, at least, or maybe more. Then they rang the bell of the tricycle and said horrid things when father was in the baker's shop. They made me so angry—I can remember it yet—I said I would tell father. I nearly cried. But this time there was no one who was not quite nice to us—except, Oh, yes, one person who wouldn't let us any rooms. But that did not matter. Indeed, it was a blessing. For we went farther down the street till we came to a delightful hotel or inn or something, where Miss Blackett, who kept it, was just as good to us as she could be, and gave us nice things to eat on the sly. Also the 'Little Brown Bear' came again, and told us more stories in the evenings. Then, at ten or eleven at night, he got on his cycle and wheeled away into the dark. It was so nice and romantic that I wished I could have gone too. It is splendid in the summer to wheel on and on through the archway of the green and sleeping woods. It is best when you are sure of the policemen, and can ride without a light, which does no good, but makes everything dark as pitch, and as uninteresting as the Queensferry Road.

Then I saw the two boys at Creetown who once on a time were brought in from playing on the street, and tidied up so that they might be ready to kiss me. They both howled at the thought. For which

I don't in the least blame them. But all the same they had high collars on, and I don't think that they would have minded nearly as much now.

This, of course, came before the elephant, but then, you see, if things don't go into my Dear Diary just when I think of them, the probability is that they won't go at all.

One long lovesome day, that I won't forget in a hurry, we spent driving through Borgue—sunny, sweet, hawthorny Borgue, where the clover is, and the green honey made by the bees that have never so much as sniffed a heather bloom. It is not Galloway, of course. It has not the qualities of Galloway, I mean. But there is something about it that makes the heart grow fonder the longer one stays there—a kind of green 'den' such as the bairns have when playing at 'soldiers-and-outlaws' in the wood—a sheltered sanctuary, a Peace on Earth among men of good-will. At least all we saw were that sort, and I hope the others were, just as much. Here, I know, Hugh John would shrug his shoulders. But that does not matter.

We did not linger in Borgue, however, which, with its still and pensive beauty, was like a kirk-yard on Sunday morning. Indeed, there are many of these along the shores—hidden nooks with tombstones, and beneath wave-washed bights of clean sand. For assuredly it was not the right Galloway. Rather it was like a bit of Devonshire that had floated away and got joined on here, wooded and wind-swept, a carpet of flowers all the summer long, one great bee-swarm booming all over it, from Kirk Andrews, which is its Dan, to the Tower of Plunton, which is its Beersheba. At any rate there is nothing like Borgue anywhere else in Scotland.

Which its natives declare, perhaps with truth, is the same as to say in the world!

Well, we drove out of Newton Stewart past Palnure, turned sharply up the hill road towards the Loch of the Lilies, past Clatteringshaws—where not a shaw clattered, though in the wagonette there were many ‘she's’ who did—as a very clever lady, a friend of father's, once remarked when her daughters proposed an excursion thither from Kenbank. ‘Deaved’ (deafened) with their tongues, she broke out at last with ‘Not Clatteringshaws, but 'Clatteringshe's'!’ However, on this occasion not a dog barked. We lunched in the midst of the solitude, and then father wandered away to watch his dear hills through his glasses, while the rest of us washed and cleaned up!

But the best of all days was that on the moors about the little house where father was born. I had not been there for more than ten years, and the ground was littered with memories. Father and I got off a little south of the Raider's Bridge. We skirted the water meadows, and looked back to the bulk of Bennan, still rugged and purple with heather, seeing to the right of it Cairnsmore of Carsphairn, a double molehill of palest blue paint. Then came the ‘Roman Camp,’ which, however, father told us had been made by the ‘Levellers’ in the early half of the eighteenth century. But the other story of the farm bull which fell into the ditch, was heard roaring for days, and, when found, had eaten every green thing within reach of its hungry mouth—trees, leaves, branches and all—pleased me most.

Then there was the well where once I had drunk from father's palms, and of which there is such a very pretty picture in *Sweetheart Travellers*—

a picture which always used to puzzle me dreadfully. For I knew that there were only father and I there. Besides which, there was not nearly light enough for Mr. Gordon Browne to ‘take’ us, even supposing that he had been hid behind the bushes! At any rate we had a drink at the ancient spring, just for old sake's sake. Some kind person had cleaned it out not long before, and the water in the shade of the woods of the Duchrae Bank was as cool and sweet as ever. Then across the cropped meadows, again ankle-deep in aftermath, to the old stepping-stones! Father carried me on his back to the big central boulder, which perhaps has been brought down by some forgotten flood, and at any rate had long served for the keystone of the arrangement in stepping-stones—which, even in father's day (so he told me), had been variously named ‘Davie's Ford,’ ‘Auld Miss,’ ‘Rab's,’ and ‘Elphie's,’ according to the names of the various dwellers in the pretty cottage in the wood above.

29. HOME-COMING

We brushed our way down through the meadows, and father went straight to the place where the Grass of Parnassus had been growing when he was a boy. It was growing there still—and thriving too. We called on a big bumble-bee, of the kind that has its stinging end very blunt and red. It was not at home, but the hole in the bank which it had occupied thirty years ago was now let to a Rabbit family, the younger members of which scuttled away at our approach, though without too much alarm. We could see their tails bobbing among the ferns and undergrowth. And then we came to the Stepping-Stones. It was ten years since I had seen them, and then I was quite a little girl. But I remembered everything at once, even to the small starry green plants that grew beneath the water, and the sharp stones that get between your toes when you wade too far out. The woods were as green and as solitary as ever—cool too, and all the opposite ground elastic with pine-needles that were not nearly so uncomfortable for the bare feet as you would suppose. We waded for quite a long time, and then sat and ate our lunch on the big middle boulder, alternately dabbling our feet in the clear olive-green water and drying them in the sunshine. Father told stories. No, I don't mean that he made them up—only that, as is usual at such times, all sorts of funny memories went and came in his head—all of the people about whom he told them as completely passed away as the orange-trousered bee we had gone so vainly out of our way to seek.

Then we went to the little farmhouse up the loaning, where they took us for ordinary tourists, and pointed out to us the sights. More than once I glanced at father, but he had so grave a face that the kind and pretty girl who showed us over evidently took him for a very severe critic of his own books, an enemy of dialect in any form. So, ceasing her legends, she offered us refreshments instead. After that we tramped away over the 'Craigs' and the heather by the very little path along which father used to go his three-and-a-half miles along the lochside to school. I saw the Truant's Bathing-Place, the Far-Away-Turn, the Silver Mine (where once on a time father had found half-a-crown, and dreamed of it for years), and the Bogle Thorn, now sadly worn away since the days of the 'Little Green Man.' After that I kept on asking questions till we got to Laurieston, when I stopped, not because I had finished, but because tea was waiting for us. They called us names, and said that they had eaten up all the good things. But father answered, laughing, that it was written that man should not live by bread alone, and that what he had seen that day ought to suffice any one. But really I did not see that it made any difference to his appetite, and, for all they said, there were plenty of nice things left for us.

Then we came to Castle Douglas, and what I remember best is the big courtyard of the hotel, the noise and rattle of horses' hoofs passing through the narrow entry on to the street, the kind people who welcomed us, and the home-like air of everything about the 'Douglas Arms,' which I never have seen about an hotel before, though I had been in many.

Our journey was done. So it was quite proper that things should begin to look a bit home-like. We

had quite a nice homecoming. Cissy Carter met us at the station in a pretty dark-blue dress, smartly belted in at the waist, but with some flour on her right shoulder. And when I asked her what she had been doing to herself, she answered in a matter-of-course tone, ‘Oh, only helping Elizabeth!’

‘What Elizabeth?’ I had the strength to gasp.

‘Why, Elizabeth Fortinbras, of course,’ she answered, quite sharply for her; ‘whom else?’ And this proved to me that the world had not been standing still in Edam while we were whirling through Father's Country at the tails of Jim's spanking chestnuts! I asked how about the pride of all the Davenant Carters, and if her father knew that his only daughter was assisting in a sweet-shop. Cissy held up her rounded chin with a pout that made me at least almost forget our noble family motto: ‘WE DO NOT KISS AT STATIONS!’

‘I did not say that I was in the *shop*,’ said Cissy. ‘I am learning how to make pastry rise till it is flake-light. And even you, Miss Priscilla Picton Smith, could not do that without getting flour on your shoulder!’

Now I would quite well like to stop here, and, indeed, I could easily do so. For a Diary, however dear, is not like any other book. When you finish one year's doings, you just get another ruled book and start with January First again. Only it is explained to me that I must not quite do that. At any rate I must absolutely tell what became of my characters! Now this is awfully funny. For, quite different from all the other story-books I ever read—nothing at all happened to any of them. Cissy is not married. No more is Elizabeth Fortinbras. No more, thank goodness, am I. Hugh John can't be—not for

a long time yet. As for Toady Lion, he upholds the honour of his country (and of the Benbow Dormitory) by not being sick on the stormiest seas—a thing which none of the rest of the family would even attempt.

But there is one thing that I must tell. It is just as well that I wrote down all about Torres Vedras, and the woods, and everything. For—sad it is to tell it—strange children dig and play there now. All our old beloved names for places and things and people would soon have been lost if they had not been written down in this book. We have set up a new home on the other side of the Edam Valley, and in some ways it is nicer. But in others it can never have the charm of the 'Wampage,' the 'Scrubbery,' the Low Park where the three bridges are, the Feudal Tower, and Picnicville, up among the Sentinel Pines! They make one's heart warm—only just the names of them said low in the heart, but now never spoken out loud by the tongue!

Our new house is on a hill, and not in the howe of a valley. From the front door (and almost from every window) we can see woods and fields, and far-away cows that are no bigger than ants. Then on the hills beyond are sheep that you cannot see at all without one of father's big glasses, such as only the boys can use. Beyond those, again, there are the mountains that run right away down into England in wave after purple wave, each bending over a tiny bit as if it were real water just on the point of breaking. Eastward and southward there are 'Pens' and 'Muirs' and 'Cairns' without number, and out of the window on clear mornings, as I lie in bed, I can watch the tasselled larch and white-stemmed birch sending scaling-parties up every

ravine and watercourse, while the big white clouds, hump-backed ones, sail majestically over all.

30. SOME DISCLAIMERS

Letter No.1 From Hugh John Picton Smith

Dear Mr. Publisher—You won't remember me, though once I came to your office with father to see you. You may recall the circumstance, because it was the first day your son went to college. I was quite a little chap then, and did not know what it was to be the son of an author with the habit of making people believe that he is writing about his own family, when half the time he is just making up. Or, as like as not, it was his own very self that did the things he blames on us. Anyway, a fellow has to be pretty stiff on his pins and pretty handy with his knuckles to be a good author's son in a big school. I came through right-side-up, however, but sometimes it must come hard on the little chaps.

You see, the fellows want to know all the time if you really said or did some fool thing or other that father has stuffed into the books, and of which you are as innocent as Abel was of the murder of Cain. (He was. It's all right—only sounds rum!)

But of course a fellow does not go back on his father at school. He can't afford to let anything like that pass. So of course there's a row—sometimes bigger, sometimes shorter, according to the length of time it takes the other fellow to decide about crying, ‘Hold, enough!’ as they do in plays. Or, as we call it at school, ‘backing down.’

Well, I put my time through at school, and by and by the fellows got to know—that is, after several little difficulties had been adjusted. Not that I like having to fight. It is right to be patient just as long as ever you can. And then, when you can't—why,

the best way and the quickest is to let her rip. Finish it good, once and for all. As father says, 'Keep the peace, my boy! But if the other fellow won't, why, make him! First have your quarrel just, and then remember to open with your left!'

Yes, of course, at school I back up what father has written, every word. It is what I am there for, and I mean to do it. That's playing the game. But what I did not bargain for was the whole family chipping in, and making a kind of lop-sided, ice-cream-freezer hero of a chap. Sis had no business with what is *my* business—about Cissy Carter, I mean. At any rate she knows nothing about it really. Girls imagine all sorts of nonsense, of course. You can't stop them imagining, and if you think you can, why, you're a fool. That's all in the day's work, and I am not whining. But with regard to anything or person not 'girlie-girl,' I, Hugh John Picton Smith, give due notice that the first chap who turns up to me anything that Sis has imagined about Miss Cissy Carter, and especially about Miss Elizabeth Fortinbras, is going to get a calm and peaceful surprise—that may or may not confine him to his room for a day or two, but which, in any case, will afford him matter for reflection.

Oh, I don't in the least want to queer Sis, or to say that she has put down anything not quite true, as far as *she* understands it. It isn't that I did not *do* these things. But Sis being a girl, and the safety-valves of her imagination-boiler shut tight, and 'Full Steam Ahead' ordered—why, I would rather have father on the job any day. He at least only puts things down (or invents them). He does not try to explain what's going on in a chap's inside. Besides, I don't see that it is anybody's business—

and after this, on the whole, it had better not be. That 'glacial reserve' (wasn't it?) which Sis yarned about might break up, and somebody who wasn't insured get hurt with the pieces. Please put this at the end, Mr. Publisher, to prevent mistakes. And if ever I write a book you shall publish it, and then at last the world will know the right and the wrong of things. Excuse bad writing. Our chaps played Smasherhampton on Saturday. It was pretty thick in the second half. The Smashers got me down and rolled me about a bit on the hardish ground. My arm is still in a sling, but it will be all right for Saturday fortnight, when we play a return on our own ground. *I* am going to play a return match too, for I know the fellow that did it.

(Signed) Hugh John Picton Smith.

Letter No. 2. From Cadet George Percival Picton Smith, R. N., Royal Naval Coll., Dartbourne.

Dear Mr. Publisher—You can print any ... (the word 'blooming' is scored out here, as being too nautical for present publication. –Ed.) thing you like about me—true or not, it does not matter. Only in the latter case it will come a little dearer. I am called Toady Lion, and I have stood this sort of thing ever since I can remember. Though I must say father has been awfully decent about it, and I got a Rudge-Whitworth 'free-wheel' out of him two years running on the strength of what you sent him. But there's no hope of coming that with Sis, who is always 'stony,' anyway, and won't believe what an awfully expensive place the Coll. is. My 'bike' is going to be awfully dangerous this year—that is, if I don't get a new one somehow. It is only my second best, and much too

small for me. I might get killed, very likely, and then you couldn't publish any more books about me! *I suppose you don't feel as if you could* ... No? That means 'Yes,' but don't let on to father. For, you see, last summer, when I had measles or something, I sold my best machine to a poor boy who hadn't any. Just think of that—the cruelty of it! But as I have never let my left hand know what my right hand does, I don't want father to do so either. So you won't give me away.

(Signed) G. P. Picton Smith, R. N.

P. S.—I might get a pretty good one for a tenner, but if it *could* possibly run to fifteen, I know where I could pick up an awfully swell 'two-speed-gear' like what some of the masters have at our Coll. But, dear Mr. Publisher, this is only a suggestion.—T. Lion.

P. S. No. 2.—If *you* did see your way to the 2-Speed, I tell you what—you could make up any old thing you liked about me—such as that I killed my grand-aunt Jane, and hid the remains in my Black Sea Chest. I've got one, honour bright. Only no grand-aunt Jane. So the crime could never, never be discovered; and I would never deny it a bit, but back you up like fun. Of course it is understood between gentlemen that this last is on the two-speed-basis, as above.

T. Lion, Now Cadet G. P. Picton Smith, R. N. (Postal Notes Preferred.)

Letter No. 3. From Maid Margaret.

Dear Sir—(I would put ‘Publisher,’ but am not sure whether it is spelt with a B or a P—in the middle, I mean.) The boys want me to join in their protest, but you will excuse me, dear Sir. And the reason is that I sleep in the same room with the authoress. If you have any little girls, they will understand.

Yours Afftly, Maid Margaret.

Letter No. 4 Elizabeth Fortinbras's Letter.

Dear Sir—There has been a good deal said about me in these pages, perhaps more than I should have liked if the Editor had given my real name. Of course Miss Sweetheart is far too loving to set down anything untrue or unkind. Indeed, she has made me out far better than I deserve, and has very kindly altered relationships, so that nobody's feelings will be hurt. For they will not know that it is they who are meant—I mean, not in my own family.

Now, the Editor tells me that all the people who read the book will be anxious to know what became of me—if I married, and whom! I should be very glad indeed to satisfy the curiosity of these good folk. I know what it is myself to glance over to the last page of a book and see ‘if it happened all right.’

But you see that I am still very happy at New Erin Villa, which is no longer a ‘villa,’ but a proper shop, with a house at the back big enough for us all to live happily in. We have a good maid for the inside work, and I have added a special ‘icing’ department,

where people can have their own home-made cakes iced and fired. Besides, I give cookery lessons twice a week in the evenings to all the mill-girls, and Polly Pretend comes over to help me sometimes. Sweetheart, too, and Miss Davenant Carter come when they can, and are a great encouragement.

I don't mean to say, like most girls, that I never will get married. Perhaps I may, but it will be a very long time yet. I am quite content as things are, and, most important of all, I have yet to see the man I would freely marry darken the doors of Erin Villa! All I want to say is that Sweetheart has seen me and my doings through the sunlight of her own loving eyes—just as Hugh John and I have often looked at the long lines of cornstooks in the last rays of a September sun, and thought how much the common hills and holms and cornlands of Edam gained by the warm glow which caressed them. But how much the more I, who sign myself

The Girl Behind the Counter.

No. 5. Certificate.

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The Editor.

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1896 Cleg Kelly
1896 The Grey Man
1896 Sweetheart Travellers
1897 Lads' Love
1897 Lochinvar
1897 Sir Toady Lion
1898 The Red Axe
1898 The Standard Bearer
1899 The Black Douglas
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1899 Ione March
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1900 Stickit Minister's Wooing
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1905 The Cherry Ribband
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1905 Sir Toady Crusoe
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1911 The Lady of a 100 Dresses
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1911 The Smugglers
1912 Anne of the Barricades
1912 Sweethearts at Home
1912 The Moss Troopers
1913 Sandy's Love
1913 A Tatter of Scarlet
1914 Silver Sand

POSTHUMOUS PUBLICATIONS

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'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.'