

The Complete Crockett

The Galloway Raiders

digital edition

Scottish works



SIR TOADY CRUSOE

S.R. CROCKETT

Galloway Raiders Digital Edition

First published by Wells, Gardner, Darton & Co, 1905.

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

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In 2025 the S.R.Crockett online museum was established and the Galloway Raiders Digital Edition works are now all available for free download from <https://srcrockett.omeka.net>
The museum offers a virtual space to contextualise and interpret Crockett’s works.

To find out more about Crockett’s life, literature and legacy you can also visit The Galloway Raiders website www.gallowayraiders.co.uk and The Galloway Raiders YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/@gallowayraiders>

INTRODUCTION

Published in 1905 by Wells, Gardner, Darton & Co, *Sir Toady Crusoe* is the third and last children's book Crockett wrote for them and a sequel to the 1897 bestselling *Sir Toady Lion*. This sequel is an out and out boy's own adventure and the hero is a loosely fictionalised version of Crockett's youngest son George, the Toady Lion of the title. In real life, George Crockett went into the navy, fought in the 2nd World War and attained the rank of Commodore. As a running away to sea story (with passing reference to Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*) it predates Arthur Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons* books by some twenty five years. As such it is, of course, less sophisticated, perhaps owing more to the boy's own version of Penny Dreadful magazines Crockett read as a child than to the emerging market for children's literary fiction – though it bears good comparison to the contemporary E. Nesbit stories about the Bastables.

Most importantly, I believe that Toady Lion is one of children's fictions greatest characters. Somewhat like his close contemporary Peter Pan he appears destined not to grow up. Or at least to hold true to Barrie's claim that 'nothing that *happens after we are twelve matters very much.*' In *Sir Toady Crusoe* while his brother Hugh John appears to have aged eight years since the first story, Toady himself is still always described as a '*small boy*' who has barely outgrown his childish speech impediments – but he is old and wise enough to know how to use them to their best advantage. His age seems somewhat flexible between around eight and twelve. He shares

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some characteristics with Barrie's *Peter Pan*, but he is much more real. As we know, Peter was a creation of more than one boy, but Toady is George through and through. He describes himself:

'I'm Missur Picton Smiff's little boy—who's roo?'
said Toady.

Though he knew very well. But, as Hugh John would have said, he was suffering from an aggravated attack of Toady Lionism, and for the time being, had readopted all his coaxy-woaxy fetchingnesses of pronunciation. As he wore very little clothes, and what he had on were wringing wet, he looked much like a very curly-headed cherub with great big innocent eyes, who had never had a wrong thought nor done a mischievous act in all his life.

Looks are deceitful. Favour is vain.'

To appreciate Toady, you have to see the iron will barely contained by his cherubic babyiness. Crockett's powers of close observation used on his son are most important in the success of the character. He tells us about the young boy's nature: *'It was a family tradition that Toady Lion was always 'better by himself.'* Then all was peaceful and serene.'

And while Toady knows better than most children how to 'charm' adults (especially women) Crockett leaves us in no doubt that his son is a pragmatic, ruthless child: *'Toady Lion was no respecter of persons. He spared neither sex nor age, but hit as hard as he could. Mr. Picton Smith did not discourage the training, knowing how a little science of the knuckles, or even the name of it, sweetens the purgatory of a boy's early school life.'*

Crockett shows that fighting was a natural part of a boy's life and the boyish quarrels that populate the

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story serve to convince us of its realism.

'The whole story now became clear to the trained mind of Mr. Picton Smith, long accustomed to these juvenile court-martials.'

Crockett seems to revel in the father/son relationship, and we should note that he grew up as a child on his own, among adults. Observing his own children grow up, with the inevitable sibling rivalries, clearly provided a wealth of material for his own writing here and elsewhere. We may see a version of Toady Lion in Dzonny Coulson in *The Banner of Blue* (1903).

Even if boy's own adventure is not your bag, I suggest that the character study of the young boy Toady Lion is more than enough to hold your interest, and to some extent it carries the story. Toady captivates in the way that only small boys can, while at the same time being thoroughly quarrelsome. Crockett even describes his behaviour as libertine and positively revels in revealing his character traits: *'This was the true secret why in most things Sir Toady loved to play a lone hand. He had a mind so teeming with ideas and possibilities, humorous and otherwise, that he always considered himself in the best of good company when alone.'*

Of course no one knew better than he, that ninety-nine out of the round hundred of such fancies were nonsense. But still when something likely did come along, he was all fixed and ready for it, and tackled the interpretation with joy.'

This can only come from a man who knows his son well – and who perhaps sees something of himself in the child.

Crockett tells the whole story with his tongue very firmly in his cheek. For example: 'There is an entire

book written about Sir Toady Lion, I believe, but I have never had time to read it right through. Several boys and girls, however—on whose judgment in literary matters I am accustomed to rely a good deal—have informed me that it is not at all a bad sort of book in its way.

This may sound too wildly enthusiastic to be a genuine criticism, but its effects can be immediately corrected by adding Sir Toady's own view of the matter.

'Tisn't at all a nice book. 'Tsays that Hugh John did all the good things an' w'at I did all the bad. 'Tisn't true, nuther...'

'...Well, I happen to know a lot of things about Toady Lion which perhaps the man who wrote the other book did not understand, and just to square matters and make it fair all round, I will tell one or two of them.'

Crockett allows Toady to give us his views on women: *"Tis unlucky to tell one woman more nor you can help about 'nother woman,' he said, 'specially when she asks. Hugh John he says so too!"*

Toady's views are far different from those of his love-sick brother Hugh John, who comes in at the end of the narrative. While Toady has scant regard for girls – especially Big Girls – yet he is self-sacrificing enough to play Pandarus for Hugh John and Cissy Carter.

'Horrid nuisances—girls—I mean Big Girls,' he confided to Saucy Easdaile; 'they make a fellow all different somehow. Now there's Hugh John. He used to be jolly no end. He'd come after rats with the tarriers, climb trees, go poachin' all about on our own hook, have both old Dickson and Colonel Carter's Tom chivvying us like mad, and never turn a hair! Then all

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of a sudden he grows up—all in one year at college—just because that twisty-haired Ciss Carter went to her aunt's in town, and they asked him to dances and things. And when he comed back, he wouldn't do none of these things, and wore a high collar, an' gloves, even when he hadn't to.

Toady is somewhat more pragmatic than Hugh John in his approach to the opposite sex as he tells the minister: 'An' we want to know about Saucy—she's his sister, you see, but she's engaged to me.'

Sir Toady was nothing if not plain.

The minister looked up sharply.

'Hullo,' he said, 'you begin early, young man. What do you mean by 'engaged to you'?'

'Oh, nothing at all,' said Sir Toady frankly. 'It's something you tell to girls just to please them. They like it. It don't mean nothing really. Girls want to kiss you, you know. They're made that way, I suppose.'

Sir Toady's tone was world-weary. Vanity of vanities—all was vanity—more especially girls... 'But Saucy's not like that, you mustn't think so,' he explained; 'she is Dinky's sister and a very decent sort. She can smack as hard as a boy. That's the mark of her fingers now.'

Toady Lion's greatest skill perhaps lies in the making of an adventure out of nothing and the story opens with his behaviour getting seriously out of control. Mr Picton-Smith is away a lot and the servants are having difficulty keeping him in line. The incident of 'poaching' is used as the excuse for sending him from Edam (Penicuik) to his uncle and aunt's at the fictional Creetown/Langton (probably Auchencairn) for a prolonged stay. But Toady is not happy with this arrangement.

The main part of the story is certainly set along

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the Solway Coast, a place Crockett fictionalised for his own purposes in several of his adult novels, and a place he knew well. His own uncle owned a house called Castle Daffin in Auchencairn situated right next to the manse. I like to think that Castle Daffin is the setting for the Easdaile's, with the minister being at the next door manse (occupied in reality by Rev William Thomson.) This description fits in nicely: *'The boys slid through the back door of the barn into the little orchard, and then over a wall into a pitchy-dark lane. Groping their way down this, they wound their bodies through a gap in the manse hedge, and so with infinite precautions to the window of the minister's study. They could as easily—nay, far more quickly—have followed the avenue, and entered by Mr. Jeffray's front-door; but there is a schoolboy way of doing things which does not change with the centuries.'*

The running away to sea story takes us along the Solway Coast to the 'Croach' lighthouse. This is most likely the area around the Meikle and Little Ross Islands. The lighthouse men Dick Finnan and Billy Bryan are great characters, and also feature in Crockett's 1908 novel *Vida*. We also get an insight into why Toady wants to be a sailor rather than a soldier: *'to be frank, he did not at all like blood, and always turned away when he passed butchers' shops. (This was the reason he was going into the navy, where the business, if any, is wholesale.)'*

The rest of Crockett's family barely feature in this novel – it truly belongs to George. Neither Margaret, born July 1896, nor Ruth, their mother, who is 'dead' for the purposes of the story, gets a mention. Hugh John is brought in towards the end, at which point Prissy makes a 'guest' appearance, but the one

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and only star of this show is George 'Sir Toady Lion'. His accomplices are his Australian cousins, Dinky who is a year older than Toady and Saucy who is a year younger – and already in love with Toady. She's not alone though, every woman (and most men) find him impossible to resist for long.

Crockett is a fine writer of the emotions of children, but he's also a great observer and characteriser of dogs. In *Sir Toady Crusoe* we are treated to a description of the Picton-Smith family dog Ross: *'In his study near by Mr. Picton Smith sat knitting his brows over a piece of knotty county business, which needed all his attention. He lifted his pencil and laid it down again half-a-dozen times without writing anything with it. At intervals his great deerhound, Ross, got up and walked to the door, which he tried to open with his nose. Each time he found it shut. He was too well-bred to whine, though he wanted with all his big doggish heart, to get out into the open air. For he could hear the sound of the children's voices in the garden, and—well, he felt just like you or me when shut up in a close study on a hot day. All the same, being a gentleman—or, if you will be particular, gentledog—he only walked back to the mat and stretched himself out upon it with a sigh that stirred the torn letters in the waste-paper basket, and floated the buff envelope of a telegram right under the table.'*

Crockett also introduces us to the bigger and less 'gentle-dogly' Boompluff (possibly based on J.M.Barrie's dog – which it is believed had a dislike of men with beards. Suffice it to say that Crockett wore a beard!)

There is also an amount of self-referential awareness on the part of Toady Lion in the story.

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With arch self-awareness of his earlier adventures Toady Lion says: *'And they wroted a book all about it, and called it after me—the beasts!'* said Toady, kicking at a grass border which had done him no harm.

'I know,' said Saucy, *who, it seemed, knew more than she pretended, 'I've seen it. It has nice pictures in it.'*

Toady is not impressed and goes so far as to threaten the illustrator *'if I could find the fellow that drew my picture all bulgy round about the waist, I'd slaughter him.'* That's what Hugh John said. But I won't slaughter him. I've thought of something better.'

'What?' said Saucy breathlessly.

Sir Toady set his finger to his nose, and patted the side of it gently. *'Slow torture—but it's a secret,'* he whispered. *'One day they shan't laugh any more. They shall t-r-r-r-emble at the name of Sir Toady Lion. And the man that drew me like that—'*

'Name of Browne,' said Saucy, *who had good memory.'*

Toady has scant regard for books and writing in general: *'Sir Toady regarded the act of composing a book without any awe, but to Dinky it represented a superior kind of magic to that practised by the black-fellows of his country. Sir Toady, who had often assisted Prissy with her poems when the Windy Standard Magazine was late in coming out, wished that he knew the difficulty. Perhaps he could help.'*

Later Crockett notes: *'Sir Toady had indeed hidden his allies. He got the idea out of a certain book which describes the life of an Arab of the City.'* (This is of course a sly reference to Crockett's own 1896 book *Cleg Kelly!*)

Toady is nothing if not imaginative and living as

he does in a world of his own imagination, the truth is a flexible thing.

'How can you tell such—such whackers?' said Saucy Easdaile.

'Don't know,' said Sir Toady penitently; *'I get going, somehow, and they jump up in my head, and then—they are just like true!'*

But at the same time, the children are shown as keenly aware of what showing off is – called 'doing biggity,' it is generally frowned upon. Chapter 7 shows Toady's attitude to this.

Of the adventure story itself, I'm aware I've said precious little. I'll leave you to enjoy that for yourself. Like all Crockett's work, *Sir Toady Crusoe*'s filled with interesting little snippets of domestic detail, from Saucy's dream of pea and ham soup: *'Saucy woke with a pleasant sense that she was in the pantry at home, sleeping in a bag of pease-meal. The cook was making pea-soup, with cheese in it, and macaroni, flavoured somehow with shoe-strings and lamp-oil!'* to Toady and Dinky's thoughts on heliographs, which they describe as a 'modern and classy' means of communication: *'We might heliograph,'* said Toady musingly; *'that would be an awfully swell way. But then I don't know the code, and Saucy would only think it was somebody playing with a mirror anyway!'*

A heliograph is a wireless solar telegraph that signals by flashes of sunlight (generally using Morse code) reflected by a mirror. The flashes are produced by momentarily pivoting the mirror, or by interrupting the beam with a shutter. It is mentioned in Kipling's 1886 poem 'Code of morals' and H.G.Wells *War of Worlds*, 1898, showing that Crockett, if not Toady himself, was widely read.

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Toady's explanation of the letters M.A. is amusing. He uses it in a letter: *'To Sauce Ease—Friends near—watch—wait—you will be delivered.—Signed Sir Dinkins and Richd. Coeur de Lion, MA.'*

'Why M.A.?' inquired Dinky, 'and why not write the names properly?'

The author made an impatient sign, like a dramatist who is asked to change his lines at rehearsal to please the leading lady.

"M.A." means "Mighty Army," he said curtly. Really he had seen it printed on bills and church announcements after the name of his friend the Reverend John Jeffray, M.A., B.Sc., and he had thought it looked fine.'

Crockett as narrator points out in his typical self-deprecating humour that he is aware his story is not to be taken too seriously, or indeed moralistically. *'Mr. Burnham tells me to beware of being irreverent. And I am trying. I mean it most reverently. You cannot untwist a crooked tree and make it grow straight all in a moment.'* Like father, like son!

The final part of the story sees Toady on a quite different adventure – that of helping his older brother Hugh John and Cissy Carter become the modern day Romeo and Juliet. Hugh John is injured in a cycling accident and Toady rushes to the rescue. In the process he manages to get the adults to recall their own youth (no mean feat) and look favourably on young love. But there are secrets held back even, Crockett suggests, from himself: *'Now what passed between Sir Toady and his brother when Janet Sheepshanks was put outside the door—and the key-hole plugged—is known only to Toady Lion. He has not told even me—and he tells me most things, or else how could I write this book? As for*

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Hugh John, his mind is a wiped slate on the matter.'

Toady refuses to be daunted by limitations. He says: *'You can't just always, all the time, make things happen as you want them to. But you can give them heaps of shoves the right way, if you watch out.'*

I make no apology for quoting extensively from the text in this introduction, because I think it's about the best way for the reader to appreciate both the skill and the humour to follow. I hope you will enjoy reading *Sir Toady Crusoe* for all that it contains. It seems only right to give Toady the philosopher the last word: *'My father always does what I say,' concluded Toady Lion, with a confidence scarcely warranted by the facts.*

Cally Phillips

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CHAPTER ONE

A DEN OF THIEVES

‘A perfect den of thieves,’ said Dickson the keeper, with all the emphasis which could be given to his words by digging his mole-catching ‘spud’ fiercely into the earth. ‘And what’s mair, Maister Smith, I will *not* be responsible for the pheasant covers if that boy is to be left about Windy Standard, when ye are away in furren pairts!’

‘Why, what has Sir Toady done to get you by the short hairs, Dickson?’ demanded his master, smiling at the keeper’s impetuosity, so alien to his usual staid Scottish habit of speech. Mr. Smith of Windy Standard knew well his younger son’s general popularity, and was surprised at Dickson’s tone.

‘Dune?’ cried Dickson, with another dig with his ‘spud’ which nearly uprooted his own great toe; ‘I tell ye, sir, he has harboured the worst poacher in the county—Throckmorton of the Seggy Goats. He kepted him in the auld Castle on the Island, and even brocht the Doctor to him—young Dr. Thynne, a man, sir, when you think that his father was a magistrate and death on poachers, who should have kenned better than to encourage Master George in his ill-doing!’

‘But how could a child of his years carry through such a thing?’ said his father; ‘it sounds impossible on the face of it.’

‘Impossible!’ said the keeper, bending his brows at his master; ‘beggin’ your pardon, sir, if you kenned as muckle about young Master George as I do—aye, and Janet Sheepshanks the same, only he bewitches all the women-folk—ye would never think

that anything was impossible to that young dev—gentleman!’

‘Hum,’ said Toady Lion’s father, rubbing his ‘considering chin,’ as the boys called it, ‘there may be something in that, Dickson. He does enchant the women-folk, I allow. Well, I know one that he may have his will of—if he can, let him bewitch his aunt! Ha, Dickson, tell me about this poacher he looked after in the old Castle. I have not heard of that before.’

‘His name was Throckmorton, sir,’ said Dickson, explaining heavily, ‘an Englishman—, or at least from the Border country. The rascal hurt himself in our covers, and Master George gets him, I don’t know how, into the auld Castle, and he takes him birds and rabbits and hares by scores, sir. We found the bones, and he cooks them for him. He did, indeed, sir, as I can bear witness with my own powers of vision.’

‘But he is hardly more than a child—only a little boy—I can’t make it out.’

‘No more can I, sir,’ said Dickson; but this I do know, that when you are on board of ship, as it were, and adventuring of your precious life among yon far-away savages, it’s my place and pleasure to keep the house and grounds as they ought to be kept. And I can not do the like with Master George about, and him caring no more for Janet Sheepshanks than for a—a (he glanced about him for a comparison) a cow looking over a dyke. I cannot do it, sir, not in justice to myself. Not that I have anything against the young gentleman. Butter would not melt in the mouth of him, when such is his wish. But it is the responsibility, Mr. Smith, and the covers—’

'But why not take a good ash plant and give him a thrashing now and then, Dickson?' said Mr. Smith, knitting his brows in perplexity; 'you have my entire permission.'

'Thank ye, sir—no, sir,' said Dickson; 'I am a man that has tried my best to lead a peaceable Christian life as far as it is in the nature of sinful feckless humanity so to do. And I have never casten oot (quarrelled) with anybody that I could help. But if I as much as lifted a hand to Master George, sir, it's a holy fact that I would have every woman in the parish ragin' on my back. I could not even answer for my own married wife of forty years' standing!'

'He shall go,' said Mr. Smith grimly, as he thrust his hand deep into his pocket, 'to the care of my sister, Mrs. Easdaile—you know her, I think, Dickson?'

'I do that,' said Dickson, with a gleam of quick intelligence. 'And I should think, if I might venture the remark, that the arrangement would be a most desirable one for all parties. The lady has no children of her own, and, as I have been told, is a great Reformer. She will have a job to her mind in reforming Master George, if I may make so bold as to say so!'

'Umm,' said Mr. Picton Smith; 'well, we shall see. In the meantime, say not a word about this, Dickson.'

'No, sir, certainly not; thank you, sir. You have took a load off my mind, sir, this day.'

And the old gamekeeper of Windy Standard stumped away, his gun over his shoulder, well pleased with his morning's work. He had secured the banishment of that hero of battles, Sir Toady Lion, and his introduction into the new environment

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of the house of Easdaile Langton. He had also provided the veteran Reformer, Master George's Aunt Rachel, with something to reform—a foeman worthy of her steel.

But though neither Mr. Picton Smith nor Dickson knew how Sir Toady Lion could suddenly become a bold bad poacher, we happen to know the whole story on the highest possible authority.

[This was it—but it must be remembered that Toady the Poacher came almost in the middle between the former Sir Toady Lion and the new Sir Toady who discovered a Crusoe's Island, all his own, to disport himself upon.]

CHAPTER TWO

HOW SIR TOADY TURNED POACHER

There is an entire book written about Sir Toady Lion, I believe, but I have never had time to read it right through. Several boys and girls, however—on whose judgment in literary matters I am accustomed to rely a good deal—have informed me that it is not at all a bad sort of book in its way.

This may sound too wildly enthusiastic to be a genuine criticism, but its effects can be immediately corrected by adding Sir Toady's own view of the matter.

"Tisn't at all a nice book. 'Tsays that Hugh John did all the good things an' w'at I did all the bad. 'Tisn't true, nuther.'

Well, I happen to know a lot of things about Toady Lion which perhaps the man who wrote the other book did not understand, and just to square matters and make it fair all round, I will tell one or two of them.

This that I am going to begin with happened when Hugh John, his elder brother, was back from school on his first vacation, and long before Toady Lion went to school himself. His brother was busy playing cricket with Sammy Carter and his sister Cissy, so Sir Toady was left a good deal to the freedom of his own will, together with the society of his rabbits, mice, and guinea-pigs, and to the tender mercies of his old nurse, Janet Sheepshanks. Janet objected to the knightly appellation by which her favourite was now universally known. 'It's a shame to ca' the laddie by sic a name. I will never take a daftlike

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word like that in my mouth--Sir Toady Lion, forsooth! The boy's name is George Picton Smith, for I had him in my arms a minute after he gat it frae the minister; and it was me that dried the water aff his brow, an' him yellin' like a railway engine when the man in the signal-box winna let her into Edam Junction.'

How Sir Toady Lion got his famous name is easily told. It happened long ago. It has, indeed, been referred to already, but never authentically described. His favourite hero in fiction—I mean history of course—was Richard Coeur de Lion, and his famous dictum as to the treatment of his brother John contains his own pronunciation of the name of the lion-hearted monarch.

Prissy, the historian of the family, had been dilating on the nobility of character displayed by Richard the First of England.

Hugh John was mending a fishing-rod and criticising. He was excellent at both.

'Richard was the goodest king of all the Plantagenets,' Prissy said sententiously.

Hugh John felt that this must not be allowed to pass.

'How can you tell whether he was good or not—he was so little at home?' he sneered; 'anyway, 'tisn't goodest.'

'Well, 'best' then, since we are so particular,' Prissy answered with some spirit; 'but anyway you can't deny that he was good; for when his brother John got up a conspiracy against him, he forgave him right away and made him a Duke, or an Admiral of the Blue, or a policeman, or something nice like that!'

At this point Master George, who had been

listening with all his might, put in his verdict.

'If I had been Wichard Toady Lion, and Hugh Dzon had rebelled against me, *I* wouldn't have fordived him. I'd have tutted off Hugh Dzon's head!'

Which, when you think of it, would have prevented Magna Charta and reduced the speeches in the House of Commons to half their length. Because, you know, whenever a member of Parliament cannot think of anything else to say, he always hauls in poor Magna Charta by the collar of its coat. I've known a great many, and they all do it. But, as I say, this happened long ago.

It was a family tradition that Toady Lion was always 'better by himself.' Then all was peaceful and serene. He played about on the sand-heap. He made magnificent castles, or fell to and battered them down again with promptitude and despatch, equally to his own satisfaction. But when Hugh John was at home this delightful state of things was apt to be disturbed by civil strife, sometimes even by strife which no one could call civil.

One day, just before Mr. Picton Smith went to London and Hugh John back to school, it happened that the brothers were playing about in the High Garden, a delightful place from which you can look down on the tops of trees in the valley, and in another direction away to the blue hills of Cheviot, where, if you could only see them, the white sheep are feeding by the thousand.

In his study near by Mr. Picton Smith sat knitting his brows over a piece of knotty county business, which needed all his attention. He lifted his pencil and laid it down again half-a-dozen times without writing anything with it. At intervals his great deerhound, Ross, got up and walked to the door,

which he tried to open with his nose. Each time he found it shut. He was too well-bred to whine, though he wanted with all his big doggish heart, to get out into the open air. For he could hear the sound of the children's voices in the garden, and—well, he felt just like you or me when shut up in a close study on a hot day. All the same, being a gentleman—or, if you will be particular, gentledog—he only walked back to the mat and stretched himself out upon it with a sigh that stirred the torn letters in the waste-paper basket, and floated the buff envelope of a telegram right under the table.

Then through the heavy air there came a sudden and appalling yell, which brought Ross again to his feet with a short sharp bark of inquiry. '*Oo-ah! Oo-ahhhh!*' It was the voice of Toady Lion uplifted in the proclamation of woe—'Hugh Dzon hitted me—I'll tell Janet! *Oo-ahhh!*'

Generally, Mr. Picton Smith did not interfere in the children's petty squabbles. He had indeed once disposed of an officious cook who, having a grudge against the gardener, came running to tell him a horrible tale of how 'Master Hugh and Miss Priscilla were a-fighting like anythink behind the stables, and Watson was a-encouraging of them!' To which Mr. Smith replied briefly, 'That's good—let them fight it out. It will do Hugh John no harm, and Prissy much good. I am very glad she has the spirit. And do you, cook, kindly attend to your own work after this, please!'

But on this occasion the outcry was so extra-alarmsing that Mr. Picton Smith put on his Panama summer hat and went hastily out. Toady Lion stood on a little rockery which the gardener had recently constructed by the side of the sand-heap. His mouth

was like the largest kind of capital O, and from it proceeded these appalling sounds, which rose and fell on the still air, like the bellowing of the siren of a first-class liner in a dense fog—

‘*Oo-ah—Oo-ah!*’ it wailed, till, through his tightly screwed-up eyes, and the knuckles he had inserted into their sockets as far as he could put them, Sir Toady became conscious that he had succeeded in his purpose. He had brought his father on the scene, and there was no use in fog-signalling any more.

‘What’s the matter, sir?’ said his father sternly; ‘why are you disturbing the whole neighbourhood by making a noise like that?’

Too late Sir Toady saw his error. He ought to have gone and told Janet Sheepshanks, who would have said, in apostrophe of Hugh John: ‘Did he then! Hit his brother, did he? The bad boy! Wait till I get him—and here’s a sugar piece for you, my poor wee man!’

But instead of giving sympathy and a sugar piece, his father only said: ‘What’s the matter, sir?’

‘It was Hugh Dzon w’at hitted me. He did—hitted me on the head—Oo’

‘Hold your tongue now—don’t begin again! Tell me how it all happened. Did you hit your little brother, Hugh John?’

‘Yes, I did,’ said the straightforward Hugh John, who never offered any excuses for his ill deeds.

‘Then you will come to my study, sir,’ said his father. ‘I have something to say to you.’

‘Yes, sir,’ said Hugh John stoutly, though paling a little.

‘But please, father,’ cried Prissy, anxious for justice not to take an over-hasty course, ‘it really

wasn't Hugh John's fault. You see, Toady Lion--

'Shut up, Priss. Don't tell tales!' hissed Hugh John between his clenched teeth. He was a soldier, and knew when to hold his tongue.

'But I will tell,' said Prissy, disregarding him; 'father, it wasn't a bit his fault.'

'Your brother is right, Prissy,' said her father kindly. 'I will find this out for myself. Come here, Toady Lion!'

Sir Toady, who had momentarily abstracted one red knuckle out of a redder eye to see what effect he was producing, at once reinserted it and began to whimper afresh. He moved towards where his father had set himself down on a garden seat. He did not go very fast nor with any confidence, but rather progressed with the sidelong hesitancy of a crab walking over grass.

'Come quicker, Toady Lion!' commanded his father, and the boy mended his pace, for he thought, 'He doesn't mean to whip me anyway—or he'd just have said 'George!'

Thus encouraged, Toady Lion presently found himself at his father's knee.

'Now, Toady, tell me exactly how it was. Where did Hugh John hit you, and why?'

Now Toady Lion never could answer more than one question at a time. (Who can, indeed, when it comes to that?) So he confined himself to the first, as being also the safest.

'He hit me over the head—hit me hard. It hurts now!'

And Toady began to sob again at the memory of the injustice done to him.

'What were you doing when Hugh John hit you?' was the next question, and somehow it sounded

stern.

'Wasn't doing nothing—nothing at all. No, indeed —'deed. Was jus' playin' wif my gun, and Hugh Dzon, he comes runnin' and hitted me on the head—*Ah-Ahoo!*'

'That'll do, sir; no more noise. Now look here, did you not touch your brother at all with your gun?'

'Never did nuffin' 'tall,' began Sir Toady's loud protestation.

'Now think before you answer, George!' said his father very gravely.

Something in Mr. Smith's eyes made Toady Lion (as he confided to Prissy afterwards) feel 'all sort o' funny and shaky in his tumnick.'

He remembered suddenly that he must not tell lies, and that honesty was the best policy.

'Well, father,' he said very slowly, as if he had just had a new light upon the subject in hand, 'p'waps—I—did—prog Hugh Dzon wif my bayonet juss a little behind. *But I don't fink so!*'

The whole story now became clear to the trained mind of Mr. Picton Smith, long accustomed to these juvenile court-martials.

The boys had been playing apart, Hugh John busy with some fortifications, constructed strictly according to the big Vauban book out of which his father allowed him to trace his favourite plans. Seeing him thus occupied, the imp of mischief had entered into Sir Toady, causing him to think what fun it would be to 'juss prog Hugh Dzon wif my bayonet.' So it was at first, for Hugh John had no time to spare, but only said, 'Stop that—you!' and moved about to another place without taking any further notice. But when his assailant proceeded to knock down flanking towers he got tired and said, 'If

you do that again, Toady Lion, I'll knock the head off you—now mind!

But Toady did not mind. He tried his bayonet 'juss this one time more' in the small of his brother's back as he was bending down repairing the damaged towers. Whereat Hugh John instantly (and most excusably) cuffed him.

'George's pocket-money is stopped for a week to teach him to tell the whole truth,' said his father, rising from the seat and going into the house with the air of finality which made the children think him the greatest man that ever was. Prissy watched till the door was shut, and then went and threw her arms round her younger brother's neck.

But that youth had now a strong chance to put the others in the wrong, and you may be sure that he availed himself of it to the full.

He threw off Prissy roughly, saying, 'I don't want 'oo. I don't love 'oo. You were going to tell of me. Go away, nasty Priss! I hate 'oo!'

Whereat Prissy promptly cried big tears, for she could not bear that any one should be angry with her, or, for the matter of that, angry with anyone else.

But for the present Toady was at enmity with the whole human race. Hugh John also would promptly have made it up, if he had been met half-way.

'All right, old chap,' he said; 'it's all right now. I didn't mean to hurt you, though you did give me a beast of a prod! And I say, we'll all 'go bunce' with the pocket-money this week.' ('Bunce,' or 'go bunce' means in Hugh John's country to divide equally, to go shares. It contains the essence of Communism and Christianity. Other forms are, 'to go shags,' 'to divvy up')

Galloway Raiders Digital Edition

'Don't want your ole pocket-money. Go to Dzericho wif your ole money!' replied the Enemy of his Race.

'Go to Jericho yourself and see how you like it,' returned Hugh John, feeling much hurt, as one always does when overtures, kindly and even generously meant, are contemptuously rejected.

And at this Sir Toady resolved never to speak to any of his kin again as long as he lived. He would withdraw to the mountains and live a wild and adventurous life among bisons and wild Indians. And then in after years, when they had given him up for dead, he would descend with a cavalcade of savages—he, the brave young chief of the tribe, riding first of all, in his best Sunday paint and feathers. Then, when they were all dead and scalped, they would be sorry, and wish that they had behaved better to the Terror of the Border when he sojourned among them as a little, common, grubby boy.

* * *

There is a nice map, all drawn out with bright colours, in the book about Sir Toady Lion. I saw it one day at a bookstall, and might have been able to tell you more about it, only that the man came and took the volume away from me, after somewhat rudely remarking that only buyers were allowed to read books at his stall—which, when you think of it, was very stupid. For, of course, if you were going to *buy* the book, you would never read it at the bookstall. Some people know so little about their own business.

Now, if you look at that map you will see where

SIR TOADY CRUSOE

Toady Lion journeyed to when he renounced the society of his fellows. He went directly to the Castle Island by way of the stepping-stones. This was an island, not in the sea as you might suppose, but in the middle of the Edam river. However, it was so big, and the river so small, that it was more as if the water had had a quarrel with itself, and the Right Side had said to the Left, 'I won't play with you any more I'll go and be a river all by myself! But after trying to do this for a mile or so, Right Side had evidently been sorry, and turned back to make it up.

At one end of the Island stood a castle, old and dilapidated, but with walls still strong and high. It had splendid dungeons, and iron bars, and torture-chambers, and all sorts of lovely places, where, if you had twenty necks, you could easily break them all in ten minutes and never turn a hair.

But Sir Toady did not go to the Castle, he took his way to the northern end of the Island, which was covered with the most delightful kind of undergrowth. There were willows and birches, with lots of heather, and broom as high as your head. The rabbits scuttered here and there and all about among your feet. If you sat very still, as likely as not an otter would come out from under the bank and swim about in curves like the letter S. Then he would dive down and come up presently with a fish in his mouth, and smile at you before swallowing it tail foremost, as much as to say, 'Wouldn't you like a bit, old fellow—and *don't* you wish you may get it?'

It was to this wilder end of the Castle Isle, therefore, that Sir Toady directed his steps (that is the correct phrase to use). In ordinary language, he went there.

He had reached the beginning of the coppice, and

was stooping to get underneath the low-growing branches of the willows, when he suddenly came upon a boy, a little older than himself. He was a ragged boy, and his face was very white. He had a 'girn' in his hands—that is, a rabbit snare made of brass wire—and in the 'girn' was a kicking hare.

Toady Lion had been educated in the belief (and a very good belief it is for those concerned) that all that runs and flies is the property of the lord of the land which happens to be immediately below feet or wings. So he stopped still as death, and watched the boy.

'Poachers!' he said to himself in quick horror.

The hare cried out like a child; but the boy remorselessly twisted its neck till the crying ceased abruptly. Then he stuffed the still twitching animal beneath his ragged jacket, from a hole in which one furry ear wagged in a comic and unattached manner.

'What's 'oo doin' wif that?' cried Toady Lion, feeling that the time had come for him to take a hand; 'that's my father's hare!'

'Go t' blazes!' said the lad with the hare, turning about quickly and seeing only a boy smaller than himself.

'Go to blazes 'ooself!' cried Toady Lion, very indignantly; then, remembering Hugh John's retort, he added, 'and see how 'oo likes it!'

'But div me the hare first,' he added, with instinctive obstinacy as to the rights of property.

'Tisn't your hare!' said the boy, preparing to go off.

'I'll show 'oo whose hare it is, 'fore I finish wif 'oo!' said Toady Lion valorously. 'Put it down, I say!'

'Shan't,' said the boy. 'Come and take it if you

dare!’

‘Put up!’ said Sir Toady, using the phrase he had learned from Sergeant Steel of the Welsh Fusiliers, who, at the request of his father, had instructed Hugh John and Sir Toady in the art and science of self-defence. Ladies who were admitted to these exhibitions always went into hysterics of delight at the dainty boxing-gloves with which the boys’ small hands were fitted. That is, their admiration continued until Toady, void of all chivalry, said to them, ‘Oo come on; I can hit 'oo out of time!’

A short experience of this usually moderated their raptures, for Toady Lion was no respecter of persons. He spared neither sex nor age, but hit as hard as he could. Mr. Picton Smith did not discourage the training, knowing how a little science of the knuckles, or even the name of it, sweetens the purgatory of a boy’s early school life.

So to the ragged boy with the poached hare Toady Lion cried out in the words of his instructor—

‘Oo put up! Does 'oo hear? Put up!’

‘Lemme 'lone,’ said the boy, who evidently did not want to fight. ‘I ain't interfering wi' you.’

‘Div me the hare then. 'Tisn't your hare. 'Tis my father's hare.’

‘Shan't—you're only a kid anyway—why, you can't speak properly yet!’

This last taunt infuriated Sir Toady Lion, who could not bear any reference to the difficulties he continued to have with the English language.

‘Put up!’ he cried fiercely. ‘Put up 'oo hands, or I'll smass 'oo!’

The boy seeing a small blue vision rushing upon him headlong with hands clenched, at last dropped the hare, and, as he would have expressed it,

'squared up.'

But Sir Toady, though smaller by half a head, had not been pounded by Sergeant Steel for nothing.

The ragged boy was astonished to find his first wild strong blow stopped somehow by the intervention of an unexpected arm. He had fought before many times, but only according to the traditions of the rustic school, which never defends, but simply rains blows and receives them till the weaker and less enduring throws up the sponge. After trying a blow or two unsuccessfully, the 'hare-boy' stopped to think. But in that same moment he had received Toady Lion's right in his eye, and Toady Lion's left on the point of his chin. Then, like a small windmill, the scientific pupil of Sergeant Steel administered punishment. It was a pity that he happened to run across the ragged boy—that is, a pity for the boy. He was avenging himself upon the world for the stopped pocket-money and several other things. The fight was not a long one. The ragged boy came to himself sitting upon a tuft of course bent grass, with Sir Toady, small, disorganised as to clothing, but infinitely determined, standing before him holding the dead hare by the ear.

The ragged boy looked a moment into his face and then, wonder of wonders, burst into tears--real tears, not the kind which Toady Lion kept in stock as a valuable asset in case of need. Great globes rolled down his pale freckled cheeks and overran his quivering lips. Sobs shook his loosely built, ill-nourished frame. Toady Lion was astonished. He stood a moment irresolute, and then said uncertainly, going a little nearer to him, 'Don't cry; I didn't mean to hurt you very much!'

SIR TOADY CRUSOE

'It's not that; I don't mind being hit,' said the boy; 'but it was for my father's supper. He'll not get a bite if I don't take him the hare.'

Sir Toady became a little more doubtful as to right and wrong, than he had been in defending the hereditary rights of property.

'What's ze matter wif 'oo father?' he asked, swinging the hare.

'Will you tell the beak if I tell you?—or your father?—I suppose he's the head beak about here?'

Toady Lion turned up his nose till he looked like a small beak himself. 'Shan't, nother,' he said shortly; 'I don't tell w'at I don't want to tell.'

The ragged boy dried his tears and looked over towards the point of the Isle, where the thickets were densest and the broom longest.

'You promise never to tell, and say 'Death and Double Death,' he went on with instinctive trust in a good fighter, 'and I'll take you to see my father. He got hurt a week ago last Sunday. He was after the hares, and his gun went off, when he was crawling through a hedge. And if it hadn't been for me, he'd ha' clemmed! Aye, an' he's come mighty near clemmin' as 'tis!'

The heart of Sir Toady Lion was touched. He knew what it was to be hungry. He went and held out the dead hare.

'Here!' he said impulsively; 'I'm sorry I hitted 'oo. Shan't do it no more—not if you take all ze hares as is, to give to your father,

'No—nor I shan't tell Hugh John,' he added; 'he's all the time doin' fings, and gettin' writed about till he finks he's ever so great. Now, I shall do fings mineself too! No, nor Priss shan't have it to pray about, nother. Go on, little boy. I'll help 'oo father

mineself.'

CHAPTER THREE

THE GARDEN PARTY

Toady Lion felt that his chance had come at last, and he was going to see the thing through, without help either from the heavens above or the earth beneath.

The ragged boy took his way into the thicker covert by the method so peculiar to boys, ducking under the arches of the broom, and putting aside the rough green pliant shoots which grew taller than Sir Toady's head and closed over them both as they penetrated deeper, till their whereabouts was only revealed by a slight waving of the broom thickets as they passed.

He went fast, trailing the hare on the ground behind him. Sir Toady followed his guide, now on his knees to the destruction of his knickerbockers, now on all-fours, clambering over the trunk of a fallen willow that served for a precarious bridge over the deep and broad ditch which drained the lowlands of the Isle.

At last the ragged boy made the sign of silence, and parting a bush of willow, whose long leaves made a rustling noise as they turned their grey undersides uppermost in the light wind, he looked silently through at something lying beyond the range of Sir Toady's vision.

'All right, he's awake!' he said with an anxious thrill in his voice.

The boy instinctively reached back a hand to Toady Lion and stepped through, as carefully as

though he had been introducing that hero into a new world.

He found himself in a hidden nook deep in the broom. An old matting had been arranged on three sticks like a gipsy tripod to keep off the rain, but on every side were rents open alike to sun and wind. Through these today the sunshine danced and the waving broom cast shifting shadows upon a man who lay huddled up on a ragged old railway tarpaulin.

He was long and lean and hollow-jawed. His beard straggled thin and yellowish-white down his breast. His scant hair straggled also. His brows were bound about with a blue kerchief, white-spotted and dirty, the knot by which it was held in its place drooping over his eyes and giving him a peculiarly hang-dog expression. At the apparition of Sir Toady Lion he sat up on his elbow and gazed vacantly.

'Father's gun went off when he was crawling through a hedge, and keeled him in the side,' said the boy by way of explanation; 'it don't look much, but it won't heal up.'

'Shut up about the gun,' said the man with a sullen growl; 'it will be better for you, and me too!'

Toady Lion gripped himself, with his nails sunk in his palms. He was afraid of blood, and the thought of a wound made him ready to faint; but he was determined to see this matter through to the end, let the end be as bitter as it would.

'Lemme see it,' he said; 'I am Mr. Picton Smith's little boy, and I won't tell. Death and Double Death!'

The man looked at the ragged boy, who stood holding the hare as he had done when Toady Lion first saw him. The lad nodded, and said pleasantly in answer to the mute appeal, 'He's all right, dad; he

won't split; see that eye and nose? Fetched me a couple of clinkers on them. He did it, I tell you, that little 'un! He ain't the sort that splits. No, by gosh!

The man accepted the imperfect credentials, and began to roll up his shirt. Then Sir Toady saw in his side a wound—ragged, angry, inflamed—and turned pale.

'There's a pot over there where I can make a fire, and I catches rabbits and hares, and makes him soup,' said the lad. 'We ain't o' this part o' the country, you see, and the folk hereabout don't take to us—same as you. And small blame to them, say I. So we has to do the best we can for ourselves.'

Meanwhile Toady Lion had been thinking.

'Look here,' he said (he really pronounced it 'yook,' but we need not put down his pronunciation exactly) – 'look here, I know Docka' Thynne—he's all right—he keeps the jolliest Irish terriers. I'll fetch him down.'

The pallid man lay back with a sigh.

'Ah, young master,' he said, 'tis no use; I'm done—doctors, they can do naught for such as me.'

'Oo never can't tell,' said Sir Toady cheerfully. 'Docka' Thynne's a oner. Hugh Dzon says so. Docka' Thynne, he mended our retriever when he had a hole plunkted right through him — bigger nor that — much, much bigger.'

By this time the ragged boy had the hare skinned and was busily employed preparing it for the pot. The eyes of the sick man followed his son's movements with a kind of wolfish longing.

'I'll go fess (fetch) Docka' Thynne!' said Sir Toady Lion. 'He'll mend you up good as new, same as our dog Jack. I've got some of the ointment yet. But Jack, he growled just fearful when the gamekeeper

put it on.'

* * * *

It was not long before a small apparition appeared at the house of Doctor George Thynne, in the village of Edam. The Doctor was a young man who had recently succeeded to an old-established and excellent practice. The Doctor had not long lain down to rest, after being away all night at a distant case. The servant who answered the door said that he could not be disturbed on any account.

His sister, a tall and handsome girl of twenty, was entertaining a small and select garden-party when, all unannounced, Sir Toady Lion appeared over the wall, capless, bare-legged, his knickers rolled up as far as possible over his chubby legs, having waded the Edam. He was dirty, but to every woman born of woman, as perfectly irresistible as he had been ever since, as an hour-old baby, he had captured the heart of the monthly nurse.

'Oh, you darling! Isn't he sweet? It's Sir Toady,' cried half-a-dozen at once, maidens fair and maidens plain, spinsters and mothers of families, all talking after their manner in strongly accented italics.

'Oo get out! Keep off, I tell 'oo! Shan't be kissed; so there!' cried this disdainful Adonis. 'Keep off or I'll smass 'oo, I will!'

Toady Lion stood with his legs far apart, both kinds in his pockets, and his elbows defiant and belligerent.

'Where's Doc?'' he inquired sternly. 'I wants Doc!.'

'Come and have some tea, Toady Lion. Come and sit on my knee!'

Invitation from such lips would have corrupted Saint Anthony. But Sir Toady was (as yet) incorruptible.

He looked about for some one whom he could trust. There was not a man in sight, and all women were more or less doubtful. They always wanted to kiss him—'Goodness knows what for!' ejaculated the disgusted Toady Lion.

Perhaps it was because he did not want to kiss them.

His eyes lighted upon Frances Thynne, the Doctor's sister. She was young and pretty, and was credited in Edam with having a mind of her own. She declined to be called Fanny, and she had never tried to kiss Toady Lion. At all events, with the consistency of his sex, Toady Lion adored her.

'Where's Doc'?' he said, shaking off with disdain one of his more importunate admirers. 'Asleep? Well, 'oo go right away and wake him up. Tell him I want him. No, not my father —just me, George Picton Smiff.'

'Yes, Toady Lion,' said the Doctor's sister meekly, as she started on her errand.

Sir Toady remained at his ease in the midst of the lawn, entertaining the company calmly with his views upon the sexes, till the return of Frances Thynne and the advent of the Doctor.

'Girls is no use— nor women, 'cept Janet Sheepshanks; Hugh John he says so too, and I bet he knows. Why, he's more nor ten (keep off, or I'll kick 'oo—yes—wif my foot!)

Here he made a demonstration against Flo Somers, the dark-haired daughter of a neighbouring landed proprietor, with one bare foot poised in the air.

'Well, old man, what's wrong over at your place?' cried the good-humoured young Doctor, taking his awakening from afternoon slumbers more pleasantly than some people we have heard of. 'Anything gone wrong with Jack's works again? Or has Hugh John eaten too many green gooseberries?'

'Oo come wif me,' said Sir Toady truculently; 'can't talk before all these (he paused for a word expressive of contempt) *gir-r-ls!* Come on.'

'Right,' said Doctor Thynne, 'I'll walk a bit of the way with you.'

Without deigning a good-bye to a single one of his many adorers, Sir Toady marched off, his chin in the air, and his bare legs browner and plumper than ever.

Perhaps he did not notice—at all events he did not heed—the clasped hands and expressive eyes which followed his exit, nor yet the exclamations of 'Isn't he just adorable? Did you ever see anything so sweet?' that followed him like a chorus.

But as he went out of the garden he met Frances Thynne coming towards him with a certain free swing and alert carriage which marked her out, even to Sir Toady's blasé eyes, from all other maidens of Edamshire.

Sir Toady stopped and took a deliberate survey of her from head to foot with grave deliberation, and with hands deep in his pockets.

'I fink 'oo is a ripping girl,' said Sir Toady, with the finality of a recognised Napoleon of the heart.

'Oh, you darling!' cried Frances Thynne, 'that's the very nicest thing I ever had said to me.'

'Well, 'oo keep off then,' returned Sir Toady, angling his elbow out in case of accidents, 'or I'll be sorry I saided it at all!'

* * * *

As the Doctor and Sir Toady walked along, the former, under the deepest oaths, promised not to reveal the mystery of the ragged boy and of the man under the matting on the Castle Island.

'Now, my man,' said Doctor Thynne, stroking his chin thoughtfully, as he looked down at his new patient so unconventionally introduced, 'you must be moved somewhere instantly.'

'Not to the work'us, Doctor—I'd rather die, sir,' said the man. 'The ward and the shame would kill me—indeed it would, sir.'

'Well,' answered the young Doctor, who had a heart and understood these things, 'I believe you are right. It would kill you—or even a stronger man. We must try and think of some other arrangement.'

'Don't 'oo trouble 'ooself,' said Toady Lion; 'I'se goin' to look after him mineself!'

And he did for many days, before Sir Toady's father made up his mind to depart, and allow the next chapter to open on a different scene.

CHAPTER FOUR

SIR TOADY RESOLVES TO RUN AWAY

'Shouldn't speak like that about your folks w'at God has gived you,' reprov'd Saucy Easdaile, looking straight at Sir Toady Lion. 'It's just like our Dinky when he has got whipped. And you haven't got whipped, though you deserves it much—yes, more 'nan Dinky.'

The knight traced X's and O's in the dust of the road with his bare toe. Then he murmured with a far-away expression in his voice, but an evident application to his companion, the follow words—

'The things his parents bade him do
Good James did earnestly pursue!'

'No, I'm not 'Good James' any more than you,' said Saucy Easdaile, stamping her foot at the shameful charge, 'and you know it, Toady Lion. But you shouldn't, and you know you shouldn't.'

'Shouldn't what?' demanded the boy defiantly.

'Shouldn't do none of the things you has done do,' cried Saucy in picturesque grammar. 'Talk that way about your people, for one.'

'Heu-u!' said Sir Toady contemptuously; 'well, anyway it's precious hard on a fellow of my age that they should all go off and leave me with an uncle that's a muff and an aunt that's a sneak.'

'Your aunt is your father's only sister,' said Saucy peremptorily; 'and your uncle—he's married to your

aunt.'

'Well, can I help that? How *silly* girls are!' commented Sir Toady, with a certain weary resignation to the facts of life. 'There's father had to go to Ingy or China on business, and he sent me to Aunt Rachel to look after! Could I help that? Right where I can't have any rabbits with lop ears, nor bats that hang with their nice funny heads down—no, nothing at all—only you, Saucy, and you're a girl. Even Prissy's at school and Sammy Carter and Hugh John—'

'Who's Hugh John?' said Saucy Easdaile.

Sir Toady Lion gazed at the little girl with his jaw dropped. Not to know Hugh John Picton Smith was worse than a crime.

'Hugh John—who's Hugh John?' he repeated in a dazed way; 'you don't mean to say that you don't know? Why, he is my big brother that is at school and plays cricket. He's what they call 'celebrated.' He was imprisoned in our old Castle by the Smoutchy Boys. It was in the great war an' I helped, and Prissy and Cissy Carter. No, I forgot, Prissy only prayed.'

'Well, and didn't that help too?' said Saucy.

Sir Toady avoided the question, not because he doubted as to the efficacy of prayer, but because the thing had been done by a girl.

'And they wroted a book all about it, and called it after me—the beasts!' said Toady, kicking at a grass border which had done him no harm.

'I know,' said Saucy, who, it seemed, knew more than she pretended, 'I've seen it. It has nice pictures in it.'

'Has it?' sneered Sir Toady; 'lot o' good that does a fellow! Yah! And they made Hugh John all so fine

and heroic—saluted by the Scots Greys, and fastened to the wall, and fighting like Remulus when he kept the bridge at Lodi—’

‘Well, and didn't he?’ said Saucy Easdaile.

‘Oh, 'course he did! He's my big brother,’ said Toady promptly; ‘but then, though I fought just as good as him, whenever there is anything silly, or soft, or greedy-grub, down it goes to me! But when it's 'Ho, my merry men all! or 'Charge where ye see my white plume wobble'— or anything like that—it's Hugh John that has to say it every time! 'Tisn't fair now, is it, Sauce?’

‘No, 'deed and 'deed, it isn't!’ agreed Saucy, wrought upon in her finest feelings for the oppressed.

‘And do you know, they akshally made fun about my app'tite, and said I eated too much, and me as thin as—as a clothes-pole,’ said Sir Toady, caressing his comfortable proportions.

‘Shame!’ said Saucy, suppressing, however, an inclination to smile.

‘Yes, and I said to Hugh John, 'How would you like it?’ I said. And *that* made him think.’

‘I wouldn't stand it,’ says he, ‘and if I could find the fellow that drew my picture all bulgy round about the waist, I'd slaughter him.’ That's what Hugh John said. But I won't slaughter him. I've thought of something better.’

‘What?’ said Saucy breathlessly.

Sir Toady set his finger to his nose, and patted the side of it gently. ‘Slow torture—but it's a secret,’ he whispered. ‘One day they shan't laugh any more. They shall t-r-r-r-emble at the name of Sir Toady Lion. And the man that drew me like that—’

‘Name of Browne,’ said Saucy, who had good

memory.

'Browne,' said Sir Toady contemptuously; 'that's all you know! He's a wicked Italian count, with a ninky coat over his arm, and a hat with *such* a slouch.'

'Like an umbrella,' said Saucy.

'G'way!' said Sir Toady curtly; 'and he carries a poisoned dagger. And do you know why he does it?'

'For his living?' suggested Saucy.

'No-o, *for revenge!*' whispered Sir Toady, 'because I supplanted him in the affections of the fair Sassingia, Marquese of Bologna! That's why. But I shall be revenged—ha, ha!'

Then quite unexpectedly the little girl began to cry.

'But you said that you never loved anybody but me,' she sobbed.

'More I do, Saucy! It was all a make-up!' cried the repentant Sir Toady, on his knees in a moment.

'Sure?' said Saucy, glancing one wet eye left-handedly at him.

'Pop!' said Sir Toady.

'How can you tell such—*such whackers?*' said Saucy Easdaile.

'Don't know,' said Sir Toady penitently; 'I get going, somehow, and they jump up in my head, and then—they are just like true!'

There was silence for a while. Sir Toady and his appeased friend were sitting amicably swinging their legs over the back of the seat in Aunt Rachel's garden. They divided equally some sticks of sourish rhubarb, which neither of them liked. But they felt that they had to divide something, and eat together in token that the quarrel was made up. Once they had tried smoking the genuine pipe of peace. But

only once. The very sourest rhubarb that ever grew was preferable to that.

'Say,' began Saucy Easdaile, after the pause had lasted long enough, 'what will you do if Aunt Rachel finds out about the three panes of glass w'at you squibbed into flinders with your catty-pult, an' the best flower and fruit dessert-service plate, w'at you threwed at the cat?'

'I shall run away to sea—' said the Undaunted; 'she shan't whop *me*. Only father does that till I go to Hugh John's school. Aunt shan't, anyway.'

'Oh, won't she? said Saucy. 'I've seen her whip a bigger boy than you—the gardener's boy, that could pick you up and walk off with you under one arm. Tommy Seagle is his name.'

'Go to your Tommy Seagle!' cried Sir Toady; 'he and Aunt Rachel couldn't whop me together. I'll run away to sea, I tell you.'

'Rats!' said Saucy; 'you'd be sea-sick.'

'Well, so was Nelson!' retorted the youth instantly. He had her that time.

Saucy, struck by the invincible manly determination written on the hero's face, began to be afraid that he really meant it.

'I *don't* like Tommy Seagle,' she suggested meekly.

'Much I care whether you do or not,' said Nelson Junior ungallantly.

'If you *do* run away to sea,' said Saucy, the corners of her mouth drooping, 'I'll come too.'

'Rubbish!' said Sir Toady; 'why, they Wouldn't have you. They don't take girls.'

'I'd go as stewardess,' said Saucy, who knew he needs of steamers.

'Stewardess—in the navy! Ho! ho!' shouted Sir Toady scornfully. 'That's all girls know!'

'Well, I'd go as a Red Cross nurse and look after you—that is, when you were sick,' retorted Saucy Easdaile; 'you'd be jolly glad of me, then!'

Nelson Junior recognised the frigid truth of this, and was silent.

'Anyway if you don't stop here, I shan't,' she repeated firmly; 'I'll come as a boy in a suit of Dinky's old clothes.'

'And get found out the first time you saw a mouse. There's dead loads of them on board of the men-of-war. They climb down the hammock-strings and nibble the fellows' hair. Lieutenant Hexam told me.'

'Well, I am going with you if you go, mind that,' said the lady; 'you shouldn't have promised.'

Sir Toady, with the masculine instinct to get out of a promise hastily given at all hazards, tried what he called 'soothing'—that is to say, smoothing down by means of sweet speeches.

'I say, Sauce,' he said gently, 'don't tell anybody, but I do like you awful—nearly as much as my teeny-weeny black indiarubber pig with the corkscrew tail I've got at home. If I do run away, I will write to you from every port, and you can keep the stamps to put in my stamp-album. And I'll think of you—whenever I remember to say my prayers!'

The frequency of this did not impress the girl, who only repeated in a dull, determined way, 'If *you* run away, *I* shall run away too!'

A hard masculine voice came from some unseen window calling them 'to come in, and be quick about it' if they wanted any tea. So with a united sigh they rose and obeyed, leaving the point still unsettled.

As he passed through the great green arch which led out of the garden of Easdaile Langton, his

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aunt's present residence, Sir Toady grumbled to himself, 'Serve me right for bothering with a girl! They won't never play fair—always thinking a fellow means what he says.'

CHAPTER FIVE

UNCLE PUSS-PUSS AND AUNT TIGER

Now Sir Toady Lion was Aunt Rachel's nephew. Saucy Easdaile was Uncle Easdaile's niece. They were therefore no relation to each other, except through Mr. Easdaile; and he didn't count, not even in his own house. He was a thin-haired, anxious-faced man, who went about doing nothing except keeping his nails polished, and his hair so arranged as to cover the bald spot above his left temple. He spoke very softly, and walked in a similar manner. Sir Toady called him Uncle Puss-Puss. He was married, according to the same authority, to Aunt Tiger.

Aunt Easdaile (Mrs. Easdaile) had brought up her younger brother, Sir Toady's father, and when that operation was complete, she had married Mr. Clarence Easdaile. The verb active is used here. For, generally speaking, whatever Aunt Easdaile wanted to do, she did. And it was not Uncle Clarence who would have dared to say her nay, even in the matter of marriage.

She did not go much to Windy Standard in these later years, having quarrelled with Janet Sheepshanks, the chief of the powers in her brother's house since the death of the children's mother.

'I wonder, Picton,' she said repeatedly to Mr. Smith, 'how you can bring yourself to keep such a person about the house. She takes command of everything. She even gives away your old shirts to the gardener without consulting you. She buys you

new ones, and you know nothing about it.'

'Ah, Rae, Rae,' said her brother, 'you are still the same old girl. When will you get it into your head that you cannot manage everybody's business as well as your own. I should have thought that Easdaile's shirts were as much as one woman could attend to, without bothering with mine.'

'She even speaks to you without proper respect,' Aunt Rachel went on, rustling her stiff silks like a whole grove of beech trees in a sudden gust, 'and she brings up these children with unbearable harshness. I saw her the other day correct George Picton in a manner little less than brutal. It is so bad for a child to have his ears boxed.'

'Perhaps you would like to try your hand on George Picton while I am off to Hong-Kong?' said her brother. 'I have been thinking it over, and certainly I should not like to have him exposed to Janet Sheepshanks' brutality. If you try gentleness and moral suasion with Sir Toad—I mean with George Picton—well, I shall be much interested in the result on my return.'

So it happened that as the result of these two conferences, with Aunt Rachel and with Dickson the gamekeeper, Sir Toady Lion found himself an inmate for an indefinite period of the house of Easdaile Langton, in company with Saucy Easdaile (she was named Selina when punishments were in the air) and her brother Dinky, lately sent home from Australia, the children of a younger brother of Mr. Easdaile's, who had gone abroad wool-raising, while his elder had stopped on at home, wool-gathering.

Saucy was a year younger than our hero, and Dinky, her brother, a year older. Now Dinky was a fighter, and, to keep the house quieter, he attended

a neighbouring day-school at which he, Dinky, occupied himself in persuading his companions that he was a great man, while the master occupied his cane in persuading Dinky of his mistake. Lessons had not yet begun to interest Dinky, and he cherished the delusion, generally confined to girls' schools, that the Isle of Arran is surrounded by the German Ocean, and that seven times six make sixty-four. These peculiarities led to more difficulties with his schoolmaster, who wrote such reports to Aunt Rachel, that Dinky lived during most of his holidays upon bread and water.

Happily, however, in the year of which we speak, blouses were worn very much *bloused*, so much so that they formed what Sir Toady Lion called 'family kangaroo-pouches.' So by filling one of these at table, when Aunt Rachel had taken off her spectacles and when, as usual, Uncle was searching for the Lost Cord of his single eye-glass, good sister Saucy was enabled to minister comfort and broken meats to a brother in tribulation.

Usually while waiting for these, Dinky swung a bag of chaff in the barn and imagined that he was punching the head of the schoolmaster. Of course he couldn't hit Aunt Rachel. She was, unfortunately, a woman. It was no use having it out with Uncle Easdaile. He, poor man, had a bad time of it anyway, and besides, privately everybody liked him—even Dinky.

The Australian boy and Sir Toady Lion were, mutually, revelations to each other. For the first time, Dinky realised that one could fight better with the head than with the hands. Toady Lion's patient mastering of a situation, his marshalling of his forces, his surprises and flank attacks were a new

view of life to Dinky. He realised that the battle was not to the strong, except when the strong was also strong in the head.

Again, for the first time in his life Sir Toady saw the benefit of having a willing and capable assistant. He abandoned his 'splendid neutrality' in the face of such an enemy as Aunt Rachel, and with so ready and obedient an ally as Dinky Easdaile. 'Dinky' was a corruption of 'Dingo,' which, in the dictionary patronised by Sir Toady Lion, was defined as 'the wild Australian dog, of a wolf-like appearance and extremely fierce.'

And when he had just had an encounter with his schoolmaster, Mr. Woodlock, or with his aunt on disputed points, this exactly described Master Robert Pemberthy Easdaile, late of Barravilla, North Queensland.

As for Saucy, she was general fag, bond-slave, helot, and mark of exclamation to the small company of three at Easdaile Langton. But she was only permitted to admire her brother in the strictest privacy. Otherwise Dinky would have smacked her. Her duty was to say how fine, unprecedented, immensely successful, unparalleled in generalship were all the plans of Sir T. Lion, and also the achievements of his 'mailed fist,' Dinky the Queenslander.

In fact, she was war correspondent with the Toady-Dinkian forces in the field. But the censor was strict. She might praise, but she must neither blame nor criticise.

The Easdaile dining-room, into which Saucy and Sir Toady were called for tea, was an immense formal apartment surrounded with what Sir Toady called 'polished elephants.' The side-board was one

immense and shapeless elephant in a high state of dark-brown sheen. The carved bookcases were elephants opened up and shelved inside. The table in the centre was an elephant with a very broad back and short legs. The tablecloth looked like a howdah when the Easdaile silver plate was put on it on state occasions. A dinner upon it was, in fact, an entire rajah's procession. Mr. Easdaile's father had been long in India, and Uncle Clarence had been born in Bombay, which perhaps accounted for his constitutional melancholy. He was ever a sad man and a quiet. He would look at a fly on his hand with a gentle reproach which seemed to say, 'How can you buzz and dodge and tickle so, when life is but a fleeting dream?'

'Sit there!' said Aunt Rachel, giving Saucy a push in the direction of a chair at one end the long table; 'and you there!' She indicated the corner where a plate was set before a table-napkin roughly thrust into a ring, so that the longer end formed a sort of irregular trumpet.

'Now, George Picton,' said Aunt Rachel, 'did you fold that napkin or did you not?'

There was a twinkle in Sir Toady's humorous grey eyes as he gravely regarded the trumpet-shaped napkin, and then said very softly, 'What do you think yourself, Aunt Rachel?'

Here Uncle Easdaile disgraced himself by making a little snorting noise in his throat, and then trying to cover it by blowing his nose vigorously. But his wife turned upon him.

'That's the way,' she remarked acridly, 'that I am supported in this house. My own husband--laughs--yes, *laughs*, when I am trying to teach a poor motherless boy, who has been most shamefully

neglected, a little as to how he ought to behave.

‘My de-e-ar!’ cried Uncle Clarence, lifting his long white hands in a vain endeavour to exculpate himself, ‘indeed I did nothing of the kind. I think—I believe I must have caught a little chill at the Bone, Crust, and Broken-Dish Jumble Sale the other day!’

‘Yes, you did laugh—you know you did. Don't prevaricate, Clarence!’ cried Aunt Rachel, snuffing, and searching under her stiff brocade skirt for her handkerchief in the very large and jingly pocket which she carried there. Uncle Clarence continued to make signs of penitence with his hands and shoulders—not, however, trusting himself to speak, lest that should be held a new offence—while Sir Toady Lion (who was immensely interested in the hauling up of the jingly pocket, and in the various bundles of keys, string, and scissor-cases which the search brought to light), hummed quite audibly ‘The Anchor's Weighed,’ till Saucy besought him with her big soft eyes to stop.

CHAPTER SIX

THE ADVENT OF THE MINISTER

Then very suddenly he changed the subject in his usual masterly and matter-of-fact way. 'Aunt Rachel,' he said, 'I saw Minister today, an' he's coming up to see you—told me so. An' I asked him if he would be here for tea. He said just 'What o'clock?' And I said 'Five,' coz that's *our* tea, and it's the nicest, with a sit-down, and as much as ever you can eat, and all that Uncle leaves of the cake. Oh yes, there *is* cake today, Aunt Rachel (the boy continued in a higher tone)—why, there's some on Uncle Clarence's moustache *now*.'

Here the head of the house made a vain attempt, by hastily dusting that adornment, to prepare for inspection before his wife's eyes could rest upon it. He was caught in the act.

'As usual,' said Aunt Rachel, with unnatural calmness; 'how can my poor attempts at reformation be successful, with such an example before them? No, Clarence, don't go to your study and slam the door and shut yourself up with last week's *Field*. You know you have no work to do. Stay, rather, and help me to influence in some degree these two—poor—ignorant-neglected...!'

There came a sharp *wrangle-wrangle* at the bell far away down in the kitchen region of the house. Aunt Rachel threw up her hands with a sharp cry.

'There!' she cried, 'I declare it is the minister. What will Mr. Jeffray think? Only this wash for tea! And you, George Picton--just wait till I get hold of you when he is gone—the impertinence—to take it

upon yourself to invite any one to tea—and at such a time!’

Whereupon, being moved by the suddenness of the peril, she dashed at the cupboard, from which she brought out all manner of jams and cakes, and, last of all, opened a new tin of Sir Toady's adored 'Tantallons' (food of the gods, *vice* ambrosia superseded). Then she rang the bell frantically, in the hope that cook would understand to send up some fresh tea.

Mr. Jeffray entered smiling, with a manner a little like a ship sailing before the wind, and shook hands with Aunt Rachel, who stood before him looking somewhat guiltily flustered. He was a tall man with thick grey hair that curled all about his head, and a smile in his eye which answered to that of Sir Toady, and counteracted the professional gravity of his mouth. He was a great and real power in the district of Creelport, because of the quiet uprightness of his character. Even Aunt Rachel, who had a bitter word to say of almost every one, made an exception in favour of Mr. Jeffray. She was so genuinely glad to see him, that Sir Toady, by keeping his eyes on her movements, was able, during the effusion of her welcome, to convey or annex (after the manner of Great Powers) four sponge cakes, three jam rolls, three-quarters of a round of shortbread, and half-a-dozen Tantallons.

Some of these he stowed away in Saucy Easdaile's 'kangaroo-pouch' for the benefit of Dinky when he should come home from school. Saucy alone disdained to take advantage, though Sir Toady called her 'Great Soft' and tried to stimulate her by his example.

In a minute or two Sir Toady knew well that this

present marvellous opportunity would be over. It behoved him, therefore, to hurry. There was still a good deal of currant jelly on his plate. Also there was a plentiful 'hunk' of very juicy 'raisiny' cake.

'Two goods make one better!' said Sir Toady, using the cake as a spoon to eat up the jelly withal.

But just then Aunt Rachel swooped upon him. 'No,' she cried, 'it cannot be! It is not possible—all these nice things of which Mr. Jeffray has come so far to partake, eaten up already! Upstairs with you this moment to my room, George Picton, and wait for me there.'

'I beg of you, Mrs. Easdaile,' said Mr. Jeffray suavely, 'that you will not send our young friend away. He and I have already had much pleasant fellowship, and I cannot forget that it was entirely owing to his kindness that I have the pleasure of sitting down at your table today.'

Sir Toady paused open-mouthed and crumby. The country was saved. He had finished the last of the jelly, and also the spoon with which he had eaten it at the same moment.

'I wonder how he gets it off so nice,' he thought. 'I only wish I could. And long sentences too! Why, they run as easy as treacle, and all in grammar too! It's a fine thing to be a minister. Even Aunt gets all the nice things down for him and is as sweet as pie. Never mind, I had first look in after all. It's funny! They always jaw so much when they shake hands. That's the time for a smart boy to look out for his self! When the grown-ups were yelping like that, Hugh John once ate up the whole icing of a cake. Good for Hugh John,—but *I* didn't do badly, nuther! *I had the cake!*'

'George Picton, return thanks!' Aunt Rachel called out suddenly.

Sir Toady concealed three tough - skinned 'gangareen' oranges in the breast of his blouse, and wiping his mouth, voiced his thanks according to order-

'For this our table spread with food
We thank Thee, bounteous Lord of Good.'

The words were Prissy's, and Prissy's younger brother commented on the incident quite thankfully as he went out through the door.

'Narrow shave that! The 'gangareens' *fissled* in their paper wrappers like a rat in a waste-paper basket. I was dead-sure Aunt was going to spot me. She would too, if she had been saying 'Good-night.' She always feels a fellow's pockets then, on pretence of patting him. 'Bless you, my boy!' she says, and nabs you! Horrid mean trick that! But taking 'gangareens' isn't stealing. It says, 'This our table spread with food.' Well, they *WAS* on the table. They *IS* food. I only spread them a little more than Aunt meant to. Besides — some is for Dinky!'

He took the oranges out and unwrapped them in the safe shade of the spruce-fir which overshadowed the summer-house.

'Two is good,' he said, 'one is a little gone at the side. Dinky shall have that. It is the biggest!'

And he wrapped them up again carefully in the '*fissly*' paper, and deposited them in a safe crevice under the seat in the close company of a broken golf mashie and a venerable croquet ball.

'I love Dinky!' he said, with the expression of a generous cherub on his face.

CHAPTER SEVEN

‘DOING BIGGETY’

‘Girls is grubs, twice-times more nor boys,’ said Sir Toady Lion to Saucy Easdaile one morning, in a philosophising mood. ‘Now there’s our Prissy. She used to be so good—oh, just disgustin’—liked three-times-church on Sundays, and sermings when they were long, and wouldn’t never suck a sweet in between, nor let *you* if she was next you. Horrid, she was! An’ now she’s gone to school, and d’ye know what she says?’

Saucy shook her head, but her dark eyes burned with the interest which comes into all children’s faces when they are going to hear about ‘the naughty ones.’

‘Tell!’ she said softly.

‘Well,’ said Sir Toady, ‘you won’t berlieve (believe), but Priss says at her school they sing the missionary hymns—like ‘Greenland’s Icy’ and ‘Polar Strand,’ and things like that—three times as loud as any others!’

‘And why?’ demanded Saucy; ‘I don’t see anything very wicked in that!’

This looks like a disappointment.

‘Ah, but,’ said Sir Toady, ‘the reason they sing so loud and joysome is just ‘coz they haven’t to fork out sixpences and thrippennies and shillings for the missionary c’llection afterwards. For they’ve no missionary collections at school, you see. No, nor Mission Boxes, *nother!*’

‘I see!’ said Saucy slowly; ‘but, after all, you don’t

need to give unless you want to!

'That's all you know,' cried Sir Toady in high scorn; 'you try it with Aunt Rachel watchin' like a hawk, and you with the only thrippenny w'at you has been savin' to buy fish-hooks! Then you'll see!'

'I never have any money,' said Saucy plaintively; 'Aunt Rachel keeps all mine, and when Uncle Clarry gives me a shilling, Aunt takes it away 'to keep for me till I get big'—as if I should want it then!'

'Yes,' said Sir Toady, shaking a wise and experienced head, 'when Aunt sets out to be sweepy—well, she's just a oner of a sweep.'

Then he regarded his little friend with the corner of an eye. They were seated down by the old saw-mill, on a log which had been mouldering down into the ground for a longer time than either of them had been growing up from it.

'Say, Saucy,' he said, lowering his voice, 'if you don't tell, I'll give you some of my money.'

'Stuff,' said Saucy ungratefully; 'you haven't got any. Why, I saw Aunty hold you up by the Wide Part this morning and shake you, and you hadn't nothing but a blunt knife with a blade what's broke, a lump of resin, and a pig-nut. Aunt took the pig-nut and the resin, so now you've got nothing but the knife. You couldn't halve that, could you?'

A look of amusement, coupled with unspeakable scorn for the Sex, crept over Sir Toady's face as the small girl was speaking.

'Selina Easdaile,' he said, 'don't be a Baby Buntin'! D'ye suppose I would keep anything I cared about where Aunt Rachel could find it? Little do you know Sir Witched-Toady-Lion! Why, I have a dozen treasure-houses. And I would have had fourteen, if I hadn't forgotten where two of them is!'

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'Have you really and really?—You're not just saying it just to Do Biggety?' inquired Saucy Easdaile, with suspicion. Sir Toady's powers in the direction of Doing Biggety were a matter of public comment.

Sir Toady promptly turned a hand-spring somersault off the log.

'Why, Sauce,' he said, 'you are sitting on one now! Though (he added, in a deprecating tone) I only keeps this 'un in case I decided to run away to sea in a hurry.'

Without further remark Sir Toady carefully removed a part of the bark from the three-quarter rotten trunk, and exposed a cavity, evidently the work of a boy's hand and device. It contained a large number of things connected (in the mind of the embryo Nelson) with his future profession of the sea. There were several short coils of rope, the model of a full-rigged ship fitted with penny cannons of brass after the manner of the latest type of cruiser. There was a suit of worn sailor clothes marked 'Our Boys,' a lanyard, and a sheath-knife of a ferocious pattern, carefully done with red ink about the handle to represent the blood of the slain, while the number of the victims was indicated in approved pirate fashion by nicks in the haft. Twenty-three and a half was the modest total of the slain.

'You might have made it the two dozen, neat!' said Saucy.

'And tell a lie for the sake of one silly little cabin boy under twelve!' said Sir Toady, with immense scorn. 'When I go to sea, I'll soon make *that* all right.'

There was also literature. With awe Saucy handled 'The Grey Phantom of the Seas,' 'The

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Submarine Avenger,' 'Dumb Dick, the Death Pirate,' and in a place by itself (as indeed it deserved to be) a certain celebrated work called 'Huckleberry Finn.'

'There's lots in that of no use,' said Sir Toady, as he saw Saucy looking at Mark Twain's masterpiece; 'but after all one *might* want to descend the Mississippi with a nigger, and it would come in handy for teachin' a fellow the language. Dinky he says so too.'

Saucy caught the suggestion after the manner of her sex. If she was far behind in the best methods of deceiving grown-ups, there were some things in which Sir Toady could never hope to match her.

'So,' she said, slowly growing white to the lips, 'you and Dinky have made it up to run away to sea, and leave me with Aunt Rachel. I'll go and tell her now.'

It was a wholly vain threat, and Sir Toady knew it instinctively. He seized his advantage.

'Go, Tell-Tale,' he said, taking off his cap and bowing in the manner he had been taught to do when opening the door for a lady, 'go and tell its Auntie Rachel. Run, pretty, then! Run, Miss Peach!'

Smack!

Clean, firm, flat rang Saucy's hand on Sir Toady's cheek, to that hero's vast astonishment; and the little lady stood before him, now quivering with anger, her small white teeth showing where they had bitten into the fullness of her lower lip.

'What did you do that for?' demanded Sir Toady, caressing the place.

'To show you,' said Saucy, 'and if you try me, I'll do it again.'

With quite unusual Christian feeling Sir Toady promptly turned the other cheek, which was

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as promptly smitten, but this time with a stroke from which the sting had mysteriously departed.

Saucy began to look a little frightened. Sir Toady still stood unmoved. His methods were not those of Dinky the fighter, nor yet those of his brother Hugh John. He was at once a subtler and a far more dangerous adversary than either.

He made his pretty little 'manners' bow to Saucy once more.

'Good-bye,' he said quietly; 'I don't think I shall see you again. I shall have many things to do this afternoon. There is much to arrange (he was Doing Biggety now with a vengeance) and I may as well say ta-ta—if I may have the pleas-yah!'

He held out his hand in a lordly, careless way to Saucy. The little girl struck it away from her with an angry fist, and turning towards the house, buried her face in her hands.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ADVICE TO BOYS ABOUT TO RUN AWAY

It was true. Saucy Easdaile had hit it. Sir Toady and Dinky had indeed resolved to run away from Aunt Rachel's, but with the curious inconsistency of youth, they were waiting for Dinky's holidays in order to do it.

More than once they had talked over the necessity of including Saucy in their plans, and had always decided against it. But now the little girl, with a flash of intuition, divined the whole. There was, therefore, no use in pretending any more. Dinky saw that as soon as he came home.

'It's all up a gum-tree!' he said, gloomily digging his bare toes into the ground. (He had just hidden his shoes for the day.) 'If we bunk now, Saucy will split, and they will have the seaports watched.'

He had picked up the phrase in 'Ten-Fingered Joe; or, The Man who Forged a Million.'

'Yes, they would nab us for certain,' he continued; 'this island of yours is such a little place. If only we were in the Ringarooma bush now! Why, you could lose anything there, and never find it any more.'

Sir Toady Lion sat considering. He never interfered when his second in command was working off his ill-humour.

'I say,' he began, looking up with the utmost composure, 'let's go and consult Mr. Jeffray!'

Dinky gasped. He had not got rid of his Australian prejudices against the clergy.

'What! not the parson?' he said; 'why, he would give us away in two shakes, and we'd get a proper

welting apiece—I should get two, for Aunt would tell the schoolmaster up at Langton.'

'Come on,' said Sir Toady, who never gave reasons to his underlings; and, still grumbling fearfully under his breath, Dinky obeyed.

'Of all the mad hatters, Toady Lion,' he began, 'you do take the bean.' But got no farther. The impossibility of doing justice to the situation cut off his words well behind his lips.

So to 'the minister's' they went. The Manse of Easdaile Langton was a comfortable square box of a house, designed for a family, but yet it was nowadays too large for the demands of the Reverend George Baillie Jeffray, B.Sc., who now dwelt in it.

In the hall were rows of pansies in little wooden troughs, all being cultivated into something else. Along the passages electric wires criss-crossed overhead like spiders' webs, and somewhere under the house there was a humming sound as of a top. But the top was big enough to shake the house with its spinning.

The children stood together on the doorstep, and instinctively Dinky put out his hand and took Sir Toady's in his. He understood about the Barravilla bush, and could 'yarn' about the murkiest superstitions of the Ringarooma natives; but these of Mr. Jeffray's were quite other devils, and Dinky knew no counter incantations against the buzzing throb of a dynamo.

The minister was in his study. Yes, the boys could see him, Had they had any tea? Mr. Jeffray would wish them to have tea with him. She (that is, Agnes Inglis, the minister's plump and placid housekeeper) would gladly bring it to them. She had, she whispered, some apple jelly. It was just made, with

rhubarb, the first of the season. It was early that year in the beds.

'Is there scrapings?' said Sir Toady, looking up with the radiant light which always came into his face when he thought of things to eat.

'Scrapings,' answered Agnes Inglis, all her comfortable body shaking with hospitality ('a little like apple-jell herself,' remarked Sir Toady afterwards)—'scrapings—yes, little man, plenty of scrapings. But you will need to come into old Agnes' kitchen to get them!'

'Right!' said Sir Toady, 'we'll come—soon as we get through with—*him*.'

The minister was found with both hands in his hair and a great many sheets of paper strewn before him. It was not his sermon he was writing. No; it was a poem on the history of the Church. Mr. Jeffray signed to the boys to be silent, and Agnes Inglis explained in a whisper that he was often 'took that way.' He was trying to think of a rhyme.

Sir Toady regarded the act of composing a book without any awe, but to Dinky it represented a superior kind of magic to that practised by the black-fellows of his country. Sir Toady, who had often assisted Prissy with her poems when the *Windy Standard Magazine* was late in coming out, wished that he knew the difficulty. Perhaps he could help.

At last the minister removed his hand hastily from his head with a shake as if he had been labouring in the sweat of his brow.

'No, he said sadly, 'I can't hit it.'

'What is it, sir?' asked Toady Lion eagerly.

'I can't hit upon a word to rhyme with Origen,' said Mr. Jeffray sadly.

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'*Porridge 'em'*—make them eat all their porridge—same as Aunt does us!' exclaimed Sir Toady, promptly as an echo.

'I fear you do not understand, George,' said the minister kindly. 'Origen was a great Church father!'

'No matter,' said the youth, 'father has to take his just the same as us. Janet Sheepshanks makes him. Porridge is awful good for fathers—and mothers—and kings of the earth,' he added, without any great connection, but just because he liked a good sounding Bible phrase to round his sentence with when he was speaking to a minister.

Mr. Jeffray looked amused and said, 'Well, Sir Toady, what would your idea of a poem be? You know I am trying to put a great many wise things into rhyme, that children such as you may be able to carry them in their heads.'

'I don't know 'bout that,' said Sir Toady, who was never much interested in plans for his own improvement, though anxious enough to improve other people; 'it's like this. We make up improving verses all by ourselves, and after they are made up, we never forget them!'

'Ah!' said the minister, 'I should greatly like to know your method—could you favour me with a sample?'

Sir Toady scratched his head, nodded, and began—

'We love it more than curds and cream,
Our morning plate of porridge;
The very spoons we lick quite clean—
But Saucy says it's horritch!'

'Of course,' the poet hastened to explain, 'you must say the last word a little husky, as if you were

going to cough. 'Horrid' doesn't rhyme *quite* exact, but it sounds all right when there's a lot of us shouting it out together. Would you like to hear us?'

'No, thank you,' said the master of the house hastily, 'there is no need. Your method is no doubt an excellent one, but I fear my little rhymed History of Early Christianity would not bear being shouted out altogether as you suggest.

'But what did you come to see me about—anything I can do for you? Been up somebody's apple tree—and want me to intercede for you, eh?'

'Oh no,' said Sir Toady; 'it's real serious this time. We are going to run away, and don't know whether we ought to take Saucy with us. We promised, and we want to know if we have to keep our promise, even if she gets toothache or constumption, or p'raps the distemper like what Dinky's terrier had last spring?'

'Oh, a case of conscience!' said the minister, interested at once; 'but how do you know that I won't go and tell your Aunt what you intend?'

Here Sir Toady looked very serious. His eyes were even severe. 'You juss can't, sir,' he said; 'it's sacred what we says to you. Why, you'd be ex-kum-unicated!'

He got the last word out with tremendous effort. It was worse than swallowing a fish-bone with nothing to help it down but a piece of dry crust. He owned this afterwards to Dinky.

It was now Mr. Jeffray's turn to look serious.

'It is not usual in our communion to receive private confession in this way,' he said; 'but of course if you desire it, I must treat anything you may say as secret.'

'I know,' said Sir Toady, who was learned in the

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law, 'coz I heard father say the judge would let you off answering questions in a police-court, being a minister. That's why we did not tell Doc' Elliott. *He* would have to tell whatever he was asked. No secret of cum-fession'l for him!

'That's all right, boys,' said their spiritual adviser; 'I understand that you have me. Well, out with what you have to say, and I will give you my best advice. You first, Toady Lion!'

'Me first—and second—and all the time,' said Sir Toady scornfully. 'Dinky does as I tell him! Don't you, Dink?'

Loyally Dinky allowed that such was their pact.

'Cep' when he's too cheeky,' added the Bush Boy, to save appearances, 'THEN I whop him!'

'Tis this way,' said Sir Toady, drawing a long breath, as he always did when he had anything to put into grown-up words, 'Aunt whops us—good, we can stand that, Dinky an' me. Aunt preaches to us. Well, that's all right, too, when we're naughty. But then Aunt—she whops us and preaches after, whether we've done anything or not. So we have to *be* naughty, just to get square. Not so, Dinky?'

The Bush Boy nodded with a look of infinite disgust.

'I bar Aunt!' he remarked, in a way that sounded quite final.

'Afar, afar from the 'Aunts of men,' quoted Mr. Jeffray pensively.

'With the silent Bush Boy alone by my side,' Sir Toady capped him gleefully. That was his kind of fun, and he approved of Mr. Jeffray.

'Didn't I tell you we came to the right shop when we started out to see the minister?' he asked Dinky. But the Australian had never heard of 'Afar in the

desert I love to ride.'

'It's the holidays,' Sir Toady went on, 'an' I don't do lessons anyway since I came to Uncle Easdaile's —'

'He's delicate,' interjected Dinky, sneering darkly over at the burly little figure beside him. But Sir Toady was unmoved. He continued in an even narrative tone—

'And so we're going to run away, leavin' messages and things to Uncle, and to tell 'em not to drag ponds, because we're not dead a bit. We have only gone to fight beneath the crimson banner of our country. Least mine is crimson. His is a Black Swan, same as you see on postage stamps.'

'He lies,' said Dinky wearily; 'I've licked him for it often. That's for West Australia. I'm a Queenslander. *He* don't know the difference.'

'Well,' said Toady Lion, 'if your flag ain't a Black Swan—it's a Blackbird. I read how your father brings 'blackbirds' over in loads from coral islands and things. I don't see what he wants 'em for—perhaps to sing him 'Hush-a-by, Cocky-oly' when he goes to sleep.'

Dinky disdained any answer. This also had been thrashed out before. He had done the thrashing himself.

'An' we want to know about Saucy—she's his sister, you see, but she's engaged to me.' Sir Toady was nothing if not plain.

The minister looked up sharply.

'Hullo,' he said, 'you begin early, young man. What do you mean by 'engaged to you'?''

'Oh, nothing at all,' said Sir Toady frankly. 'It's something you tell to girls just to please them. They like it. It don't mean nothing really. Girls want to

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kiss you, you know. They're made that way, I suppose.'

Sir Toady's tone was world-weary. Vanity of vanities—all was vanity—more especially girls.

Mr. Jeffray sighed a little, but his eyes were not turned quite so frankly to his visitors.

'I, at least, have not found it so,' he said at last.

'Then you're dasht lucky,' said Sir Toady; 'Hugh John he says so too!' However, he hastened on to do justice to the absent.

'But Saucy's not like that, you mustn't think so,' he explained; 'she is Dinky's sister and a very decent sort. She can smack as hard as a boy. That's the mark of her fingers now.'

He exhibited with pride three faint red streaks on his right cheek. Upon which, Dinky, interested at last, drew near and gravely inspected the scars of battle like a black tracker judging footmarks.

'Sis hasn't cut her nails lately,' he remarked. Sir Toady regarded him scornfully.

'Well,' he said, 'did you expect her to run upstairs and cut them, brush her teeth, say her prayers, and then come back and smack me?'

'And so you've come to ask if I think you should take Saucy with you when, as I understand, you run away to sea. Is that it?'

'He'd much rather run away to land,' said Sir Toady, indicating Dinky with some remaining scorn.

'If there was any land to run to,' said Dinky with sudden heat, 'but there isn't. It's only a blessed little island that you can run round in an hour after all, and then they can nab you at the edges. Now at Barravilla the bush goes back a thousand miles—'

'No matter where it goes,' said Sir Toady, with strong sense, 'you can't take the train to Barravilla

this afternoon—no, nor yet the Blackbird special express to Ringarooma in the morning.’

‘I’ll wop you if you don’t mind,’ Dinky’s eyes were saying very plainly—so plainly, indeed, that Mr. Jeffray hastened to interfere.

‘So you promised to take this little girl with you,’ he said. ‘I suppose you made her the confidante of your schemes.’

‘The what?’ Sir Toady’s cry was quite involuntary.

‘I mean you told her all about it,’ said Mr. Jeffray.

‘Not much,’ said the spokesman; ‘why, she didn’t need to be told. She just looked at us and knew all about it. Girls are like that, you know. They always find out what you most want them not to know. While as for what every fellow knows—about sparrows, and catapults, and how to breed lop rabbits, and how to stuff birds, they are—they are, what is it you say on Sundays, sir—like the...?’

‘Like the beasts that perish!’ quoted their host without a smile. Then Mr. Jeffray thrust his chair back from the desk at which he had been sitting, and scratched his ear thoughtfully.

‘This is a serious affair,’ he said slowly; ‘you may be altering your whole future lives. I suppose you have thought what your fathers would say about it?’

At this the two boys looked uncomfortable—‘sort of trimbly and twitchy all over,’ as Sir Toady described it later.

‘Of course you would do just the same if your fathers were here to look after you?’ pursued the minister, looking at them keenly.

‘Not much, we wouldn’t,’ cried both the boys at once.

‘Why, my father would just skin me alive!’ said Sir Toady with some pride.

'Well, don't you think it is a little mean to do it behind their backs?' said the minister, pursuing his advantage; 'besides, they will be returning, and what will they say to such an escapade then?'

'Oh,' said Sir Toady, 'they'll be so precious glad to see us that they won't whale us—much!'

'Anyway,' said Mr. Jeffray, 'you mightn't like it as well as you think, you know, after you *had* run away. And it might be too late to turn back. Then you would be very sorry, especially if you had a little girl with you.'

'What did I tell you?' said Dinky gloomily with his eyes; 'he's a parson after all. They are always on hand with pails of cold water.'

'But I've got an idea,' continued Mr. Jeffray; 'what do you think of this? Suppose you come here, to my house. I will ask your Aunt to lend all three of you to me. You see that wood by the river where the fir trees run up to the hill? That's on my glebe, and the old hut with the thatch roof. That's mine too. And there's a tent I used to have for camping out when I went photographing in the old wet-plate days. It's pretty rotten, but might turn the rain at a pinch. Well, come over here, and try running away for a week. What say you? Sleep, and hunt, and fish; eat, drink, and be merry; live in the open air as much as you like. Kill Indians and have adventures with wild beasts. Then if it's too rough for a girl—I don't mean for yourselves, who are hardy—why, you can come inside to sleep. I'll undertake to arrange it with your Aunt. I think I can promise you so much. As for my housekeeper, that is a more delicate matter. Ha—hum—let me see.'

Toady Lion's hand went up as if he had been answering in class. 'Oh, if you please, let us tell

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Aggie,' pleaded the Invincible; 'she will do just what *I* say!'

'Well,' said Aggie's master, 'it is well for you if you have found out the secret. Ten years has she been with me, yet not a thing I tell her will she do.'

'Ah!' remarked Toady Lion, with the easy consciousness of power, 'of course *you* are different.'

'Evidently,' said Mr. Jeffray, as he rose to conduct his visitors to the door.

'Oh, don't trouble,' said Sir Toady; 'we are going down the kitchen stairs.'

'Quite right,' replied the minister; 'no grass will grow under your footsteps, I can see. You are going to begin siege operations on my housekeeper at once. No wonder you know the way to the Gibraltar of her heart. Usually she loathes boys. What is it now, Dinky?'

The Bush Boy, apparently jostled by his companion, had emitted a snort that had ended in a kind of gasping gurgle.

'Nothing, sir,' said our ready hero; 'when he thinks of Australia, it often takes him like that. Often he'd war-whoop right out if I didn't hack his shins—in church and all.'

'Oh,' said the preacher a little blankly, 'please don't let him do that. Good-night, boys; good luck to you with Agnes. I will see your Aunt tomorrow. And of course, in the meantime, I needn't tell you—not a word to anybody.'

'Mum's the word! Mum is the *n*th power, as Hugh John says!' said Sir Toady. 'Good-night, sir.'

* * *

'And now,' whispered Dinky, fiercely throttling his

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companion, 'will you kindly tell me what you took the skin off my ankle for. I'm jolly well going to scrag you for that.'

'You were going to tell him that it wasn't our love for Agnes that made us want to go downstairs, but the scrapings of the apple-jelly pan.'

'No, I wasn't,' said Dinky, a little staggered, nevertheless.

'Well, he would have understood, anyway,' said Sir Toady. 'I'll teach you to snort like a lo-cum-otive with a cold. Sorry I didn't hack *both* your shins. 'Twould have served you jolly well right!'

Dinky said no more. He was serving a Great Man.

CHAPTER NINE

SIR TOADY SAYS 'ROO'

The boys turned the corner of the stairs and stood in another world. The manse kitchen was high and spacious, its walls always glinting with polished copper and silver, or at least what shone like silver. Also, what to the boys was far above all artistic considerations, it always smelt of good things to eat.

'Come away, my little lambs,' the hearty voice of plump apple-dumpling-y Aggie Inglis met them from above the table on which she was rolling out pastry.

'Snort!' went the elder of the 'lambs,' moving however out of the range of Sir Toady's foot. Whenever Dinky thought anything was funny, his nose always said so for him, however hard he tried to restrain it. '*Baaa-ah*,' it said softly, yet with a clearness which always alarmed his companion, who feared that Dinky's untimorous mirth might spoil everything.

'He hasn't been very well, Aggie,' explained Toady the diplomat; 'you will have to excuse his want of appetite. He has to be *very* careful what he eats.'

'That's a—' began Dinky, who was already sniffing up the odours of pie, cold ham, and above all the sweet pervading scent of preserving fruit.

'Pooo-oor boy,' said Agnes Inglis, immediately sympathetic; 'has he so? Well, then, let me see—let me see! There's some nice senna tea, or camomile I can give him in a minute. Or is it his blood? He is rather red in the face, now I come to notice. Sarsaparilla is the thing for that! I've got some ready. Last year my sister's son's wife's cousin was

troubled with an income in her left—'

But Sir Toady saw that he had gone too far.

'Oh no, thank you, don't trouble,' he said; 'it's all right, Aggie. He can only take medicines at bedtime, you see. Doc. Elliott won't allow it any other time. He has just to be a leetle careful, like—not to eat as much as me—nor such rich things!'

'Well,' said Aggie, smiling, 'at any rate, I'll do up a little parcel of herbs before you go. And I'll mark them when to be taken. You'll see that he does get them, poor boy. And if his appetite does not come back I've something much stronger—a decoction of real Peruvian bark. You'll come back for that. I gave some to you the other day, Master George, you remember.'

'Yes, indeed, Aggie,' said Sir Toady, licking his lips. 'I can taste it yet!' ('Couldn't get the beastly taste out of my mouth, though I scoured it with sand,' he explained to Dinky under his breath.)

Thump—thump! Thump—thump! A big thump and a little one time about, went Agnes Inglis' rolling-pin on the bakeboard. She had put on her big round-eyed silver-rimmed spectacles, but when she really wanted to look at anything very particularly, she looked at it over the top of them, or more often still, shoved them up on her brow out of the way.

The eyes of the boys glistened as the shining pan of 'apple jell,' confected with the first rhubarb of the year, was set before them. Two horn spoons, worn very stubby, were supplied, so, that no 'scrape marks' might be left upon the brass of the preserving pan.

It was good being in Aggie's kitchen. The worthy woman paused in her work, as much to feast her eyes upon the happy gourmands as to breathe

herself from labour.

After their first 'Speed-the-Plough,' as Toady called the eagerness with which they both worked their horn spoons lest one should get more of the good things than his neighbour, Sir Toady began, easily and negligently, as was his way, to explain to Aggie Inglis their own plans and Mr. Jeffray's intentions with regard to them.

'Indeed, then, an' I am thinkin' ye are all daft thegither,' cried Aggie, 'but the minister the daftest, as should ken better—sorry am I to say the like of an ordained man! But I'll be neither art nor part in any such ploy. And that's what I am tellin' ye, Maister George! What would your father have said? Aye, what *will* he say when he comes back?'

Instead of answering, Sir Toady finished his last spoonful and rose. With hands rigidly held out, each finger stickier than its fellow, and his sweet innocent expression rather heightened by the ruby 'jell' upon his lips, he trotted across to Aggie.

'Sponge me!' he commanded, with a look that seraphs might have envied. He really said (and this is one of the little finesses of our hero), '*Sponze me—will roo sponze me!*'

The *r* used for *y*, and the *z* for *s*, were relics of his baby age, long discarded from ordinary conversation, but in full use for coaxing purposes. And no man over forty and no woman of any age whatsoever, could resist Toady Lion thus equipped for battle.

Once Hugh John made up a little poem about him, and it ran thus—

My eyes are blue, and I tell you true,
Like a kitten when fish is served, I mew!

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Ah, mew-ly mew, and oh, wooly-woo,
You can't refuse me when I say 'roo!'

It was not perhaps very kind of Hugh John, who had his own methods of coaxing as well as the next man, if it came to that. But all the same, it was very near the truth. At any rate, when Aggie Inglis had dusted the flour from her arms, and wiped Sir Toady's mouth and hands, she stooped and kissed him. Sir Toady stole a glance of deprecation at Dinky, as much as to say, 'Didn't I tell you?' Or perhaps more exactly interpreted, 'Please excuse her. *She* can't help it, though as far as I'm concerned, it's all in the day's work.'

There were no more objections from Agnes as to the coming of the children to the manse, and her master, a little nervous about how to broach the subject, found the ground ploughed, sowed, and harrowed for him.

Indeed, Aggie kept the boys so late in the kitchen, or rather they discovered so much that needed attention there, that it was past their Aunt Easdaile's supper-time before they noticed. They were then 'as full as a ripe gooseberry,' as Toady Lion remarked. And the minister, discovering their whereabouts by the shouts of unhallowed laughter from the garden, kept them to prayers, and thereafter walked back with them to ensure them a reasonable reception.

It was well judged, for Aunt Rachel was looking very grim, and the long cane Tickler, as well as Tingle the birch rod (which Dinky alone had yet been made acquainted with), was placed in a prominent position on the hall table. But Mr. Jeffray soon put that all right; for he had the same (or at

least a similar) way with Aunt Rachel as Sir Toady had with his housekeeper, and with Janet Sheepshanks at home.

Not only were the boys let off punishment, but their attendance at prayers and the long afternoon spent at the manse were both counted to them for righteousness. Moreover, Mrs. Clarence Easdaile would be very pleased to let her dear friend Mr. Jeffray have all three children for the manse on a visit of some duration. She hoped it would be for their good, mentally, bodily, and she might add spiritually. She hoped that they would not fail to profit by—the instruction--

‘Oh, I don't mean anything very instructive,’ said Mr. Jeffray, laughing at Dinky's rueful face; ‘but they will brighten up the old place for me, and Saucy must come too. By the way, where *is* Saucy?’

At this every one looked round. The little girl had been no more missed than a cat. That was because she was habitually ‘a quiet puss’ in the house.

‘Saucy! Saucy! Saucy!’

‘She was here—let me see—let me see,’ muttered Aunt Rachel; ‘bless me, I declare I do not remember having seen the child since teatime!’

And no more had any one else about the house of Easdaile Langton.

Then Dinky looked at Sir Toady, and Sir Toady looked at Dinky. There was the same thought unexpressed in the heart of each.

‘She thought that we had run away without her, and she has gone to seek us!’

But this they kept to themselves.

CHAPTER TEN

THE LUXURY OF WOE

It was true. There was no getting over it. Saucy the fiery-hearted, being resolved not to be left behind, had started out into the world alone to find her brother and her faithless comrade. She would teach them to give their bridle-reins a shake, and adieu for evermore. As Sir Toady very justly said, 'It teaches a fellow not to start talking to girls—they always get thinking you mean what you say! They're so beastly in earnest!'

Hitherto Sir Toady had taken a far-off and somewhat haughty view of affairs of the heart. He had always been in the position of the adored, and if any of the more demonstrative sex did not immediately fall down and worship him, he wondered what was the matter with the woman.

No matterr!—A time was coming! Ha, ha!

But indeed, the time that had come was serious enough in all conscience. They did the usual things which every one does in such circumstances. Of course Mr. Jeffray, who was a good runner, started off at top speed to warn the police at the village of Langton, a mile and a half away. Mr. Easdaile ordered out the pony-trap and set off himself down the main Paddy-Port road, while Chisholm the groom was despatched on horseback in the direction of the North. Luckily it would not be very dark, for it was in the heart of the longest days, but Sir Toady and Dinky felt the futility of all this.

'That's not the way to find Saucy!' they agreed. 'Now let *us* think of something sensible. Uncle Easdaile would pass her if she was as big as a hay-

stack stuck in the middle of the road. And as for old Grubb the policeman at Langton, he couldn't spot an elephant in a clover-field.'

'Grown-ups are awful funny!' murmured Dinky, with deep feeling.

'And the worst is, they think they know such a lot!' said Sir Toady, shaking his head sagely. He was watching a star that seemed to flutter, a pale lavender colour in the last bit of saffron sky that the sunset had left behind it, stranded and forgotten.

'I say,' said Dinky, 'I've thought of something!'

'Well, keep on thinking it,' retorted Sir Toady. 'Don't say it till I get finished. Just now *I'm* doing the thinking!'

Dinky became mute, and when the Lord of Creation had finished his thought and stated his plans, Dinky and he immediately proceeded to carry them out. It was necessary that Dinky should know his place.

* * *

'No, I won't—I won't,' Saucy Easdaile had said, 'I won't stay here and I can't. Boys are horrid. They are *born* cruel!'

Saucy had known all the afternoon, indeed all day, that the two were contriving iniquity. Iniquity meant to her something in which she was not permitted to join. Saucy was not proud. She would gladly have gone down on her knees to the boys, and begged to be allowed to share their secrets. But she knew well that method would be without effect.

There was nothing for it but frightening them. And if they did not come near her to *be* frightened, how could she frighten them? Yes, boys were

naturally horrid. But oh! the blankness of the long day without them. She wished they were there to tease her. Yes, they might even pull her hair, and she would not cry. Saucy looked down the bare highway baking white in the sun. Her eyes could follow it, fringed by straggly poplars, till it crossed the brook which turned the corn-mill at the little bridge. Then it climbed up a broomy knoll, and so all suddenly popped over the edge into the Unknown—just like Dinky and Toady Lion. They had gone away from her. They were away out there somewhere, free, untrammelled, and (bitterest thought of all, which made the tears start in her dark eyes) never thinking one bit about her!

Ah, that *did* hurt! Saucy was profoundly sorry for herself, touched by that first vision of her own misery, which is so affecting to all children and most women. She seemed so pitiful to herself. *They* wended on, Dinky and Toady Lion, throwing stones into the lake, bathing their hands and feet in the cool water. The birds sang for them. They told stories to one another. While she—poor, *poor* Saucy Easdaile, their sister, their—the Other Thing (she could not think of the word Betrothed), was sitting all alone—like Cinderella (sob) in her rags (she looked through tears at her neat cool dress), in dust and ashes, burned and freckled by the sun, hungry (it was just after tea-time). And with a sudden clucking spasm in the throat, and a flood of inextinguishable tears, she saw herself with no one to love her in all the wide world—‘Alone! Alone—all, all Alone!’

And at the sound of her own sobs the flood became a river, and the river a great ocean of sorrow. The floodgates were opened wider than ever.

The fountains of the deep were broken up. Presently at the sound of approaching footsteps Saucy rose and fled upstairs by the servants' staircase to hide her grief from the eyes of man—and especially, from the sight of her Aunt Rachel, who would demand to know all about it, and probably end by setting her a piece of crochet-work to do. Saucy hated crochet-work. Shirt-making and stitching on buttons were some good. Men sometimes needed such services. Toady Lion needed them, or if he did not now, he would some day.

When she had reached her bedroom and made a pretence of locking the door, she turned round, and lo!—neglected and desolate as she was herself, she saw—her only son Jacko! He was dark-complexioned, her Jacko—hairy all over, with a row of white beady teeth sewed all across his face, funny velvety ears, and a long tail. But in spite of all his mother loved him. Saucy flung herself upon her first-born with eyes that were still wet.

'O Jacko — Jacko,' she moaned, 'did you think your mother had forsaken you, forgotten her darling? Did you think I was long away, dear son?'

And she tied a fresh bow on his sailor's knot, turning her head from side to side to see if it became him, and then, remembering that all such pomps and vanities were over for ever for her, she hugged Jacko tight to her breast, crying, 'O Jacko! oh, my child! I hope you will never grow up to make any little girl as unhappy as Dinky and —Toady Lion—have made your poo-oor mother! Promise me that you will not. What—you won't promise? O Jacko! But (here she sighed) I suppose, being a man, you can't help it. All men are bad—boys worse!'

With this comprehensive verdict upon mankind,

Saucy rose and began her few hasty preparations for flight. She put a new clean collar and two handkerchiefs (one for Jacko) into her under-pocket, which she wore in ancient fashion round her waist by a string. To this she added a needle-book, in which was a leaf of a rose given her only last week by the vagrant Toady Lion. The rose was a ruin. All the petals were coming off even when she first received it. He had not had time to look for a better one, owing to the tea-bell going *ting-tang, whingle-whangle*, just at the moment of pulling it, a sound which effectually banished sentiment. But now its very stalk was dear, though in practice a little inconvenient, being so prickly. Still, even this seemed a sort of comfort to Saucy, whose great aim at the moment was to make herself as miserable as ever she could.

Saucy did not take any food. She was never going to want to eat again. She felt it. But—oh mystery of the human heart!—she slipped into her pocket some comforting acid drops, the very name of which seemed to suit her blighted and widowed condition. Then there was just her Harris cloak, her tam-o'-shanter hat which—which he had—had—liked. And once again the flood swept away all landmarks.

Then suddenly Saucy lifted her tear-blurred face, seized Jacko impulsively in her arms, and stole down the back stairs, pausing behind the outer door to reconnoitre.

'Chooky—chooky—chuck—chuck!'

That was Uncle Clarence, going mildly about with a pocketful of oats, trying to kill time by feeding the stray poultry. She must wait for him to go round the house. From above came another voice. 'I declare I can't go out of the room for a moment—'

That was Aunt Rachel having it out with Wallford, the new tablemaid.

She could hear the hum of talk in the kitchen, a clatter of plates, and then, ringing out clear, a jolly laugh. That was Grainger, the second housemaid, the plump one, who was engaged to the butcher down Edam lane.

Ah, how little they knew! *They* would sleep in their warm beds that night, they could afford to laugh and jest—and even take supper. Saucy had already eaten her own, but it was not convenient to remember things like that when one is revelling luxuriously in woe.

And so on—down, out, and away!

The shrubbery, happy place of long morning talks, and unseen plays—why had she passed that way? There, in a cleared spot, was the little church at whose altar they had plighted their simple domestic troth. Here, enclosed in a beau-u-tiful circle of stones, and with Darby-and-Joan seats at either chimney-corner, was the tiny self-contained dwelling where they had taken up house. There was the very broken crockery in which she had cooked and served their first frugal meal. She remembered it was mashed Brazil nuts garnished with sorrel salad, because *he* liked it. No, of course she didn't mean Dinky. Dinky indeed! Dinky was at school at the time. *He* was, always nicest to her, and played better when Dinky stayed at school. She wished with all her heart that Dinky had stopped at school. It was the best place for him, coming between them like that. And what if the master did whip him. That also served him right.

But no one pitied the sorrows of a poor brother — certainly not his sister Saucy.

Then, drying her eyes absent-mindedly on Jacko's fur, and setting her lips in a calm, bitter smile—the smile of one who has loved and suffered—Saucy Easdaile determinedly turned her back for ever on the home of her—no, not of her Aunt (she shuddered), but of her ancestors, and so went forth into the wide, cruel world, with only Jacko and an acid drop to console her for the cruelty of mankind.

However, to tell the truth, these two succeeded pretty fairly. For by the time she had got to the path over the moor Saucy had dried her tears, and began to wonder when she would be missed, who would miss her first, what they would do, and who should find her body.

Ah! that was what she really cared about—to be found, gracefully, pitifully, but, above all, *painlessly* dead. And her quick imagination took up and discarded a dozen varying versions. She rejected robins and dead leaves as hackneyed. She felt she would certainly be accused of plagiarism. Besides, robins were nowadays such beastly stuck-up little things that as likely as not they would never come near, however long she lay and waited for them. Then there were those 'strikes' that she heard her uncle deploring so much, and her Aunt Rachel declaiming about—'the insolence of the working-classes,' she called it. Perhaps—nothing was more likely—the robins might be on strike. Now that she came to think of it, Saucy never remembered to have seen a single robin carrying leaves and twigs as if he did it for his living. Sparrows, yes—but what girl with proper pride would care to be buried by sparrows, nasty little noisy, vulgar things!

Robins were therefore ruled out.

Then she remembered that picture of Ophelia in

her uncle's room. She could see herself all afloat on the surface of a green pool with flowers in her hair, and such a sweet look. Yes; that was better. Saucy went to the edge of a pool called the Stank, which she thought might do. But the very sight of the duck-weed that covered it was enough for her. It might be all very well in Denmark, where there were nice, clean, picturesque pools on purpose, but not here. She for one was not going to spoil her frock in that dirty water for Ophelia or anybody.

Exit Ophelia!

In a barge, like Elaine—Elaine the fair, Elaine the lovable. Yes, she was like that! The thought sprang up full-grown in Saucy's head. Yes, she had it. It would keep her things dry. Dead or alive, she would not get scolded for messing her dress. She could use the hood of her Harris cloak for a pillow. She knew where there was a boat she could get. She would go floating down the river to Camelot. And then when she got there, they would come—they would all come. Ah! she could see it, and the words ran pleasantly in her heart.

There would come the fine Gawain (Dinky) and wonder at her, and Lancelot would later come and muse at her. (Who Lancelot was, did not need to be explained.) And last the Queen herself (no, NOT Aunt Rachel!), and pity her. Yes, that was it. And so, without a moment's hesitation, and without at all thinking of the danger, Saucy Easdaile started for the old boathouse.

It was much given over to rack and ruin, for Uncle Easdaile was not an adventurous man. But his gamekeeper kept one boat in decent repair. The little tarred shed in which it abode stood in a creek off the main tidal channel of the Water of Creel,

which, in front of the village of Langton, spreads out into a shallow lake nearly a mile wide, with wooded islands and pleasant rocky shores. Saucy had often been out with Dinky on the 'Lake,' as it was here called, with Dinky, and in later days with Toady Lion also. But as they had always gone at the safe time of the flowing tide, the little girl had not the least knowledge of the dangers into the midst of which she was venturing at full ebb.

Saucy brushed through the dewy grass, pushing aside the undergrowth of birch and alder, till she came out upon the open heather above the Loch. The 'Lake' of Creel spread away to north and south, steel-grey and glimmering like the blade of a new knife. There was a little ridgy ripple in the midst which showed that the tide was running hard out, and a smooth-washen line showed along the opposite shore, as level as if it had been ruled with a wet ruler. Any one but a girl brought up far from the salt water could have told that the tide was emptying fast into the sea, and that it was hardly a time even for grown men to venture upon the treacherous Solway currents.

But little Saucy had no fear. Why, indeed, should she? What is the good of Heaven with its eyes of many stars, if it be not to keep watch over such?

The boathouse at last! Saucy came on it suddenly, and had a moment of dismay lest it should be locked. So it was; but the gamekeeper, who had last seen to it that the boat in which he visited the rocky islands remained water-tight, had not paid much attention to the sides of the house itself. So that Saucy easily pushed herself through the gaping boards, dragging Jacko after her, and so stepped into the boat.

But she had to get out again, in order to reach the chain which, happily as she thought, was not padlocked, but only thrown with two turns about the snibbing-post. There were two oars lying cuddled up against the side, a baling tin, and, in a locker, a rusty knife. But Saucy, resolved to follow closely her model, left them all behind her, except the tin scoop, and with her small hands began to push the round tubby boat out into the stream.

It was no light job. *Bump* she went against one side of the boathouse! *Thump* against the other! The boat hung for a long time on the threshold, for there was a swirl setting in towards the little creek-mouth at that point, and Saucy always floated back, as if some kind hand were pushing her back into the safety of the boathouse.

But Miss Easdaile had not been provided with that determined little curl of her upper lip for nothing. Her Aunt Rachel always said that she was an obstinate child, three times worse than Dinky when you got her roused. And this time Saucy really *was* roused. She lifted the rudder from its place, and though it was a heavy weight for a child, Saucy pushed with it so fiercely against the angle of the boathouse, that she sent the boat a long way out into the river, quite away from the power of the swirl.

She drew a long breath when this was done, and staggering again to the stern, she leaned over and tried hard to slip the rudder back into its place. But the swerve and push of the water as it began to stream backwards from the sides (so it seemed to Saucy, at least) kept her from getting the little pins into their eyes. Then her foot slipped on the three-cornered movable floor, and she was as near as

possible over the edge into the water. As it was, her arms were wet to the armpits, and her throat gave a strange empty little sound, as with a heave and a leap the rudder floated away.

Nevertheless the mystery of the coming night elated her. She was going to find Dinky and —Sir Toady the Unfaithful. How—she did not know. But somehow. At any rate they would find her. And *then* they would know—she could not tell very clearly what it was that they would know. But, at any rate, that they could not play with *her*. If *they* could not keep their words, like boys—she would show them how a girl could keep hers.

Then she began to settle herself in the bottom of the boat. She had arranged the hood of the Harris cloak for a pillow, when she remembered how in the story the boat had been steered by a dumb man. What was it that it said? Oh yes!

'The Dead steered by the Dumb!' That was awkward; there was no one at all to steer her boat, 'as she went down to Camelot.' No—one—but—Jacko! Well, was not Jacko both faithful and dumb—all she now had in the world to love her. (She sobbed a little here.) So she kissed her dumb servitor, and arranged him in the stern near where the pole of the lost rudder had been; and once again she stooped and kissed his honest woolly head, and left him, his long tail dragging in the stream behind for a steering oar, and perhaps guiding the boat down to Camelot just as safely as anything else.

Then Saucy lay down and drew the cloak close about her. Her hair would not stream in the wind, as it ought, nor yet float, a drowned Saucy's hair, amid the nets at sea! But that she could not help. For, quite recently, Aunt Rachel had had it cropped

short like a boy's. However, when she felt the first lift and swirl of the mid-current, little Saucy said her prayers. First, of course, there was the Lord's Prayer. Then 'Now-I-lay-me-down,' and then what she called 'an extra' — that is, a prayer she didn't *have* to say, which she might say or not according to circumstances, and which might be added to at discretion if there were anything, such as a dolly with blue eyes, that she wanted very, very much. Sometimes this 'extra' helped her to get what she wanted. Mostly not, however, at least in her Aunt's house. Prayers didn't work there somehow, as they did at home in Australia with her arms tight about her father's neck.

This was Saucy's prayer in the boat as she tossed on the swift waters which were bearing her towards the open sea.

'O Lord Jesus, make Dinky and Toady Lion good boys. Or if You can't *quite* manage that—oh, make them sorry! Make them ever so sorry for telling lies and leaving their poor little Saucy all alone when they runned away. It wasn't kind, was it, Lord Jesus? But don't get too angry with them, because they are only boys. And *You* know what boys are, Lord Jesus. And (rattled off very fast) make me a good girl, for Christ's sake. Amen.'

And so with the watching stars winking and astonished, and the boat beginning to pitch a little in the jabble of the outer firth, Saucy Easdaile slept the sleep of safety and perfect innocence.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE LIGHTHOUSE OF THE CROACH

Away out on the point of the Great Ross of Solway, ten long sea miles from the estuary of the Creel, rises above the wash of water the tall white pillar of the Croach Lighthouse. It is not one of the newest sort, with electric lights wheeling and flashing high above the sea-floor.

Indeed, it is considered rather antiquated in its equipment. But honest paraffin, 'Doty' burners, a good oil-engine, and careful tending make the Croach what it is—one of the landmarks of the sailor feeling his way in some of the most dangerous seas in the world.

A red isle is the Great Ross of the Croach, as, indeed, its name imports. Near the opposite Mull the granite of the higher coast-hills breaks down suddenly into a low, long peninsula rough with heather and gorse. Then comes a league-long reach of reef, showing only black fin-backs at low water, like a school of killer-whales, or spouting foam when the tide comes up over them strong from the southward. Then you see the island of the Great Ross, and on its outmost point in the full swirl of the Seven Tides, as the place is called, behold, the noble Croach Lighthouse!

For the month of which we write Dick Finnan and William Bryan were the keepers of the Croach, both sturdy men of the quiet seriousness of demeanour common to their calling. Dick, however, was turning grey of head and whisker, a broad, thick-set, kindly man with little to say for himself, but a great power of listening to Billy Bryan. Billy was his second in

command, a much younger man, kinky-haired as a 'nigger,' with teeth that glittered continually, and a tongue that was never still.

It was Dick's early morning aloft with the lenses in the young sunshine. Billy had kept the last watch, and having extinguished the lights, was now snoring in his bunk. But Dick moved whistling about on the upper platform—and as he rubbed and squinted this way and that at the shining prisms and ribbed condensing lenses, the old man meditated.

'A month of the sky above and the earth beneath—not so much earth neither—and Billy! Yesterday we got our supplies, and bar a gale or a brig ashore, we will hear only the sea-maws till the first o' next month. Why, it 'ud be scarce quieter in one's grave than here on the Great Ross!'

On the Croach Dick Finnan was not really unhappy. Indeed he enjoyed his month of the light far more than his time ashore, where there was little going on except perhaps a cart passing in a morning, an event which sent the village wives of Palnackie to their doors and kept them talking and clacking there for hours.

Now at the Croach there was always something happening.

'Ah,' said Dick Finnan to himself, rubbing the door-mat of grey hair which hung casually beneath his chin, as if blown there by a high wind, 'you have not been all morning asleep, Master Solan. It's no short way from Ailsa, to have come so far before five of the morning!'

'But what in the name of wonder is that?' he cried, astonished. 'A boat in the scour of the race! Where's that glass? There's something in it, as I am

a living man. Billy, Billy, run to the reef!’

Billy came to his feet still asleep but all standing, and was on the platform in a jiffy, his striped shirt fluttering out like a banner in the light morning wind.

‘Aye, it's somebody, alive or dead,’ he said, after a brief inspection; ‘and if we don't get that boat out of the water in ten minutes, she will be on the teeth of the reef, and be made matchwood of before our eyes.’

The little boat was rocking lightly and almost daintily on the current which ran along the landward side of the reef. But if it should once turn the Croach point, it would be in the dread ‘Suck of the Seven Tides,’ and, as Billy expressed it, be made matchwood of before their eyes.

As Dick and Billy stood on the little spit of rock, it became evident that the current ran strong to the southward, and that the boat, with its burden, would pass at least twenty yards away and just clear of Croach point.

‘Bless my soul, there's a baby in it!’

And indeed Dick Finnan was not far wrong, because Saucy's face, a little damp with the spray, and rosy with the fanning of the salt winds of the firth, lay sweetly pillowed on her small hand like a babe's in its cot.

‘Hold my jacket—I'm going!’ cried Dick Finnan.

But Billy Bryan was in better case for the water. Simply letting his shirt fly out on the wind, he plunged in, and with twenty powerful strokes, he had seized the bow of the boat just as it swung round to pass into the white acreage of turbulent waters which boiled southward across the Race of Croach.

He glanced over the bows anxiously for an oar. But, seeing none, with a sudden determination he caught at a fragment of dangling anchor-chain, and struck out for the land.

'Run to the point—Judson's Point, Dick, and throw me the rope as I pass! I can't make the shore straight!'

Dick flew to a little erection of flotsam boards piled behind the oil-tank at the base of the lighthouse. He snatched at one of the smaller coils of rope, and lifting it, ran down the black and seaweedy rocks with far more agility than his rotund figure would have suggested.

With a jerk of one hand he pulled away the lanyard, to which was attached the watch which kept the official time of the establishment on the Croach, and for whose safe keeping he was responsible to the most honourable the Commissioners of Northern Lights. The chronometer dropped on a little bank of shingle and fragments of dulse, where it lay, face upwards, ticking contentedly away.

Then with eyes glued on the sleek wet head of his mate, and on the little cockle-shell of a boat dotting and dipping behind, Dick Finnan ran up to his armpits in water, and stood ready to fling the rope. The end of the coil fell with a *whop* in the boat. Billy had a double turn round the thole-pin in a moment, and Dick was walking steadily out upon the firm black back of the reef, while the boat and Billy followed quietly till they both found themselves on the pebbly shelter of Judson's Cove.

CHAPTER TWELVE

BILLY BRYAN'S CASTAWAY

'Bless my heart *and* soul—a girl, a little girl! Run for the brandy, Billy!' cried Dick Finnan.

'I'll run for my clothes, if *you* please,' grunted Billy, 'but—I'll fetch the brandy.'

The stimulant, nevertheless, was not needed. For when Billy returned, clothed according to the regulations of the service, he found a quaint little figure in a Harris cloak sitting up on the warm sand of the cove, and talking to his mate.

'She won't tell me who she is—or else can't!' said Dick in an undertone. 'What in the world shall we do with her?'

'Well, we can't send her adrift again, can we, Dick?' growled his mate. 'What a fool you are! What does it matter whether she can remember who she is or not? Mebbe if you had been all night out in a small boat, and fetched up on the Croach reef within an inch of Kingdom Come, you might have been a bit rocky in your dates too, Dick Finnan!'

Then Billy, having thus sharply reprimanded his senior, turned to Saucy.

'You're *my* salvage,' he said; 'hungry, my pretty?'

Saucy, glad to be rid of awkward questions as to who and what she might be, and how she came to be there, answered that she did not feel very hungry at the moment, but that if she had something to eat, she thought that perhaps...

'There now, old Shellback,' cried Billy, with huge contempt; 'see—she will talk all right to me. What

might your name be, darling?’

Billy Bryan said ‘darlint,’ or the next thing to it, owing, as he explained, to having been brought up by a grandmother who ‘came from the ould country.’

‘Saucy!’ replied that young person, now completely at her ease; ‘and give me your hand to help me up.’

Billy Bryan, much flattered, would have mounted her on his shoulder, but Saucy, not yet prepared for so much friendliness, declared her determination to walk. Her eyes were now fixed on the big white granite pillar, from the lantern of which the sunshine was reflected in a broad glare.

‘That’s a lighthouse,’ she said; ‘I know! For I often saw them on the voyage—oh, plenty of them.’

At this both men pricked their ears.

‘Now we’ll have it,’ murmured Billy; ‘I’ll get it out of her if any able-bodied man can.’

‘The voyage from where, my duck?’ he asked, in a softly encouraging tone.

‘From Australia!’ said Saucy simply.

The men gazed blankly at each other.

‘From Australy!’ said Billy, repeating the word after her; ‘you come all the way from Australy?’

Saucy nodded. ‘And Dinky, too,’ she added simply.

‘Who is Dinky?’

‘Dinky is my brother,’ said Saucy, with an air of infinite sadness. Evidently she was remembering everything now. How much she meant to tell these men was quite another matter. Anyway, it would be such fun to go on living in that nice white tower. Billy and the man they called Dick were not quite the Great King Arthur and his true knight Lancelot, but still they looked kind enough, and they talked

SIR TOADY CRUSOE

confidently of things to eat. So it would be all right.

Still looking at Dick Finnan, Billy asked his next question.

'And what might have become of Dinky, your brother?'

The little girl instantly sat down and began to cry.

'Lost,' she cried, and then again more softly, '*lost!*'

She was thinking of that cruel Other, who was yet more lost to her. Well, they would be suffering for it now. Ah, they would be sorry! They would be still more unhappy if she had to live all her life in a tall lighthouse, and never be heard of any more. Dick and Billy signed to each other. This explained it. A homeward-bound ship had been wrecked, and by some sea-miracle these two young ones had got off in a boat, the last survivor to be cast ashore safely at the foot of the Croach Lighthouse.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

SAUCY IN THE STORM

Saucy woke with a pleasant sense that she was in the pantry at home, sleeping in a bag of pease-meal. The cook was making pea-soup, with cheese in it, and macaroni, flavoured somehow with shoe-strings and lamp-oil!

She wondered how the soup would taste, and was on the point of telling cook to please be sparing of the lamp-oil, when she opened her eyes, and saw the dark face of Billy Bryan, whose eyes, black as beads, were fixed upon her. Behind him, looking over his shoulder, peered the grey, weather-beaten visage of the man he had called Dick.

'My preservers!' said Saucy, remembering it was what the heroine said in the 'Wreck of the White Ship.' She decided quickly that in such a nautical atmosphere it was no use saying anything about Elaine the fair, Elaine the lovable, Elaine the lily maid of Astolat.

Billy and Dick grinned and nudged one another like schoolboys.

'Not quite come to her little self yet,' said Dick; 'she wants a life-preserver, she says.'

'G-r-rrr—out!' retorted Billy, 'ye ould chump—she is only calling us her preservers, and I dare say is askin' the blessing of the Holy Virgin upon us! And it's not your father's son that's out of the need of it, Dick Finnan!'

The sun was glimmering in through a little narrow window very deeply set in the wall of the lighthouse. A couch had been hastily made up for Saucy on certain sacks of provisions, on top of

which the mattress reclined very cosily, a bundle of sea-birds' feathers rolled in a sheet making a comfortable pillow. The window was open, and the sea could be heard talking cheerfully to itself outside, whispering and clapping its palms, as if encoring the sunshine and the wind.

'I'm hungry now,' said Saucy, sitting up. 'But, oh—where's my Jacko?'

And with a sense of shameful neglect her mind reverted to her precious son.

'Look beside you, Miss!' said old Dick, grinning with delight.

Saucy turned, and there, sure enough, reclining on the bag of pease-meal, and with his long tail wrapped comforter-wise about his throat (sea-air is bad for the throat—parents and guardians cannot be too careful) lay Jacko!

'Oh, you darling! she cried, and clasped him in her arms. At that moment she felt that she needed nothing else to make her perfectly happy. Just to live on in a lighthouse and to have Jacko! She would have him taught the business. He would be the staff of her declining years. She would never think of Toady Lion any more. And as for Dinky—blank emptiness itself could not express how seldom her mind would dwell on Dinky.

The two lighthouse men accepted the notion that Saucy had been saved from the wreck of an Australian vessel homeward-bound to Glasgow, and as the questions they asked brought out no more details, they began to believe that the shock had, for the time being, taken away the little girl's memory.

'But it'll come back—sure,' said Billy Bryan confidently. 'It'll come back right enough. There was a sister's son of mine got a crack on the head at

Glasgow Fair, and for a dozen years he cudn't bear the sight of a Scotchman. And now, if ye'll believe it, he's livin' at Paisley on three pound a week and enjoyin' himself! Can I say more nor that?'

'You're a Paddy, or your grandmother was,' said Dick; 'what has your sister's son to do with this bit lass that caa's herself Saucy—which is no Christian-like name that ever I heard tell of!'

'Well, sure, Dick Finnan,' said Billy, 'if they was to call you Ould Numbskull and *me* Broth-av-a-Boy or Top-o'-the-Mornin', them wudn't be given names, ladled out with the holy wather by the minister or Father Burke, God bless him. But anny one that knowed us now, wud be at no loss to dishtribute them where they belonged, wud they now? Same with this pretty maid. She is saucy and she's called Saucy, and the mischief of a good name too for the likes of her!'

'Humph,' said the elder man, 'that tongue of yours roars like the lantern ventilator on a windy night, and has as much sense to it too!'

Meanwhile Jacko and his mother were out wandering on the little island of the Ross. First Saucy went to see that the boat, which was her Uncle Clarence's, had been safely drawn up. For she was a careful girl, and had no wish that Uncle Easdaile should lose by her in the long run. The boat had been lifted clear of the reach of the waves into a kind of shelter. There was, however (she saw with sorrow), a great rent in the bottom near the stern. For Billy Bryan had reached her just as her keel struck upon the first tooth of the reef.

Saucy felt that she must save up and pay for the repair of this. That would be only fair, and it was a comfort to remember that she had as much as

fourpence in copper in her bank, safe out of reach of her aunt. Never had Saucy dreamed that there could be such a delightful place in the world. Little coves filled with pale, rose-coloured shells that tasted salty in the mouth, then a heap of wave-worn cockles, again another where shells of all sorts were heaped together. Ah, there was her treasured leg-o'-mutton—and another and another and another! Many that she did not know the names of, but made up names for herself out of her own head. There were pretty pink *tellinas*, which Saucy called Blushers. Yellow and white ones of the same sort, only larger, she named Curds-and-Cream. The long, ribbed razor-shells became Sides-of-Beef, and the rare *chitons* Little Boatikins.

The Croach was of all games the very finest. The big white lighthouse, the store-places with locked doors, and the mysterious numbers and letters on them, Saucy studied them all, and had her own explanation for each one. Then the lighthouse itself always looked so kind and strong and friendly. She felt that she was going to love it very much. This first day Dick and Billy Bryan did not interfere with her in any way, but one of them was always watching her secretly from the platform at the base of the lighthouse, or squinting over the railing as they went and came about the lantern.

When they passed they nudged each other silently and winked as at a rare joke. What a blessing this had not happened during their month on shore. They were the lucky ones. Presently, to crown all, Saucy brought them up each a little button-hole of sea-pinks, creamy sea-kale, and pale lavender rocket. The two men were immensely delighted, and Billy Bryan held the small girl up so

that she could pin the trophy on the lapel of Dick's pilot-coat.

'There!' he cried, 'Dick Finnan, ye hairy sinner, never have ye had the like of that from a pretty lady. And the more shame to you that's no better than a poor wizened ape of a bachelor at your age. Faith, as for me, I'm going to get married my first shore-leave, unless so be as Misthress Saucy here will be so kind as to wait for me!

That night, beneath her rugs, Saucy lay brave and cosy on her bed. Something in the strangeness of her surroundings kept her wakeful. That is, she slept and waked, and slept again, only to start up and listen. She was not afraid. Oh no, she was quite happy, but she listened to the wind outside that passed shore-ward in a fine hurl of storm and noise. She felt the faint but quite distinct shock and tremble of the lighthouse, when a huge green wave reared itself and struck the parapet, throwing a gigantic spout of froth and foam as high as the lantern. These kept her from sleeping soundly. Also there was a faint smell of rancid oil from the birds' feathers, which disconcerted Saucy. She kept telling herself that Jacko liked it, for he was sleeping soundly. And so, like a good mother, she settled herself not to mind it also. Besides, Dick and Billy were so kind, and had taken so much trouble in getting everything ship-shape for her. She had a basin, soap, a new tooth-brush, lovely hard biscuits to nibble at during the night, and a glass of water, for there was a delightfully clear and limpid spring on the island.

Saucy lay listening to the storm, and at each shriek that pierced above the steady roar of its mighty voice, she huddled more cosily into the

Government blankets, till only the least little tip of her nose was left to breathe through.

'I like it—oh, I like it! And they all think I'm dead. Instead of which I'm so comfortable! And you can't get at me, you old wind, not if you try ever so!'

This was hardly the spirit in which Elaine the Lily Maid had gone to her fate, to say nothing of Ophelia. But Saucy was nothing if not various in her moods, and all that is left to us is just to report these as carefully as may be.

Then in the brief spells of quiet which came sometimes, Saucy could hear the clicking of the clockwork running with well-oiled pinions, making a soothing murmur through all the night, and now and then at regular intervals a broad light flickered silently across the deep window-sill, leaving the night still darker behind it. It was the flare of the lantern beam up aloft, warning ships to keep well out from the dangerous skerries of the Great Ross.

It was not yet morning when Saucy rose and dressed herself in the grey dark. She put on a woollen skirt and her Harris cloak; then she stole up the stairs on bare and silent feet. Through every window the wind shouted at her. She could feel the tower rock and tremble like a tree that sways in a storm. Up and up she went! There was a chink of light half-way up, and she heard the snoring of Billy in his bunk. Again higher and higher! A door gave to her hand, and she stood giddy and astonished, blinking owlshly in the flash and glitter of lights, polished metal, blinding bull-eyes, shining glass, and old Dick sitting there calmly with his Bible; the clockwork humming and circling about him, and the pale blue glass of the lantern making a tent of quiet, shutting him off from the murk and terror of the

night.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

'NAME AND COUNTRY UNKNOWN'

It had all passed away in the morning. Outside the sea was still high, indeed far more dangerous than it had been when it covered the Croach rocks and reefs with furlongs of tormented whiteness. Slow, like a mighty hammer swung by a giant, the after-swell rose, stood a moment poised, and then smote the solid platform of granite masonry with the fair-and-square stroke of its mighty green sledge. The whole island seemed to rock beneath the blow, and the foam mounted in a sudden white pillar which made the lighthouse tower grey and dingy beside it.

It was Dick who took Saucy aside and told her very exactly where she might go that day—not on any account on the platform, not even out and in the lighthouse by the narrow ladders which she had been so proud of climbing only yesterday. She must keep strictly to the crown of the island, and if she wandered on the shore to seek for shells, it must only be on the protected inner side, where the waters were comparatively waveless and quiet.

For some time Saucy was quite content with her restricted privileges. A few half-wild goats were playing bo-peep and follow-my-leader among the craggy grey knobs of Croach granite. And though they would not allow Saucy to come near them, not having been introduced, she could watch them quite happily from afar.

And once—oh, once—when she had lain down between two humps of stone to shelter from the wind, and was curling and uncurling her bare pink

toes in the sun, a tiny kid, with horns just budded, came and looked at her with childlike eyes. Saucy would have liked so dearly to make friends. But she knew well what would happen if she did. So instead she froze herself into stillness. She did not even let the sand trickle between her toes, but held them close together, with a little hillock of the fine dry dust upon them.

The kid gazed long and long, studying her intently. Then, as if moved by a spring, it made a sudden graceful leap straight into the air as high as Saucy's head. Then, coming down lightly as a feather, it began to browse, as Saucy said, 'just to show how much it didn't care.'

Then came its mother and whinnied a weird little cackle of a summons high up on the rock-face. The kid obeyed, and the next moment Saucy could see it nosing against its mother's side, its silly little rag of a tail nearly shaking itself off with delight.

She thought it was gone for good, her little Corny. Yes, it was called Corny. She knew as well as if she had been its godmother. But it came back—dear, good Corny. All the morning these two young things, equally wild and equally innocent, kept peeping and 'playing pretending' with one another. Corny was interested in Saucy, and Saucy in Corny. But Corny's mother was the great difficulty. She kept a strict watch, and gradually withdrew her offspring towards the northern part of the island, Saucy following carefully, so as not to lose them to sight altogether.

It was while she was intently observing Corny, that Dick Finnan, on the watch in his turn for Saucy, as he went and came with oil-cans and dusters, suddenly missed the little girl. At first he

thought she had merely gone behind a rock. The wind was enough to make any one seek shelter. For as the tide turned it began to come in gusts from the high westward, though the sunshine remained brilliant and the distant sea sapphire and snow.

Dick waited a while for Saucy to reappear. Then he grew restless. Could she have wandered back to the platform, which was still being hammered by the solid green rollers, though now the wind from the west was beginning to break them up a little? Or might she not have clambered out on the point of the reef? He must go and see. So murmuring a prayer, for on shore he was a godly man, Dick Finnan set off to make the circuit of the little island.

The breakers were talking all about. He could see them come proudly in, the wind blowing their tops off in a fine spray, which beat against his face not unpleasantly as he climbed. But at the first touch of the shining black fins of the reefs, they fell back in a creamy smother. Then collecting their forces for a last effort, they rallied and came sweeping on up the little reaches and channels which cut into the cliff barrier of the Great Ross.

But still no little girl in a fluttering cloak of grey, dragging a forlorn monkey with a long white tail, could he see. In fact, no Saucy, or anything like her. Dick began to feel alarmed. He shouted, but the cries of the sea-birds disturbed, or pretending to be disturbed, in their nesting, and the loud ceaseless calling of the sea out on the reef, quite drowned his voice. He remembered the fog-horn back at the lighthouse, but after all that might only frighten her the more if he set it blaring in the clear blue morning. Besides, (the thought came quickly into his heart), it might bring some one to the lighthouse

to claim Saucy, and Dick for one did not want to lose her. At least, not yet.

He had reached the utmost point of the isle. Nothing was to be seen except the smoke of a steamer far away to the westward, blown by the gusts close along the sea-floor. What should he do next? He began to be thoroughly alarmed.

High on the crest of the isle Dick Finnan, with his hand shutting out the intolerable brightness of the sun, could see the goats bunched together, their heads all turned in one direction. Could the little girl have fallen from some pinnacle? She had been forbidden the shore, lest the waves should sweep her off the narrow granite piers. But Dick reproached himself that he had said nothing about the inland rocks.

He climbed hastily upwards, keeping to the crown of the isle, and ever and anon turning aside to ascend to some hump, or looking cautiously out along the side of a precipice. The goats still kept their places, nor did they appear to remark his cautious advance. The slippers with thick soles of felt which Dick used about the lighthouse made no noise over the rocks. Suddenly Dick seemed to take root. Then after a moment's pause he cowered down and began to worm his way over a little crest of rock, carefully stalking some object beneath him. From the top of the lighthouse Billy Bryan watched his mate with astonishment. He laid down the condenser he was polishing and stood agape. Had Dick suddenly gone mad? What could he be after? Not game, for he had not his gun with him.

But what Dick had seen was Saucy—Saucy in the act of kneeling at the foot of a long and narrow mound.

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It was the cemetery of the isle, and that long narrow mound of greener green was a grave. Saucy had stumbled on it quite by accident, while trying to scrape acquaintance with her shy little kid. It was in a still hollow, screened from the violence of the wind by a range of crags, a mere green bowl with rough precipitous sides, open only to the east where a seldom-used path from the lighthouse just showed, and no more, on the short dense turf.

Bending down, Saucy read the rough inscription on a stone at the head, the work of the leisure moments of some lighthouse-keeper.

TO THE MEMORY OF
A SAILOR
NAME AND COUNTRY UNKNOWN
CAST UP HERE BY THE SEA
ON THIS ISLE BURIED
BY
S. M'CALMONT
June 10, 1863
'The Sea shall give up the Dead
that are in it.'

It touched the little girl very profoundly—that lonely grave in the green silence, for the wind passing high overhead among the crags of the isle, was no more than a far-off whisper. This was Saucy's kind of pathos. Her heart cried out that she was like this sailor. If she died, would they set up another such stone for her, there, in that place, under that blue, clean-swept sky? She too was a castaway. They did not know her name any more than his.

So Saucy kneeled down and prayed for the man

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'cast up here, name and country unknown.' The words made an excellent description of the lot of men on earth, but Saucy was too young to know it. And even the straitest Protestant need not grudge the child's prayer that the dead castaway's soul might find Another Country, even an heavenly.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE BEGINNING OF THE SEARCH

And all this time, what of the searchers? What of Dinky? above all, what of Toady Lion?

Easdaile House, the village, the whole parish of Langton, were in a great turmoil because of what the local paper called the sudden, unforeseen, and complete disappearance of Saucy. For the first hour or two even Sir Toady was puzzled what to do. He and Dinky looked furtively at each other. Guilt unrevealed was on their souls. It was they, and they alone, who had driven her to this—in his yet more secret heart Sir Toady said, 'I am the man!'

Theirs had been the wrong. Theirs it must be to put that wrong right. But Dinky and his leader knew better than to rush wildly about here and there, shouting and waving lanterns. They had a better opinion of Saucy. At least she had had a good apprenticeship, and if she took it in her head to run away, in order to follow them, she would surely do no dishonour to her master, even to Toady Lion. And he in his turn was a pupil of Hugh John Picton Smith.

Dinky and Sir Toady met in the barn to hold there a council of war. It was dark, and they sat together holding each other's hands, like lovers. But it was not affection, only a sort of rat-insurance. For many of these rodents were to be heard 'firsling' and cheeping among the piled sheaves of last year's corn. And presently one, evidently a bold Livingstone or Franklin, climbing on the rafters overhead, fell with a *whop* right on top of the 'fanners' against

which the boys were leaning. It was close quarters, but Sir Toady prevented a stampede by calling out in a firm tone, 'Only girls are afraid of rats and mice!'

The speech kept all taut. The garrison continued to hold the fort, but—Dinky put up the collar of his coat. There might be other explorers overhead on the rafters. Let no one scoff at Dinky's courage till he tries sitting in a barn in the dark and being bombarded with rats which descend upon him from the roof. I do not say 'on her,' for the thing is unthinkable.

'Saucy has gone to seek us,' said Toady Lion at last; 'but of course it's no use telling them that!'

Dinky agreed, with deep scorn and disgust for the mental capacity of grown-ups.

'No more is it any good going on like that,' continued the Chief Plotter, waving his hands towards the great open door of the barn, through which could be seen the lanterns of the searchers flitting distractedly hither and thither on the hillside and tailing out far up the moor.

'Well then,' Sir Toady summed up, 'what are we to do? That's the question.'

Dinky waited to be told. He had his thoughts, but he was well aware that what had to be done would be put into words when Sir Toady Lion had made up his mind.

There was a long pause, filled up with the squeakings and the scufflings of the rats. They made Dinky nervous, for a Queensland boy never hears a rustling without instinctively reaching for a stick to kill a snake, or stretching his legs to leave the spot hastily. Shame and the grasp of his comrade's hand, however, once more kept Dinky steady.

'First, then,' said Sir Toady solemnly, 'we must

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start early tomorrow to find Saucy. We must never come back till we do. It might have been wrong to run away afore, but now 'tis right.'

'But,' objected Dinky, 'now they're all foozling about like a lot of silly bees when the hive's kicked over. What will they be when there's three of us to go look for?'

'All in good time,' said Sir Toady, with an assumption of Hugh John's Commander-in-Chief manner. 'I had thought of that.'

'I know you had,' assented Dinky, who saw no specks in his sun. 'I only asked.'

'Yes,' continued Sir Toady, 'we will leave letters behind us telling Uncle what we are going to do, and that they need not worry about Saucy, coz we will find her. We'll tell them that we have taken a vow, and sworned a great solemn oath—'

'We'll get whopped for swearin' when they catch us,' said Dinky.

'Not that kind of oath—it's like they do in courts. Besides, we needn't really swear it, you know. It's only a thing to put in a letter. Then we'll get a couple of bags and fill them with all the things I thought of for running away to sea.'

'Where will you get the bags?' said Dinky.

'Oh, be quiet, will you—driving a fellow crazy!' cried Toady Lion pettishly. 'Let me think. This thing is jolly serious. What we have to do now is to get the letters written. We can't do that in the house. Somebody would be sure to come sneaking in. Let's go to Mr. Jeffray's. He will be miles away, and Aggie Inglis will give us all we want.'

So said, so done. The boys slid through the back door of the barn into the little orchard, and then over a wall into a pitchy-dark lane. Groping their

way down this, they wound their bodies through a gap in the manse hedge, and so with infinite precautions to the window of the minister's study. They could as easily—nay, far more quickly—have followed the avenue, and entered by Mr. Jeffray's front-door; but there is a schoolboy way of doing things which does not change with the centuries.

Cautiously they raised the sill, sure of finding the study empty. A sermon lay on the floor—not a new sermon, but one that Mr. Jeffray was touching up, by fitting it with a new text, a head, and a tail to suit an 'occasion,' together with an 'application' which was meant to fetch a certain stubborn hearer in the back pews.

This had been thrown down when the idea for a new canto of his poem had suddenly come upon him. The Bible from which he had read the chapter at prayers was still open at the place. The house was very silent, for was not Aggie Inglis at the moment wringing her hands and bewailing 'the puir lost lamb' with her nearest and dearest gossip?

Without a word, and with the presence of mind of the born leader, Sir Toady annexed a sheet of paper and buckled to the severe task of literary composition. Sir Toady was a Conservative on principle—especially in spelling. He had heard his father say that in old times everybody spelt as it seemed good to themselves; and that often, in the same letter, a gentleman of education would spell a word three or four different ways. This pleased Sir Toady. He stood for the good old times, when Britons never, never, never, etc.—even to the laws of orthography. It was always necessary for him to form the letters with his tongue as well as with his pen. He had more freedom of prophecy that way.

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And such is the force of sympathy, that, Dinky's tongue, behind the writer's back, followed the up and down strokes with equal fidelity. Many tongues made labour light. The letters were written. They shall be given in their several places.

Finally the honest scribe scratched on a separate sheet these words: 'Dinky and me took two sheets of your paper and two enflops. THAT wood be a hapny (I/2) at Watson's in the villitch shop. But we have no change. Therefor we leaf you a penny. You can keap the change. So good-bye from Dinky and T. Lion.'

The penny was placed in a prominent position, and the whole simply and sufficiently addressed 'To MISRR JEFFRY ATT HOME.' AS they were going away a new peril crossed Sir Toady's mind. He took the coin, and thrust it into an envelope. He knew well the minister's carelessness as to money, so he scrawled on the outside in large letters-

'This penny was not pickt upp off the floare. It is from us, Dinky & T. Lion.'

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE FIRST SCALP ON THE LODGE POLE

In spite of all Toady Lion's vigour and determination of the evening, it is doubtful if the Saucy Relief Expedition would have started in the morning had it not been for Dinky. The thin, dark Australian, mere skin and bone laced with whipcord, probably did not require so much sleep as the bulkier brain and body of his leader, the child of a heavier race. It was not three-o'clock-in-the-morning courage that Sir Toady lacked. He was merely dead sleepy.

He yawned and blinked and goggled when Dinky, fully dressed and carrying his boots in his hand, 'joggled' him, using the shoulder as a lever.

'Lem' me 'lone,' he remarked crossly. 'What's row?'

Without a word Dinky placed two bags and two letters before him. At these Toady Lion gazed with woolly eyes, still full of the fluff of sleep. But they brought conviction. For, also without a word, he 'spooned' himself out of bed, and began to haul on his clothes as working men and sleepy boys do.

His head was already in the basin when Dinky whispered, 'You'd better stop swashing and spluttering, if you don't want Aunt on our track. Besides, as you've got to go in and pin the letters to their pillows, they had better not be sitting up on their elbows listening when you do that, else it'll be all up!'

'Pin the letters to their pillows—what rot!' growled Toady Lion, feeling it was too early to be polite. 'I

know where Aunt's 'toopee-scalpee' is. She always leaves it on the mirror in her dressing-room. And as for Uncle, I've got to put back the knife I borrowed to cut bread with, into his trowsies pocket. I shall pin the letter to his braces. That'll settle him.'

And this is why, while the cool sun of five o'clock was still slanting in at the window, a lady of severely Greek contour, with a plaid shawl draped from her shoulders, and her hair done '*a-la-snaky-Gorgon*,' as Sir Toady described it, stood by her husband's bedside with two pieces of conviction in her hand.

'Clarence,' she said in a voice like the first mutterings of the storm, 'wake up. What have you been doing with my front hair?'

Clarence sat up without surprise, merely patient and long-suffering as always.

'To your front hair, Rachel?' he answered slowly; 'why, nothing!'

The answer seemed to infuriate the lady. She thrust a grizzled wreck something like a bottle brush, or a lamp-glass cleaner that has been too near the furnace, under his nose.

'You've burnt it,' she said, 'and now I shall have to get it matched from Paris!'

Mr. Easdaile stared blankly at the article, as if it were an intimate acquaintance whose name, by some strange chance, he could not recall.

'You've been fooling with that candle again in the dressing-room. Don't tell me!' said the lady.

Clarence did not tell her, because he had nothing to tell. He had, however, done so many absent-minded things, that on principle he never denied anything. Throwing the great brown Jaeger rug which lay on the bed-foot about his shoulders, he stalked into the next room. Here he began fumbling

with his clothes, where presently, pricking his fingers, his suppressed cry brought his wife to his side.

'What are you doing *now?*' cried she unsympathetically. 'And what's that?'

She snatched something white out of his fingers without apology. She also could not afford to be polite at five in the morning.

'It was pinned to my braces—I pricked my fingers!'

'Serve you right!' snapped the lady, tearing the letter open.

It read thus:—'MANSE OF LANGTON, CREELPORT.

'DEER UNCL, - We have swored a great owth, Dink and me, never to come back without we finds Sassy. We doan no where she is, but we has spissions. Doan worry. Weer all right. We took Aunt's bag-wif-a-strap. We left the price on the mantle-peece. It was bote at a Bazzar and it told on a ticket inside how much. Aunt was took in, but I leave the Brazilyan shillin out of Dinky's bank to pay for it. We can't change it here. Also I took the old bag with leather straps for carrying on your back you said I could have, and there is some things gone from the pantray too. But Aunt has near two pound in Dinky's bank which we can't get at with a knife, Aunt havin hid the key. She can pay herself out of that. Adew, deer uncle. We'll fetch Sassy back or die in the tempt. Your loveing Dingy and George till deth us do part.'

Aunt Rachel stood in amazement and indignation, holding the letter in her hand.

'Well, of all the—!' she gasped. And then, as a new thought struck her, she darted back to where she

had found her 'toopee-scalpee,' as Sir Toady named the fringe, which by day decorated her Roman profile. It had been particularly difficult in the dark, and half-asleep, to discover how to fix the envelope to the 'foundation,' and the whole to the back of a cane chair. So Toady Lion had to call in the assistance of their bedroom candle. And certainly from a decorative point of view this had been a mistake.

'I thought so,' cried the lady, rescuing another letter—though as a matter of fact she had never thought anything about it before. Her mind began to run on birch rods and very supple canes. She would have been resigned to attend to her two nephews on the spot—even pleased.

This was Aunt Rachel's letter:—

'DEER AUNT WRETCHHELL,—Watevver yoo miss in the pantray, it wasn't the servints nor the cat wot took it. But us. Only we left money to pay for the things. Unkl will tell you where. Doan't grieve for US. We doan't for you. Yoor truly neffews Dinky and George Picton Smith.

'P.S.—Where-eer we go, we think of you!'

'Clear, certainly, and to the point,' said Uncle Clarence, venturing to smile.

'You encourage them!' cried his wife, turning upon him; 'I knew you would. It only wanted that. You ought to be ashamed. Here these boys were left in your charge by their respective parents, and this is how it has turned out.'

'But, my dear,' stammered the unfortunate man, 'I really couldn't help it. I'm not any more to blame than —'

'Than I am!' screamed his wife; 'say it! Out with it! Oh, you shameless and ungrateful man—after all that I've done, wearing myself to skin and bone for you and yours!'

'I know—I know!—For goodness' sake don't go on like that, Rachel—the servants will hear!'

'What if they do?' sobbed the lady; 'they will only know that it is one more of your outrages—one more of the spites and insults you heap upon me because I am a poor, poor weak woman!'

'O Rachel! you are not—you are not indeed. Nobody could think you that!'

'Then I suppose you mean that I am a bold, bullying, masculine jig—yes, Mr. Easdaile, a jig — with nothing womanly about me. That's a pretty name to call your wife. But say it—tell it to the world! This shall not last for ever—no, indeed it shall not —'

And with a hysterical laugh Mrs. Clarence Easdaile swept out of the dressing-room, leaving her husband speechless, and reduced to gesticulating feebly with his hands.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE SAUCY EASDAILE RELIEF EXPEDITION

It may be taken for granted by all who have the least knowledge of Dinky, the prize Tracker of the Ringarooma Back Blocks, and of Sir Toady, the Von Moltke of many campaigns (*vice* General Napoleon Smith, gone to school), that their evasion from the house and grounds of Langton was a work of art. But all the more on this account it is not necessary to give any detailed information as to how they carried it out. It is quite sufficient to say that six of the morning saw the pair on the far side of the Creel estuary, posting away to the south as fast as their short boyish legs could be induced to carry them.

Dinky was full of questions, and now when nothing was pressing and it was not so discouragingly early in the morning, Sir Toady was more inclined to satisfy his curiosity.

'You see,' he said quite mildly, in answer to these inquiries, 'it was not at all a bad suggestion that of yours—that we should borrow a couple of Uncle's ponies. It might have come off all right in Queensland. But first of all, we don't want these people back there to follow us. Ponies make tracks. Then when we turned them loose, don't for a moment think that they would have gone straight home. No, they would have been searched for, and people would have seen us riding them, and we should have been run down directly.'

'The ports would have been watched!' said Dinky, recurring to his fixed idea.

'Your grandmother!' said Sir Toady rudely; 'shut

up, Dinky, and listen. *I'm* doing the talking.'

This was the exact way he had suffered under the consulship of Hugh John. It was his turn now.

'Now,' he continued in a milder tone, as Dinky did not venture to reply, '*I'll* tell you what I've made out. As soon as I heard about Saucy scooting, I says, What would *I* do in her place; if *I* wanted to find two boys that had runned off to sea? Why, go *to* the sea. Where is the nearest seaport—big one, I mean, where boys would go to find a ship? Why, Glasgow, of course, says you. And right you are, Dink.

'But then, you see, a girl—she wouldn't think that way. She don't know anything about big ships and little ships, an' captains, an' their wanting cabin-boys. The sea is the sea to her, and she will go the nearest way to get to it. Well, how's that? D'ye see, Dinky?'

Dinky shook his head gloomily. Such mental gymnastics were not for him. Give him Barravilla bush and a mixed trail, cattle and men and horses. He was 'on to' that, he admitted. But all this arguing. No, that he must leave to Toady Lion.

'What's the nearest way to the sea?' continued the knickerbockered Von Moltke. 'Why, how does the sea get up here? Twice a day when the tide comes, doesn't it? Well then, Saucy would go down with the tide.'

Dinky became pale and his eyes grew wild.

'D'ye mean — d'ye mean?' he stammered, but could get out not another word.

Sir Toady caught the thought in his face.

'That she drowned herself—not a bit, you ass!' he hissed furiously. 'Wasn't there a boat in the boathouse all ready? Wouldn't she get into that?'

Dinky stared blankly at the subtle schemer; who

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was so eager on his demonstration, and so pleased with his own cleverness. But Toady Lion had yet other surprises in store.

'So,' he continued, 'as soon as the hullabaloo got up that Sauce was missing—'course I pretended to get a lantern and go shouting about like the rest. But I didn't. No, not much. I bunked straight to the boathouse, and —'

He paused a moment to get his full effect.

'I found the boat gone, and the oars left behind!'

Dinky's face cleared, but not so completely as Sir Toady had expected.

'It must have been Tom the keeper,' he muttered, 'or the tide!'

'No, you ninny,' cried Sir Toady; 'would Tom the keeper have left the oars lying in the boathouse, if he had gone off cruising among the islands? Would the tide have put the padlock carefully on a shelf?'

'Perhaps it was on the shelf before!' said Dinky with strong good sense.

'Well, anyway,' said Sir Toady, taking a little parcel from his breast pocket, 'perhaps the tide dropped these!'

And he showed Dinky a dozen or two rose-leaves and a few large coral beads made of some cheap imitation.

Dinky gazed at these objects keenly.

'Yes,' he said at length, nodding his head repeatedly, 'I've seen Sauce with these red glass things! But what about the flowers?'

'They're the petals of some wild roses I got for Saucy yesterday forenoon!' he said impressively.

Dinky laughed discordantly, while Sir Toady blushed with vexation and indignation.

'Giving flowers to a girl!' scoffed Dinky. 'Ho, ho!'

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But Sir Toady was already stripping for combat. He deposited his sack on the ground, and had one arm out of his jacket. Then Dinky stopped him.

'It's silly to give a girl flowers,' he said, 'but it would be sillier to fight. Why, I could whop you and another fellow like you with one hand, and you know it! So what's the good? Besides, I take it all back. I'm sorry I laughed, Toadums, if it puts you in a whack. Besides, it's all so dasht clever of you, hanged if it isn't—to find out about Saucy when none of them could. It's precious good tracking, and I couldn't say more to Black Billy of Ringarooma!'

Higher praise or a handsomer apology could not be. And Sir Toady accepted it as handsomely.

'That's all right, old fellow!' he said. 'Let's have some breakfast!'

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE TRACKER OF THE BACK BLOCKS

The two boys were following the constantly varying and deeply indented line of the Creel estuary. The opposite shore now approached till it seemed as if they could skip a stone across the channel, and again retreated till the trees and rocks became a mere misty line far across the glimmer of the bay.

They went slowly. For Sir Toady *would* persist in poking his nose into every nook and corner, prowling along every creek, kicking up the pebbles in every sheltered cove, and generally behaving (so Dinky said) as if they had all eternity before them.

But Sir Toady Lion was not in the least affected by the sneer. He went plowtering on in his dreamy yet keen-eyed fashion, and though Dinky brought him all manner of things—crabs, damaged starfishes, pieces of coal and drift coke to identify as having belonged to Saucy—Toady Lion proceeded calmly with his task. His argument was a strictly personal one.

‘I know Saucy,’ he said, ‘and you don't mean to tell me she could be long in a boat without dropping something overboard. If it had been you, Dink, you would too—only it would have been yourself! And no great loss!’

Then Dinky, having returned to his right and obedient frame of mind, begged to be informed what sort of things he was to look for.

‘Oh, anything that a girl would have about her,’ said Sir Toady carelessly—‘belts, buckles, ribbons,

and so on.'

'The belts and buckles would float, of course, wouldn't they?' inquired Dinky softly.

'One word more out of your head,' said Sir Toady, scowling at him, 'and back you go!'

'Shan't!' said Dinky. 'If I've got to be licked for this, you come along and take your share!'

'Well,' said Toady Lion, still hurt in his feelings, 'you can sit on a rock up yonder, and eat all the grub, while I go on making the discoveries.'

'You haven't made any so far!' sneered Dinky, 'and we've wasted heaps of time!'

Sir Toady pointed to the highway which cut away directly to the south.

'There's the straight road,' he said; 'if you think that Saucy sailed Unc Clarence's boat along it, and that you will find little printed notices stuck in the stone-heaps to tell you which way she went—go on and find them. But don't interfere with me! I forbid you!'

After some trouble, which at one time threatened to become serious, Dinky finally apologised—more because Sir Toady, carrying the provisions, possessed, like the House of Commons, the power of the supplies, than from any real conviction of being in the wrong. Nevertheless he humbled himself so far as to receive further instructions with at least an outward show of meekness.

'Then,' continued Toady Lion, 'all the books say that when a boat is at the mercy of the waves, or drifting under an inegg-perienced crew, she always loses spars, masts, and so on. We can look for those.'

'But you know very well Uncle Easdaile's old tub had no masts—no, nor spars neither!' said Dinky

emphatically.

'How silly you are!' retorted Sir Toady; 'don't you see that it's the principle of the thing I'm giving you—the sort of thing you are to look for.'

'No, I don't,' persisted Dinky doggedly. 'We are, to look for Saucy, and not for masts and spars that don't exist and never did!'

After this Sir Toady Lion did not deign to argue any more. He only turned his back upon the Australian, and began to prosecute his own researches more conscientiously than ever. He prowled along the tide-mark, reckoning how far certain things might have floated before grounding—the tin can for bailing was what he had principally in his mind. He was certain that Saucy would let that fall overboard the first time she tried to bail a drop. He had seen her do it before. Then there were lockers, and loose planks—oh, a whole lot of things. Above all, there was Hope, beautiful Hope, shining in Toady Lion's own breast—that and the unbounded confidence in his Star, which in a discouraged world counts for so very much.

Toady Lion was letter-perfect in the theory of detection. There was not the least blade of grass trodden awry on the banks but he invented a tale as to how it came to be different from its fellows. If there was nothing remarkable, he invented a tale to explain how *that* came about too. The footmarks of a cow awoke wild dreams of Saucy being 'pully-hauled' out of the water by a cow's tail, climbing on her matronly back, and careering off into the Unknown, with Saucy's spurs dug deep in the sides of her Wild Mooky-Moo!

Sometimes Sir Toady came near laughing at these thoughts, but he knew Dinky's matter-of-factness,

so mainly he kept his imaginings to himself. This was the true secret why in most things Sir Toady loved to play a lone hand. He had a mind so teeming with ideas and possibilities, humorous and otherwise, that he always considered himself in the best of good company when alone.

Of course no one knew better than he, that ninety-nine out of the round hundred of such fancies were nonsense. But still when something likely did come along, he was all fixed and ready for it, and tackled the interpretation with joy.

'Hallo, Dinky,' he called up to that warrior, who was somewhat contemptuously strolling on the cliffs above, waiting (as he said) till Toady was ready to do something, 'here's some fat for you. Come quick!'

Being quite sceptical, Dinky came as slowly as he could.

'Hurry up there,' cried Toady Lion, 'it's serious—this is!'

When Dinky arrived on the spot, the butt-end of a little creek bordered by a steep sleetly bank of tidal mud, above which spread a few yards of sand and a mound of shingle, he awoke out of his dream, and regarded the marks with a kindling eye.

'I'm on in this act,' he said hurriedly. 'Toadums, something has been pulled out of the water here, and there's the tracks of the person that did it.'

'Yes,' said Toady easily, 'I *thought* it might interest you. Of course I saw as much as that myself. Now you have to follow it, and find out where the thing is, that was hauled out of the water just as the tide began to go down.'

'What if it were Saucy herself,' said Dinky, in an awed whisper.

'Nonsense!' cried Toady Lion; 'you a Tracker from

the Back Blocks!—G'way! Why, don't you see from the deep rut that it's something hard, and when they set it down it makes a long mark same as a cane does when they welt you, with a little dint at the end where the wax is. That's where it hurts!

'True for you, Toadums,' said Dinky, who was getting interested. 'And it's something heavy too. See where the feet have stood still a while. The man was tired, I bet. Then there's a mark just like the handle of a railway-barrow that they wheel luggage in.'

Here Toady was tempted to ask if Dinky thought that Saucy had made this the terminus of her journey, and had been met by a porter and barrow to take her things to the hotel. But he thought better of it, and discreetly kept the jibe to himself. He enjoyed it quite as much that way. Life was gay to our hero.

All the same, as Dinky had boasted, the Australian was decidedly 'on' in this piece. And Toady Lion gave much praise to the way in which he followed the trail over difficult ground, and how, when he came to a wide reef of rock, where all trace was lost, he cast about like a dog at fault. Certain circular marks like the discs of a huge penny about a foot across, occurring at irregular intervals, puzzled Dinky.

At last in a narrow lane they came upon an aged fisherman, busily baiting his hooks. He was sitting on a hacked bench at the gable-end of a tumble-down erection of tarred canvas and boards. He did not look over-pleased to see the boys. Indeed, he glowered at them from beneath his shaggy brows, and a mongrel cur yapped furiously from a barrel.

As usual, Toady Lion opened the ball.

'*Good-morning,*' he said, lifting his cap, for he had

early learned the power of courtesy—that is, with most people. He had, however, as it happened, miscalculated. For never having had any one take off his cap to him during a long and adventurous life, the aged fisherman and possible smuggler, regarded Sir Toady with the utmost suspicion.

‘Been down at the shore this morning?’ asked Sir Toady pleasantly.

‘What’s that to you?’ growled the old man, pausing to bite a cord or two with a set of excellent but tobacco-stained teeth.

‘Well,’ said Toady Lion, smiling, ‘we thought that you might have found something!’

‘Something wot you had lost,’ grunted the old man; ‘well, so I might. Only I didn’t! What might you be looking for?’

‘We have lost a boat with a little girl in it!’ said Sir Toady gravely.

The old man pushed his red knitted nightcap back and looked keenly at the speaker. Then quite suddenly he crooked his head upon his shoulder so far that it really seemed as if he meant to throw it away altogether (having no further use for it). Then he burst into a hoarse laugh.

‘Don’t gammon me!’ he cried; ‘boat and little girl—rubbidge! You are truanting, that’s what it is—‘playing the kip,’ as they call it here.’

‘You’re ‘rubbidge’—least what you say is,’ amended Sir Toady calmly. ‘And it’s little you know, if you don’t know that school’s down now!’

‘Bless me, so it be,’ said the old man, somewhat mollified; ‘and that, I suppose, is why I have you coming bothering me here! All boys should ‘a been hung when they was young,’ he added uncharitably; ‘I wonder why they weren’t!’

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'So as to leave some people who *deserve* to be hung, when they are old!' rapped out Sir Toady with considerable point. Dinky looked to see if the fisherman did not propose instantly to annihilate them, but the extraordinary old man only threw back his head again as if he would certainly rick his neck, and laughed discordantly. When he eased up into his natural position again, lo! he had become quite good-natured.

'You're a young vagabone,' he said to the hero; 'but when I were young, hang me if I weren't a scapegoat just like you, always a-saucin' of my elders and betters. And see what I 'a come to now!'

He held out a handful of bait.

'Were you down at the shore this morning?' said Toady breathlessly, eager to profit by the good humour, 'and, if so, what did you find?'

His manner had a suggestion of his father, the J.P. on the bench, which was not lost on the old man.

'Yes, your Honour, I were,' he said, fixing Sir Toady, with a twinkle in his rheumy eye. 'You see, I was after bait, which is there before your nose. For, little as you may think it, bait don't grow on bramble bushes, which there's a many of in them parts.'

'So *that*,' said Sir Toady, with a bitterly disappointed air, 'accounts for the round marks. It was the bottom rim of his pail. But what was the bar-mark, like the handle of a spade?'

'It *were* the handle of a spade, young law-an'-gospel,' chuckled the old man; 'strange as it may appear to one so innercent as yourself, that bucket o' bait ackshully refused to come out of itself, though I whistled 'Wapping Old Stairs,' 'Kitty o' Col'raine,' an' a selection o' the latest operatic airs,

concludin' with 'God Save the Queen'—me mentionin' Her diseased Majesty, not from any disrespect to the Royal Eddard... but because I had the honour of living so long in the same country and reign with her, that it's become a sort o' habit with me, as the sayin' is!'

He spoke all this with wonderful rapidity and vivacity, his red cap jerking up and down, and his little eyes twinkling with malicious pleasure.

After a few moments he resumed his meditation, shaking his head with pretended fierceness at the pail of bait.

'So them awkward brutes, havin' declined to be moved by music (which, as I had heard, soothes the savage beast), I had to carry a great hulking spade all that way to dig them out. And there is the very identical article a-leanin' again the fence at your elber. You are most welcome to take its very remarkable picture.'

'You don't belong to these parts, I hear,' said Dinky, who had not hitherto spoken.

The ancient mariner shifted his murky eyes to fix and measure the newcomer.

'No,' he said slowly, 'I've seen a heap o' trouble in my time. Providence, that kind pervider, has been sore on me. My sins has been many, as parson says. But *that* at least has been spared to poor owd Sam. I have the misfortune, sir, to be born an Englishman,' he added, 'but I bears it patiently, though I've lived a long while in this hungry country. But mercies has been mingled with my cup. I've never yet been took for a native. Again I thank you kindly.'

Sir Toady would dearly have liked to enter into a wit combat with this veteran, and Dinky had his eye on a suitable clod or two, with which to open his

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sort of discussion. However, time pressed. The boys felt that they must go further and see if perchance they could not fare better.

It could not well be worse.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

ADMIRAL THREE EYES

As before, Toady Lion courteously saluted the old man of the red cap. But, instead of replying to the salute, he rose grumbling, 'Oh yes, 'Good-day is cheap' and fattening food for ducks. But there's one or two vallybles scattered round my place, and I count on seein' you two off the premises afore I loses sight o' ye!'

So, grinning and chuckling, he set the can of bait aside, and moved towards the little wicket-gate with far more agility than his twisted limbs gave any promise of.

'Now there's one thing I like about you boys,' he confided as he went along. 'Ye'll have observed that I asked ye no questions as to where ye come from. I did not wish for to know your names. Nor, though ye outs wi' your questions like a hexaminin' magistrate about the maid i' the boat, ye never so much as hinted as to my name. Well, for that I am goin' to tell it ye mysel'. They call me in these parts Owd Admiral Three Eyes, on account o' the spy-glass wot I like to carry in my tail-coat pocket. But my right and only given name is nobbut plain Gearge Smith —'

'Hey ho, Uncle George,' cried Toady Lion, 'so's my name George Smith!'

Then suddenly recollecting himself, he added, 'But you must not tell any one. It's a great secret.'

'Well now,' cried Admiral Three Eyes, 'if this 'ere doan't beat cock-fightin'. Here's another George Smith, and ashamed of his name! Young gentleman,

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you've been up to tricks. I knows 'un—lads like you are allus up to tricks. Schoolmaster's been a-beatin' ye for your good! Don't deny it! I see the welts on ye, not to speak o' the shame on your cheek to deny your honest given name. An' such a name - *my* name - Gerge Smith!

Now Sir Toady has an instinct which seldom betrays him; the instinct of whom to trust. Dinky lacks it altogether. He is by nature suspicious as a wild animal once entrapped. But Toady Lion knows what he is doing. He has a favourite maxim.

'Long as 't isn't money, you can trust most any one. Lots o' people as looks bad—isn't!'

He had not arrived yet at the other proposition, 'Lots o' people as looks good—isn't!'

On this occasion he glanced just once into the unpromising twinkling eyes of the Admiral in the red knitted cap, and—to the astonishment of Dinky—told him all about it. Admiral Three Eyes blinked and grunted till the story was ended.

'Well, you're the sky-scraper!' he cried delightedly; 'regular royal top-gallants. And so you've run away from Dame Easdaile up to Langton all to find your sister, that ran away to look for you!'

'His sister!' said the hero, pointing to Dinky.

'Ah, well,' said the old man, thrusting up one side of his cap so that he might scratch his head more locally, 'let me see what I can do for you. There's a cantankerous woman near by here, just over the road yonder, that is for ever pokin' her nose in what doesn't concern her. Maybe she may have seen something. I glimpsed her down by the scour of the tide this morning, and threw a gob o' mud at her!'

Sir Toady wondered why he had done this, and if the woman had thrown one back. He seemed a very

peculiar old gentleman this. Yet somehow his queer ways jumped with Sir Toady's humours.

The boys followed the old man down a narrow and shaded pathway, past a little well with a creaky wheel and bucket, such as are seldom seen in Scotland. An old sun-bonnet of faded pinky stuff was lying beside the well-stoop.

'Untidy old tatterer, she is,' cried Admiral Three Eyes. 'It was *my* money that bought that nigh on to thirty year ago. Eh, lads, a rare fool was I in them days. You young fellows, take old Gearge's warning, never be a fool about maids, as I were. But 'tis no use talking, ye be too young to understand.'

'He's not too young!' said Dinky, speaking out suddenly.

'Gosh, then, and I think the more of him for it,' cried this curious old fellow, clapping his knee. 'And what signs might your irreproachable Wisdom have discerned of this family failing in Gearge Smith—as one might say, Junior?'

'He gives flowers to girls,' said Dinky, who had followed the sense generally without regarding the flood of long words.

'Dinky, you're a traitor and a tell-tale!' said Toady Lion, who, however, was secretly pleased.

'Tell-tale yourself,' retorted Dinky; 'you've told everything. And now, we're done for. *They'll have the ports watched!*'

To this Toady Lion answered nothing. It was not worth while arguing with Dinky. He merely turned to old Admiral Three Eyes and tapped his brow slowly and with significance.

They now entered the enclosure of a little white-washed cottage, about which there was a look of some comfort. A cow was lowing over the fence,

desirous of coming in and being milked. There were scores and scores of speckled hens picking and scrapping in the yard. Guinea fowls hurtled over the low-tiled rigging like rocketing pheasants, making such a sudden splutter that the boys were startled. In the corner farthest from the house was a 'hag-clog'—that is, a large block of hard wood for chopping up other wood upon. They had heard the *click-click* of the axe even before they went round the gable of the cottage. Then at the sound of their footsteps a tall, bony woman rose to what seemed a towering height and looked steadily down at them.

'Now, then,' cried Admiral Three Eyes, 'you Emma, Duchess o' Broomstick, where did ye leave your best Sunday bonnet?'

The woman regarded the Admiral calmly, standing with a small chopping axe in her hand, the head of which shone like silver.

'You've crossed the line,' she said slowly; 'you've broke the bargain!'

'Yes, but for cause,' said the old man; 'not for the pleasure of seeing *you!*'

'Well, what is it?' she said snappishly; 'out with it, and take your followers off where they're wanted!'

'Gentlemen,' said the Admiral, taking off his red cap and wiping his brow in a formal manner with the tassel, like the speaker at a great meeting who has just hurried from the train to get there in time, 'gentlemen, the insults of this person are only to be excused by one thing—she is my wife.'

He paused for an effect, but seeing the boys gazing unmoved, he cleared his throat and proceeded—

'Yes, young men, I have the misfortune to be that woman's husband. You are still young—take warnin'

by me!’

The woman lifted the little shining axe over her shoulder as haughtily as if it had been a sceptre.

‘George Smith,’ she said solemnly, ‘if you don’t take warnin’ and get out of this, it will be the worse for all the three of you!’

But at this difficult moment Sir Toady effected a diversion. He had for some time been looking at the peculiarly shaped piece of wood on which the woman’s chopper had been employed. Now he rushed forward, and picked it up.

‘It is—it is!’ he cried; ‘we have found it!’

‘Found what?’ cried Dinky, running forward in his turn.

‘Don’t you see?’ he shouted, pointing with his finger; ‘this is the rudder of Uncle Clarence’s boat. Look, there’s the C cut in the wood, and I believe I could find the E as well!’

He threw himself on his hands and knees and ‘grabbed’ eagerly among the chips and bits of kindling wood.

‘Here it is! What did I tell you?’ he cried, triumphantly holding up a piece the size of his palm, upon the faded green paint of which, not destroyed by water or time, could be traced clearly enough the second initial of his uncle’s name.

But the bony woman felt that it was high time to take action. She snatched at the rudder, and securing it, put it resolutely behind her.

‘Flotsam is flotsam, and jetsam, jetsam, according to the law of England,’ she said, ‘and whether this piece o’ wood be your uncle’s rudder or not (of which I have no better evidence than your word), all I know is, that it is going straight into my fire to help cook my dinner, having been found by me between

tidemarks this blessed morning. Stand off, George Smith—you potterin' old man of no account, or I will let you feel the weight of this axe-head!

Admiral Three Eyes indicated the erect and threatening figure with his hand.

'Gentlemen,' he said, still as if he were addressing a large public meeting, 'there she stands—ready for to welt her lawful husband. Love, honour, and obey, was what that woman promised. But that ain't no evidence o' what that woman does, as ye may observe with your living eyes. Mrs. Gearge Smith, ma'am, ye are a disgrace to the holy estate o' matermony. 'Sides which, ye are a ignorant woman to go cuttin' up a boat's good rudder that might ha' been sold—'

'Ah, for three hunder pence and given to the landlord o' the Three Tuns, ye public-house loafer ye! I know thee, George Smith; a rare rear-admiral you be! The lump o' wood is better behind the bars o' my fire-grate, and that's where it's going as fast as I can chop it up. So clear out o' this, all the three o' ye! And faster than that, if ye would keep whole crowns on your heads!'

Sir Toady Lion now saw that it was time for him to interfere seriously. He was, as we know, a peacemaker by nature, and also by practice. Of course, he loved (no one more) a little friendly turn-up (otherwise 'scrap') with Hugh John or Dinky. But in his nature was implanted a deep desire, both to be friends with everybody, and to make everybody friends with everybody else.

To begin with, then, he smiled at the bony woman. Sir Toady's smile was not like any other smile in the world, it said so many different things to the *smilee*. It said that he or she (but more

especially she) occupied a place in the affections of Sir Toady entirely unique. He might be compelled for reasons of state to be civil to others, but in his heart he loved, solely and only, the person smiled upon.

So cheerfully and systematically Sir Toady smiled, and smiled, and was a villain.

'Will you let me see your axe?' he said, going up quite close to Mrs. George Smith. 'It is *such* a pretty one.'

Dinky afterwards asserted that he said 'roo' and 'pitty.' But this has never been proven, and may well be set down to professional jealousy.

The woman turned her hard eyes upon the small boy. Sir Toady opened his—and smiled. Hugh John used to declare that Toady had three smiles — 'Injured Innocence,' the 'Unfallen Angel,' and 'Come Greasy'—the last being the exact expression of a pussy left alone with a jug of cream. It was the Unfallen Angel which he chose on this occasion to present to the view of Mrs. Emma Smith.

That lady held out a long moment, and the expression of Sir Toady's smile was fast changing to that of Injured Innocence—what Hugh John called 'first position'—when suddenly something seemed to flutter up under the lids of the tall woman's eyes. It was as if a caged bird had escaped. She looked away for a moment, and when she turned again her face was quite different.

'Yes, little man, show you the axe? Why, yes! There 'tis! It ain't much to see, be it?'

Toady Lion had conquered. But he was nowise excited. He knew he would. And this is how he explained it afterwards:

'You see,' he said philosophically, 'it's like this way. When I meets folks, I just looks at them—Just

once. And d'reckly I see them, I know.'

'You know what?' said Dinky, to whom he was talking what the Australian would never understand if he lived to be a hundred.

'Well, I know d'reckly either that they're My-People or that they're Not-My-People. They're only the two sorts. If they're Not-My-People, I don't bother with them no more. But if they *is* My-People, I doesn't need to bother neither. For they just does wot I likes. An' mostly they *is* My-People!'

'Did you know I was Your-People?' said Dinky with meaning, 'when first you saw me?'

'Of course!' said Toady Lion instantly.

'Then that's where you trip up,' cried Dinky triumphantly, 'for at first I didn't like you at all. I thought that you were a horrid little brute, and I meant to smack your head first chance I got!'

'Pooh,' said Toady contemptuously, 'that's nothing. That don't make no difference. *Did* you smack my head, *when* you got the first chance? Or did you come and play Prisoners and Officers on the coal-heap as I told you?'

'Oh, of course I *did* play, but—'

'But what?'

'But that was only because I wanted to!' said Dinky, a little puzzled himself, now that he came to think of it.

'Just so!' said Toady Lion. And wisely let it go at that.

* * * *

But already the tall woman was smiling, and the axe was shining in Toady Lion's hand. He was also admiring its beauty fluently and asking how in the

world Mrs. Emma kept it so clean. It had got to that in three minutes by the clock. Presently it would be 'Emma.' Every time Toady Lion lifted his eyes, with the shy diffidence of true affection, to the tall woman's face, some of the hardness went out of it, never to come back again, so far as he was concerned—and that too without any reference to what he might *do*. Sir Toady was a chartered libertine. When once he had established his power, this King could do no wrong!

'You have got a nice house,' he suggested gently—'may I see the inside?'

In a few minutes he was sitting at a well-spread board, and in ten he was doing the honours of the whole establishment, with 'Emma' standing opening tins, and mourning sorely that she was out of currant cake. If only he would come back!

Still stranger it was for Mr. George Smith to find himself seated in his wife's house. He told about it afterwards, and his language is worth transcribing.

'What a shaver!' he told his mates at the Three Tuns over his modest second pot of beer. 'When he began his soft soaping, I looked for Emma to fell him with the axe, as she has done me before now. I own I maybe deserved it, but I shall bear the mark to my grave.'

'Instead of which, says my lord, 'Wot a nice room you got, Mrs. Emmer—my, I never saw the like. And flowers, and a floor that clean—why, you could take a meal off of it!' he says. And all the time looking at her, coaxin'-like as if she were made o' sugar-candy from head to foot!

'Ye needn't laugh the house down, boys—there's more and better to come. I need not tell ye, lads, how 'tis wi' me an' my wife. Emmer an' me judged

we'd agree better with the width o' the road between us. So we drew a line through the well, and, except on rent-day when she meets me half-way to take over my share to the factor, I have not crossed the score for twenty year.

"Well," says my young Shaver, "but this is downright cosy. And, yes, thank you kindly—we *would* be better of a cup of tea! Come in, Dinky," says he, (that was t'other shaver—he hadn't much to say, he hadn't). *Come in, Mister Smith!*"

'An' when I hears that, ye might 'a knocked me down with a straw. I stood there glowering at the imp's assurance. An' he wasn't even lookin' my way either, but says it offhand-like, as if he were my lord tellin' you to take a seat in the hall while he went upstairs for the change of sixpence. He was smiling up at Emma, and—I'll take my davy, boys, she never so much as winked when he asked me in, but went on smilin' and smilin', and getting the tea infused, as chirpy as a frog in the rain!

It's as sure as I'm richer in thirst than coppers, boys, my young Shaver did that. And when I stood stuck there like a noodle—me not wanting Emma to brain me,—he says it over again, sort o' pressin'-like, 'Come in—come in and sit down, can't ye, and then we'll be all comfortable!' says he.

'And comfortable we was, I tell ye. For Emma is reggilar cokkernuts on the cookin'. And she done some fryin' and tossin' up fluffy things with eggs and flour, that I had never seen or heard tell o'—not, that is, since the month Emma an' me was married, in Dereham Church by—old Passon Greaves, it were!

Then he asked her to help find the girl.

"Certain, sir," says she; 'and I'll be proud to be of

any assistance!

'None o' you never heerd tell o' Emma Smith a-usin' of them sort o' words. No, nor me nayther! Lor', 'twas as good as a play—I b'lieve if the young Shaver 'ud only have stopped, she would 'a adopted him on the spot—I do believe it!'

CHAPTER TWENTY

MR. RICHARD GROANING MALT

Mrs. Emma Smith of the Little Ross Hen House accompanied the search party down to the shore. She was even known to speak civilly, if not agreeably, to her husband. And all the afternoon she refrained from informing him that he was a useless good-for-nothing. She was not even heard to order him out of her sight. This was not credited in the village, but it was true nevertheless.

Sir Toady was in high spirits. He had, indeed, never doubted that he would find Saucy, and that he and he alone (Dinky did not count) would bring her back in safety. But now to have his ideas confirmed, to know he was on the right track when everybody else was on the wrong, came as a quite superior quality of balm to his soul.

At the bridge of Creelpport, Sir Toady and Dinky had made what inquiries they could as to whether a little girl had been seen to pass in a green boat during the night. But as there was no harbour watch, and indeed no vessels of any kind to watch over in that indigent seaport, they had had no success.

But now, on the far side of the estuary and with such excellent guides as Admiral Three Eyes and his wife, they had better luck.

In a hut by a little reed-bed which bordered on the shallow brackish swamp called the Dutchman's Pool, they came on a thin vapourish man, who seemed ready to break in pieces with a constant cough which tormented him. His speech was already

broken into fragments of two or three words, punctuated with coughing.

'Monday night—let me see—I saw nought. Tuesday, I saw nought — Wednesday, I saw nought —'

'But last night,' cried Dinky, growing impatient, 'did you see anything pass last night?'

However, in spite of this, the misty man, with the curious eyes and the wispy fluff of hair like picked oakum clinging about his ears, went on monotonously, 'Thursday night, I saw nought. But last night, as I was waiting for the tide—to go off to the stake-nets—I saw a boat—creepin' out wi' the tide. Twirling about she was—balancing and dancing in the strength o' the ebb.'

Richard Fleason was another of the Allonby men, who are to be found sparsely scattered all along the Scottish side of Solway. For though the Scot makes the better fisher, the Englishman makes the only longshore-man, and indeed with grooms and upper domestics, goes far to complete the tale of the few Englishmen earning their living in Scotland.

Richard was widely known as 'Groaning Malt,' owing to the habit he had of groaning in church, when (as did not happen often) the minister's prayers suited his taste. The Creelpport beadle had at first been anxious to put Richard out of the parish kirk by force of arms, for the scandal was great. But when he went near to tap the disturber of ordinances on the shoulder for that purpose, a great boarhound rose suddenly from between Richard's knees, and with a growl that was much more impressive than his master's groaning, exhibited, as the beadle said afterwards, 'a double row of piano keys splitting his face crossways!'

Between coughing, sneezing, and such an animal at his heels, Groaning Malt was not a popular character in the district. Also he was of chronically low spirits, and much given to uttering the most sombre prophecies. So that, on being told that in all probability there was a little girl in the boat he had seen in the narrows of the 'Dutchman' at the hour of ebb on the previous night, he made answer, sighing lamentably, 'Ah, the poor thing, then she will have gone to a Better World—let us hope so at any rate.

Eich aye, the young *may* die, but the old *must* die. And that's a comfort!

Unwittingly, however, Groaning Malt guided the boys and their allies on their quest.

'If ye want to get the body, and if, by the mercy of a kind Providence, it be neither devoured by sharks nor torn by ravenous dogfish, nor carried away by the hungry gulls, ye will find it to a surety between here and the Tide Race of Croach. And the sooner you set about seeking her, the more content will you be when you find her.'

'But she isn't dead!' cried Dinky and Sir Toady in a breath, 'we know!'

For this was their faith, and it had grown like the grain of mustard seed, especially since they knew that certainly they were on the right track. The vague, wispy man merely looked more melancholiously than ever at them, and said, sighing profoundly, 'None hopes it more than Richard Fleason, late of Allonby!'

Night was now coming on, and even as they stood on a rocky point of the shore looking southward over the long chain of islands to the Face of the Croach, they were aware of a sudden brilliant star on the horizon, which, as they held their breaths, was

presently eclipsed, only to shine out again, as it seemed, clearer than ever across the grey tumble of waters.

The Admiral pointed impressively with his hand.

'Yonder they go,' he said; 'they are always at it—prompt to the knock! The sun hisself ain't no more punctual, and a deal less use to poor sailor-men, seein' as how he shines only when it is broad day! But Dick-an'-Billy are of another sort. Eh, mate? They are at their posts night *and* day!'

The melancholy Richard assented, adding however the comforting reflection, that 'if 'twas wrote down in the Books of that 'ere Destroyin' Angel that poor sailor men, or others, were to lose their lives on them reefs, it wasn't any Dick-an'-Billy that would save them.'

'And who may Dick-an'-Billy be?' demanded Toady Lion eagerly.

'The lighthouse on the Croach, honey,' said the old woman, taking Toady quietly by the hand. 'They are lighting it now to show that it's time all little lads were home to their firesides, and you are comin' with me this night to lie in a warm bed, and eat pullet-soup, with a piece o' the breast after! *T'other One can have a leg!*'

'But we must go on looking for Saucy!' cried Dinky indignantly.

The three longshore-folk, the red-capped Admiral with his glass at his eye, Mrs. George Smith with her little axe over her shoulder, and the tall man called Groaning Malt, all reached out their hands toward the winking light on the far horizon, and joined in a sort of round of which the burden was, 'No boat nor no man, seaman nor landsman, could come within miles of the Great Ross this night without being

battered to pieces on the Tide Race of the Croach.'

Upon which the boys cried out that if such were the case, they would be up and at it the following morning as soon as the sun rose. Hearing which, the two men cried out in horror. The morning would bring in the Sabbath. It was not lawful to do any work on that day. 'No boat could be got anywhere,' said the Admiral. 'No boat would have a blessing,' cried Groaning Malt. 'It would sink to the bottom with all its blasphemious crew.' Whereupon he groaned furiously, and his dog Pinto growled and rumbled till Toady Lion looked underneath to see if by any chance he carried a cargo of rocks in his hold.

But the old woman said nothing, only kept a firm grasp of Toady's hand, as if she were afraid that even now he might escape her, and attempt to swim the ten long sea miles which divided them from the Croach Lighthouse.

Sir Toady, whom his old nurse Janet Sheepshanks had carefully grounded in Scripture, cried out with indignation, while Dinky, as usual, looked out for a stone with which to argue if it came to the point.

'But that's nonsense, what you say,' cried Sir Toady; 'tis abominable. Isn't it in the Bible that if your ox or your ass fall into the ditch on the Sabbath day, you are to go and get cart ropes and haul him out?'

'And I'll clump anybody with a rock over the head that sez we mustn't go and look for Saucy, my sister, on Sunday or any day. Besides, we're going, whatever you say.'

The long man coughed and said, 'Ye may go, and break the Law. Such is your birthright. But I can tell

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you that ye will not get a boat on this coast. Why, we would have bad luck all the week at the fishing, and as like as not get drowned into the bargain!’

It was at this moment that Sir Toady felt Mrs. George Smith press his arm.

‘Come!’ she said. And Toady Lion, quick to interpret the signs of the times—and to take hints—knew that there was a promise in that single word. Instantly Dinky broke out in wild anger mingled with threats, but Sir Toady checked him sharply.

‘Shut up, Dinky!’ he said, ‘and come along.’

‘Along where?’ growled Dinky.

‘Along with me,’ said the hero; ‘you an’ me are goin’ home—with Emma!’

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

HIS VERY IMAGE

'No use talkin' to the likes o' them, sonnies o' mine,' said Emma, so soon as she and the two boys had left their companions alone. 'Gearge Smith and Richard Fleason be both o' one sort—the sort that sins all the week and repents all Sunday. No use talkin' to them, stubborn old haythens! They're no moor Christians than was my speckled pullet Topsy, that you are going to have for supper this blessed night!'

'What of Topsy?' asked Toady Lion, who was now trotting along, his hand resting confidingly in Emma Smith's huge bony one.

'Topsy—oh, she was of no account—like my husband. She would hatch a brood as nice as ninepence, and then walk off and leave the rats to eat them, if so be it happened to be Sunday!'

'And she died of it?' Toady Lion laughed at the idea.

'She died of me twisting of her neck, and it's the fine chicken broth she will make for you and me, honey!'

'And him!' she added, as an afterthought, indicating Dinky, who was following somewhat sulkily behind.

And as she went she hummed cheerfully the couplet-

'My tears have unto me been meat,
Both in the night an' day!'

'This sister o' yours,' said Emma Smith, 'tell me about her.'

So with as much discretion as tact Toady Lion told her all that he judged it good for her to know about Saucy. Specially did he make it plain that it was because she was Dinky's sister, because *he* was Dinky's friend, that they had taken the extreme step of running away to find her.

With a scornful wonder, but without the least jealousy, Dinky, on arrival at the Hen House, watched its mistress fuss about Sir Toady's tiredness, and the supposed dampness of Sir Toady's feet. Nobody worried about him. It was not a vital question whether *he* sat in a draught or not — or, for the matter of that, in a gale!

Dinky had always known and early discounted his partner's possession of quite peculiar qualities, and so Sir Toady's rapid and complete conquest of the bony woman did not surprise him very much. Toady Lion explained his reticence about Saucy quite simply.

"Tis unlucky to tell one woman more nor you can help about 'nother woman,' he said, '*specially when she asks*. Hugh John he says so too!'

Otherwise the conquering hero took the situation quite calmly. It was one of the daily ordinary mercies provided in the scheme of things, like sleep, and hot water to wash with, and breakfast, and what Mr. Jeffray referred to as 'the blessed air we breathe.'

Boys have a wonderful gift of shifting care, of putting off till tomorrow all such worries as school, lessons, and the other inevitable evils of life.

So the night at Emma Smith's was gay, even boisterous, Dinky lending himself to the orgy with an air of protest which only lasted till the boiled pullet appeared on the table.

Then at ten precisely Emma Smith bore them off

to her one spare chamber - she called it her 'down-the-house' - and with an air of pride she turned back the spotless linen sheets, and asked if there was no other little dainty she could leave in case Sir Toady should wake in the night.

With bitter irony Dinky suggested a rattle, in case Baby should cry; upon which Emma's eyes turned upon him with the old hard expression back in a moment—that is, so far as Dinky was concerned.

'And as to the boat,' she said, to change the subject, 'I suppose you can manage one?'

'Certainly,' said Sir Toady boldly; 'we've often been out in one—oh, scores of times.'

He did not add that it had been on the mill-pond at home.

'Well, then,' said Emma Smith, 'you will find a good one on the beach in a shelter between two rocks, just before you come to the White Point. Don't step the mast till you get well out. You will have the tide with you going, and if you aim to be back about five, you will have a fair sea-breeze. Good-night, both of you.'

Yet even after the good-nights were said she stood a long moment over them with the candle in her hand. Then she went and tucked Toady Lion in, taking a monstrous long time to do it. And once it seemed to that hero that he felt a fly light on his hair. He was accustomed to this, and promptly turned up his face with the Unfallen Angel expression radiating from it—on this occasion undesignedly.

'Good-night, Emma *dear!*' he murmured. And the old woman, who had not kissed any one for a quarter of a century, did so very hastily and got herself out of the room.

'I call it disgustin'!' said Dinky, who from his side of the bed had viewed the proceedings with strong disapprobation.

'You shut up,' said the Person Concerned abruptly; 'you know nothing about it—no, nor ever will!'

And this word, spoken concerning Dinky, was true.

As for Emma Smith, she went upstairs and unlocked a chest of wood, painted a faded blue. She laid all the contents one by one neatly and methodically on the floor beside her. Her eyes, if any one had been there to see, were wondrously soft.

Right at the bottom, when everything seemed out and the pile mounted to toppling point, she came on a little suit of black velvet, with lace falling deep and yellow at neck and wrist. She held each article up separately in the meagre light of the candle. They were all fresh and unworn. Her lips moved. Then she undid a little square package, and a small daguerreotype appeared—the same velvet suit, a large brooch pinning it at the neck, a stiff chair, and above it a child's face, crowned with a blue Glengarry cap, decorated with a plume of blackcock's tail. Also in a corner of the chest by themselves, were wrapped the brooch and the Glengarry. Emma Smith held them up to look at. It seemed as if she could not look long enough.

What was that? Something tapped at the window as if to come in. Emma Smith turned and looked. No, nothing! Something only that tapped in her own throat. No more.

Then she undid a little twisted bit of whitey-brown paper. A lock of hair appeared. There was a strange breaking noise in the room, like a violoncello

string snapping somewhere—a sob as if waters of a great bitterness had overflowed.

And in the long white shirt that Emma had put upon him, Toady Lion paddled up the creaky stairs and into the room.

‘Why *roo* cryin’?’ he said (cooed rather, no one like him for that). ‘Mustn’t cry—I love *roo!*’

And the bony woman, all the springs of her deep places broken up and the windows of heaven opened, gathered up the little white trundler in her hard arms, moaning, ‘Oh, *he* would have been just like him—if he had been spared to me. He was his image, his image!’

Yet the lock of hair was as crow-black as Sir Toady’s was flaxen-yellow, and the picture showed a little pinched face and thin arms beside the hero’s burly contours and hale Jolly-Miller countenance.

But, as Sir Toady felt with that wondrous instinct of his in such matters, *that* made no difference—none at all, so long as he said ‘*roo.*’

‘What cat was that choking upstairs?’ queried Dinky, when Sir Toady got back on his chill bare feet half-an-hour after.

‘Shut up or I’ll smass you!’

There was no cooing trill of the ‘r’ in the pronoun now. Indeed, the hero’s voice sounded so truculent that Dinky only muttered, ‘Oh, very well then!’ And after his kind, lay silent and sulky for an hour. But Sir Toady turned over and was asleep in five minutes. He even omitted his prayers without suffering remorse, being somehow under the impression that he had said them upstairs in Emma Smith’s garret.

And for the first time in her life this Emma, wife of Gearge, folded up clothes, and put them away,

while they were still damp.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE PIRATES' LAIR

The cool light of the Sabbath morn slanted in at the open door, and the shadow of Emma Smith's fuchsias flecked the porridge plates as Toady Lion and Dinky sat at breakfast. The bony woman watched them eat, stirring her pot of hens' meat negligently with one hand as it hung over the fire from the big iron bar called the 'swingle-tree.'

'There's a box of matches to take with you,' she said; 'and if ye are at a short end and need Emma Smith, light a fire—or better, two fires—with wrack and bracken and drift-wood—there's a plenty about—and I'll be there as fast as a boat can bring me.'

'But we are taking your boat!' said Sir Toady.

Emma smiled a curious smile.

'Oh no,' she answered, 'not mine—Gerge Smith's boat. But Emma Smith will be at no loss for a boat on this coast, while she keeps the up-side o' the daisies!'

At the little landing-place in the creek, sheltered from the scour of the channel, she helped them to get the boat out. She showed the boys how to fix in the tiny mast, and Toady Lion, who knew, as he now admitted, 'precious little about it,' managed to scrape through unshamed. That is, he got the boat into the main fairway without manifest disgrace. And as he could at least pull a fair oar, he took the light sculls and dropped down with the first slow drift of the ebb which comes just after the turn of the tide.

Yet, had the boys known it, their expedition was far more dangerous than that of Saucy. For they had a boat, and they meant to work it. They had a sail, and they meant to use it. The weather was shifty, the wind tricky, and they knew as much about sailing a boat on open water as they did about the Higher Mathematics. The general mercy of Providence to the helpless and the demented alone preserved them.

It was when the boys tried to hoist the sail that their difficulties began. It seemed easy, but for all they could do the ropes refused to work.

'Something we haven't found out,' said Toady Lion; 'tug away, Dinky!'

'You *said* you knew all about it,' remarked Dinky, with much emphasis on the 'said.'

'So I do *know*,' gasped Toady Lion, 'but somehow it comes all different when you have to *do* it!'

A truth which was not expressed for the first, or probably for the last time.

'It's tied at the foot, stupid,' said Dinky; 'we must get these things loose! Ah, that's better! She has it—up with her! There she blows!'

So the little mainsail was spread, and round went the boat's head to the wind.

'Now the foresail to steady her! Hang on to the rudder!'

Sir Toady was ordering himself and Dinky at the same time.

But Dinky either did not hear or answered too slowly. For the moment the boat stood shivering. Then with a swoop over came the sheets, almost taking the Captain off his feet. But the next moment Dinky got the foresail taut, and the canvas filling. The boat leaned a little over and began to move

through the water.

'Listen to the bubbles—now she's walkin'!' cried Sir Toady triumphantly.

'And talking!' shouted Dinky, excited for the first time, 'there!'

A spurt of salt spray splashed in his face. The *Good Adventure* had raised her bows over a wave and then smacked smartly down on the next.

'She took it green that time!' cried Sir Toady. 'Oh, if only Hugh John could see us now!'

'And Saucy!' cried her brother. But that recalled them both to their purpose.

'Now, forrard there—watch out for a little pea-green boat without any oars,' cried the Captain to his mate.

'Aye, ays, sir!' the answer came most promptly and nautically back.

'Not that we'll see any boat,' said Toady Lion, 'we can't expect to. Saucy must have landed long ago, or been taken off an uninhabited island by a man-o'-war. They are always going about looking for pirates and smugglers and things! That's what they're for!'

'Why,' said Dinky, 'I thought they were to fight the King's enemies!'

'So they are, when he has any,' said Toady Lion; 'but now, in times of peace, they go after pirates.'

'I believe old Amiral Three Eyes is a pirate himself,' shouted Sir Toady, 'and this is a pirate craft. She looks it!'

'She does look a bit rakish,' assented Dinky, squinting at the aged tub. 'And I believe that's blood there behind you on the seat.'

'Where?' cried Toady Lion, turning quickly. For, to be frank, he did not at all like blood, and always turned away when he passed butchers' shops. (This

was the reason he was going into the navy, where the business, if any, is wholesale.)

Dinky saw his Captain's distress and grinned derisively.

'It's only the mark of Old Three Eyes's bait-can, after all; but, I say, doesn't she ride the water like a duck?'

'Ra - *ther* — it's prime!' said Toady Lion. 'Don't I do it well? I believe I could sail a first-rater?'

'What's that?' said Dinky, who had not come from Australia for nothing.

'Why, a ship of the line—a battle-ship!' said Toady Lion. 'Much you know!'

'Oh, sailin's nothin' on board the big steamships,' said Dinky. 'It's all pull a little brass lever here. *Ping-pang!* Something happens. Touch another stop! *Bir-r-r!* Something else happens. Sailing's no fun in big ships. It's on the little ones that the fun comes in!'

Dinky afterwards found that this was also a common article of faith among the junior officers of His Majesty's navy.

It was a perfect 'soldier's wind,' as they say—blow you all the way, go about, and fetch you home again! But certainly it did merrily enough for the two amateurs. Sir Toady knew no more than that he must keep the mainsail taut—flat as a board, was his expression. The wind was pleasantly fresh, and the sea was smooth, because the *Good Adventure* was running under the shelter of the long line of islands and skerries of which the Croach is the last and largest. The white tower of the lighthouse rose majestically before them. It seemed to climb up into the sky. The spray was now wetting the sails, and the boat parted the water with a 'swish' that sounded pleasantly in the boys' ears.

'This is jolly,' said Dinky; 'we shall find Saucy, I just feel it in my bones!'

'By Jove, Dinky, what's that?' cried Sir Toady suddenly, standing up. 'Down with the mainsail, I say. Let go the fore! Let everything go. Stop her—back 'er!'

He remembered the call-boys on the old Thames steamers his father had told him about. So well was he obeyed that in a minute the great mainsail, which had brought them so far, lay in folds that almost buried Dinky in the bottom of the boat. The foresail was flapping as if it would tear itself loose, but Sir Toady skipped along and got it in by himself. The lee gunwale, which as they ran had been lipping the water-line, now righted, and, behold, they were floating quite quietly off a little cove, in which a short, thick-set man in a knitted jersey was unconcernedly mending a hole in the bottom of a small pea-green boat.

'That is Uncle Clarence's boat,' said Dinky in an awed whisper. 'Let's land and find Saucy!'

'Shut up—' said Toady Lion, 'let me think!'

Their own boat had passed the cove, and now lay dancing in the little jabble of the waves which came round the Croach point.

'And yonder's Saucy herself!' cried Dinky, gesticulating.

He pointed to a tiny figure far up on the island, apparently engaged in teaching a pair of goats to dance.

'Duck your head,' said Sir Toady; 'don't let any of them see us—not even Saucy. She might blurt out that we are here!'

'And why in the world shouldn't she?' said Dinky, looking at his friend in amazement.

'Because, don't you see,' said Sir Toady, 'they are holding her for ransom! Those people are regular pirates. They have taken her captive! Oh, I know all about them!'

'Rubbish,' said Dinky; 'they are only the men of the lighthouse.'

'That's all you know,' said Toady Lion with intense scorn; 'why, all these islands between here and China are the abode of buccaneers and pirates. They light that beacon up there every night to draw the vessels on. I've read about it. We must get away as quietly as possible. She is all safe so far, and as they know that Uncle Clarence is rich, they will take precious good care of her for the ransom!'

'But,' said Dinky, only half convinced, 'why can't we land and bring Saucy away at once? We could do it easy!'

'You *are* a ninny,' said Toady Lion. 'Why, they have hundreds of spies. That man pretending to mend the boat down there is one of them. He is on the watch. Long before now he has warned his confederates, and there's guns and torpedoes and pom-poms all trained on us from behind every rock. If they had been honest and wanted to send Saucy back to Uncle Clarence's, wouldn't they have started out at once, and not kept everybody anxious and unhappy all this while? It isn't so very far.'

And indeed the argument was of some force. It did not occur to them that Saucy herself was to blame for this, in letting her captors think that she had been cast ashore from a wrecked Australian ship.

So with their heads carefully hidden, and only the oars showing over the sides of the boat, they made their way painfully back to the island next to the

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Great Ross. Here in a sheltered cove they brought their boat to land, and went on shore, in order, undisturbed by the disconcerting 'wibbly-wobbliness' of the sea, to hold their first council of war.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

ON INCH DUCHRAY

'You see, it's much easier now,' said Sir Toady, a day or two later, cocking his feet up on the couple of stones on either side of the hearth which served for their ingle-nook upon the Dry Tortugas, 'for one thing we know that Saucy's alive and well—'

'Always knew that!' said Dinky cheerfully; 'course Saucy would come out marked Right Side Up, with Care.' Isn't she my sister?'

'But you see, Dink,' Toady Lion proceeded quickly, 'if we was to tell her we were here, it would be all over. That is, unless we made a snatch for it and got her out of the hands of the Buccaneers. The weather is first-rate. Emma is an old brick and brings us whatever we want. School doesn't take in yet a while. This old shanty is leaky, but blamed comfy all the same, and if you know any better talkin'—why, tune your pipe!'

However, Dinky also was content. Only he thought that if it proved within the compass of Toady Lion's wisdom, he ought to write a letter home to keep Uncle Clarence and Mr. Jeffray from worrying about 'putting out the rewards,' as he called it. For the rest, nothing would please him more than to stay the summer out where he was.

'Of course,' said Toady Lion, meditating, 'it's easy enough to write, but a bit awkward to get it to them so that they won't suspect, and come poking round down here. Then Old Man Three Eyes will be prospectin' for his boat too, and above all they

mustn't know from the postmark that we're away down here.'

'Emma would take it back,' said Dinky; 'there's no pillar-box on this stupid island!'

'Of course not,' said Toady Lion; 'it does lack improvements. But then Emma would either give it to the Ross-of-Croach postman, or put it in the box at Creelpport. In either case, they would see the postmark, day and date, and come poking and fussing about.'

He thought awhile, and then shouted, 'Jove, what a goosey-gander—'course I can send the letter to Hugh John!'

So with a stubby pencil, and a leaf out of his little sketch-book, Toady Lion began to write to his big brother at college.

'Hugh John, you are to burn the enflop of this, so as not to know the possmark, if askt. We're in a desart isle near the equator called the Dry Torkuguas, Dinky and me, and we fight all day with pirates and buckneers. The cheef of their band is called Slack Breetches and the 2nd in command is a ruffin called Blew Jersey. They are very feroshus, but keeps Saucy oll rite, thank you, 'cause o' the ransom. By-'n-by we'll fetch her away in our long low cutter called the *Good Adventure* (we stol her, but doan you tell). We are havin A luvly time, and wish you were heer. Tell Unc. Clarry, also Ant, and Mr. Jeffray, so as to keep them from botherin. But doan give them our address, coz you don't know it. This is carried secretly by a feymail Injun slave, very faithful, and bootiful as a hoory, wot brings us grub, also powder and shells for our I-inch pom-pom air-gun. Hoping you are the same, your luvin T. Lion.'

'It's splendiferous,' said Dinky, jumping about the

floor in his excitement; 'but why on earth do you put in whackers like that about pom-poms and shells?'

'Why, Hugh John he *learnt* me,' said the author, looking at his work proudly. 'He would skin me for writing a letter all plain out as two and two is four. But he will understand all right. He's used to it, you see. And as soon as he reads that bit about not knowin' the postmark—why, he'll just grab that enflop, shut his eyes ever so tight, and get another boy to lead him to the kitchen fire. Then, pluff, it's gone! He's so honour'ble, is Hugh John—he'd never look.'

'I wish I knew him,' said Dinky wistfully; 'he must be different from everybody.'

'Why, what for?' said Toady Lion. 'He's just like me, only bigger, and can make up better stories.'

'But he makes you 'give best,' and tells you you're a fool, and smacks you, doesn't he?'

'Course he does—'said Toady Lion; 'why, he's my brother!'

The Australian acknowledged the whole duty of brothers, but added, 'Oh, *don't* I wish I was there to see!'

'To see what?'

'Oh, just to see Hugh John hazin' you and bein' boss, and callin' you names—sap-head, idiot, donkey, and so on, same as you do me. That *would* be prime!'

For the iron may enter into the soul of the most devoted.

'I'd put two envelopes over that if I were you, coz Emma Smith won't like being called an Injun slave,' continued Dinky; 'that is, if she reads the letter?'

'I shall read it to her 'fore ever I licks the enflop,' said Sir Toady easily. 'I've to make one of another

leaf of the sketch-book, and gum him with white of gull's egg. That's the way Crusoe did—made things all out of his own head! *I do the same.*'

'Are you going to make the gull's egg out of your own head?'

'Dinky, you're an idiot! Come and help light the smoke-signal for Emma Smith! We shall want her to post the secret letter in the darkness and gloom, when the waning moon is set, and all the public-houses shut!'

* * *

Regularly every year a breed of hardy mountain sheep, black of face, and of habit active as goats, are put down for spring and summer feeding on the grass of the islands of the Ross—except, that is, on the Lighthouse Isle alone, because that is the property of Government. The hut in which Dinky and his captain were living had been erected long ago to shelter the quarrymen originally engaged in getting the stone for the building of the Croach Lighthouse. Since then the shepherds had used it regularly in lambing time, and had even left there the framework of a bed, together with various pots, pans, skellets, and cooking utensils.

As Toady Lion truly said, the boys were not likely to have such a good time again for long, and as they had to face the anger of their aunt at any rate, they might as well have as much fun as possible before doing it.

So, having done what they could to ease the minds of the anxious, the boys gladly abandoned themselves without further thought to the enjoyment of their Crusoe existence, and to ever-

varying schemes for the capture—the *slow* capture—and carrying off the buccaneers' prisoner from their crime-stained lair upon the Great Ross.

The shades of eve were falling rather faster than usual when Emma Smith arrived at the island of Inch Duchray, on which the little sheiling stood. A storm was evidently brewing, and the tall bony woman was in haste to be gone.

'They have been down at me askin' all manner o' questions,' she said; 'but I stopped George's mouth about the boat he lost, by threatening to tell of the casks of French brandy he fished up off Isle Rathan last March. But I can't keep it up long. So make the best of it, lads.'

They gave her the letter to post, with many instructions as to time and place, all which she promised faithfully to carry out. After Sir Toady had read it to her, and explained about the necessity of referring to her as an Indian slave of rare attractions (which in nowise affected her), Emma Smith emptied the new provisions out of the sack in which she had brought them. These consisted chiefly of bacon and meal, and had been paid for out of Toady Lion's secret hoards, which he had dug up on the eve of departure.

As Emma went down the beach to her borrowed boat, she said softly to Toady Lion, 'Friday three weeks is relief and provisioning day over there!'

And as she spoke she nodded in the direction of the lighthouse.

After she had departed, Dinky, who did not approve of private information where both were concerned, demanded to be told what 'that woman' had been mumbling in his captain's ear.

'She was revealing to me,' said Toady Lion, with

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extreme hauteur, 'the existence of a plot on the part of the enemy to carry off Saucy to yet more secret haunts. The attempt is fixed for Friday three weeks. This will give us ample time to mature our plans and frustrate their villainy!'

'And all our money will be done then, anyway!' said Dinky.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THE SEA-BORNE MESSENGER

'First thing is,' said Toady Lion to Dinky, 'we have got to let Saucy know that we are here. The question is—how!'

'Wait behind a rock till she comes down to pick up shells. Then—tell her,' said Dinky, whose methods were nothing if not direct.

'Yell and jump out on her, I suppose!' said Sir Toady scornfully; 'why, don't you know, that might frighten her to death, being a girl—besides bringing the enemy down on us in a moment. *That won't do!*'

Dinky had never supposed that it would, but he said nothing, waiting as usual for orders.

'We might heliograph,' said Toady musingly; 'that would be an awfully swell way. But then I don't know the code, and Saucy would only think it was somebody playing with a mirror anyway!'

'So it would be, if you didn't know the code!' thought, but wisely did not say, his First Lieutenant.

There was the pause which betokened profound meditation on the part of the distinguished general.

'Have you noticed,' said Toady Lion at last, 'how the tide carries things right across from the point of this island to the Lighthouse Isle? 'Member that old drift beam we set afloat?'

'The one you fell off and got a soaking?' asked Dinky, with false innocence.

'I didn't—don't lie,' said Toady Lion, his dignity seriously affronted. 'I saw that my ship was about to be captured by the enemy, so I leaped

overboard and swam ashore. That was a very different thing.'

'It *was* blamed risky—in as much as nine inches o' water,' commented Dinky.

'Ger-r-r—out! Let me think. Don't rot!' cried Von Moltke Junior, with his hands up to his head, so as to shut out the frivolous observations of his subordinate. 'I'll dismiss you from the staff if you don't mind.'

After a luminous pause of three or four minutes, during which Dinky stood expressionless but admiring, Sir Toady threw out his hands and leaped to his feet.

'I have it!' he cried, striking an attitude; 'it isn't perhaps quite so modern and classy as heliographing, but it's a jolly good way all the same, and beats the other all to sticks for being romantic.'

'Well, up with it, chicken! Lay all before us!'

'Oh, it isn't my own, quite. I read about it in a topping book w'at Father gave to Hugh John one time, all about St. Kilda and how to take photographs of birds. It's blessed difficult! They won't stop still a moment, and a boy named Cherry Kearton tried to make 'em.'

'Rubbish, it isn't difficult a bit,' said Dinky; 'the proper way is—shoot 'em first—nail them to the barn-door—*then* they'll stop quiet enough, for as long as ever you want them, I bet!'

'Well, said Toady Lion, passing this over, 'when you can stop being an idiot, listen. You'll hear something. In this book the St. Kilda people make wooden boats—little ones, you know, just toys — and they tie their letters in waterproof stuff, and set the boat off from a rocky point like this. Then the Gulf Stream (or some other stream) carries the mail

right over to the mainland, and whoever finds it carries the letters to the post-office that is nearest, and the next morning they are all delivered to whoever they are addressed to.'

'What if the man w'at found them was to steam off the stamps, and throw the letters into the fire?' demanded Dinky.

'No one would be so mean,' said Sir Toady Lion angrily, 'and if they did, they'd be boycotted.'

'What's that?' said Dinky.

'Well,' said Sir Toady, who did not know himself, 'boycotted—means—eh—that—that if he's a boy he'd be tied to a tree and whipped—and after that left alone without any dinner till he said he was sorry.'

'Then if *he* was a girl,' sneered Dinky, 'I suppose it would be 'girlcotted.'

'Ye-e-e-s,' said Toady Lion, 'for a girl it means—it means—that she has all her dollies, and everything like what girls care about, took from her and—thrown into the depths of the sea!'

'Well, anyway, what has all that rubbage to do with us, or with getting a message to Saucy in some fancy way, instead of just goin' and tellin' her?'

'Why, Dinky,' protested Sir Toady, 'if you had your way there would never be any fun nor nothin' interestin' nor romantic at all—'

'Blow romantic—particularly b-lo-ow!' said Dinky, pursing his lips to do it.

'I suppose you'd take old Admiral Three Eyes's boat, go alongside the quay over at the lighthouse, and call out to Saucy to kiss 'em all Bye-bye! Then jump on board so as we could be back to Aunt's for tea-and-Tickler! That would be your way!'

'And a bloomin' good way,' asserted Dinky stoutly; 'all except Aunt and the cane, that is!'

'Well, once for all, Dinky, you listen to me,' said Toady Lion with dogged firmness; 'here we are jolly comfortable—there is Saucy, guarded in prison, but, all the same, jolly comfortable too. There is your father in Australy, mine in Chiny, knowing nothing at all about it. There's three weeks to run afore we have to clear out. There's Aunt and the rest—pretty mad—but not thinking we're dead, nor nothing like that. Only sayin' over and over what a hiding they'll give us when we get back! Well, are you so anxious to feel that cane, Dinky?'

'Not much!' said Dinky, wriggling all down his back at the very thought.

'Well then,' said Sir Toady, 'let us stop here as long's we can, and do things decently. Sort o' give them time to miss us and get cooled down. Then we might even get off the—ah, chastisement—altogether.'

'No fear, with Aunt in the biz!' said Dinky, with an effort of painful reminiscence.

'Oh, you can't never tell,' said Toady Lion calmly. 'We'll have so much to tell them, and they'll be so glad to see Saucy after all that while, that they won't put much ginger into it, I bet!'

'Well, what are we to do now?'

Dinky always knew that he would have to give in in the end, but he continued to make objections, if only for the purpose of hearing them refuted, tossed, gored, and variously maltreated.

'You remember that log? Well, it floated right out with the tide. It kept from about twenty to fifty yards off the reef, and grounded in Saucy's bay—the one she gathers the Leg-of-Mutton shells in. We saw it there the next day, don't you remember, lying with its hind end out?' Dinky nodded. It was certainly so.

‘Well then,’ pursued Toady, ‘we will hollow out a little boat, and bind it about with waterproof stuff—the old leather from the bellows in the smithy will do. Then we will write the letter and set the whole show afloat. We will send one every day, and commit them to the winds and the tides.’

Dinky was willing, but mentally resolved that if the winds and the tides did not attend to their business within a reasonable period of time, he would jog their memories for them!

So according to this word, it was done. With toil and pain they shaped a little boat, very solid and heavy. With a blunt knife shaped they it. They wrote a cautiously worded letter to Saucy, and wrapped it in leather, sewing it down with a thorn-spike for a needle, and some strands of grey hair which Sir Toady (arch deceiver!) had begged from Emma for a keepsake. She thought it was so sweet of him!

‘Well,’ said Sir Toady, ‘we need to tie the letter down anyway, and there’s enough of the stuff left, goodness knows!’

For indeed Emma had cut a most generous portion. It was the first time in her life that she had been asked for such a thing, and as Sir Toady graphically said, ‘It just tickled her like nothing at all!’

The demands of Admiral Three Eyes upon his wife were, as a rule, not of this sentimental character. But all the same Emma Smith approved highly of Sir Toady for making his request, and with the scissors cut him off what he called ‘a regular whang!’

The letter had of course to be carefully confected.

Not only so, but there were several rows between the partners before finality and agreement were reached. You see, Sir Toady wanted to make the

message so dreadfully mysterious and difficult to make out, that it would have needed another Toady Lion at the other end to understand it. And even then it is almost certain that he would have made a mull of it, unless he had had the explanation written down.

Something in this style was his first idea- '*Child of Misfortune, arise! Look eastward towards the Breaking Day. Two Stars of Hope shine upon thee from the Isles of Safety. Be ready. Watch — Weep not, Child of Misfortune!*'

'What d'ye mean by calling my sister 'Child of Misfortune?'' demanded Dinky, who had heard his Aunt apply the name to some very unpleasant people indeed; 'you let my father hear you, that's all!'

'It's figurative,' expostulated Toady Lion; 'it's just like Ossian!' Toady had once been drunk and babbling for three days over Macpherson—he and Hugh John in the back shrubbery together.

'Hang figurative!' said Dinky; 'it's plumb nonsense, that's what it is—and you shan't send stuff like that to my sister. My father's a sugar-grower—'

'Get out, you squatter—nigger-driver, slave-master!' was Toady's retort.

Instantly Dinky's fists were up, and there would have been a big real row next minute—if, far away on the slopes of the Lighthouse Isle, the two had not caught sight of a little skipping, dipping figure, which drew from Sir Toady the involuntary exclamation, 'Oh, there she is, the darling!'

Though Dinky abhorred the word for himself, and would have endured torture rather than use it, he could not help being mollified by the tone in which his captain uttered it. He proceeded therefore to

stick his hands very deeply into his pockets, which was his attitude of meditation.

'Well, but,' he said, 'that's not gettin' the letter written. Let's do it and have done with the thing!'

'Well, do it then!' said Sir Toady ironically.

But Dinky knew his limitations, and refused with the soft answer. He inferred meekly that only Toady Lion had the head for such matters. This put the hero on his mettle, and upon a second attempt this is what he struck out-

To Sauce Ease—Friends near—watch—wait--you will be delivered.—Signed Sir Dinkins and Richd. Coeur de Lion, MA.'

'Why M.A.?' inquired Dinky, 'and why not write the names properly?'

The author made an impatient sign, like a dramatist who is asked to change his lines at rehearsal to please the leading lady.

'M.A.' means 'Mighty Army,' he said curtly. Really he had seen it printed on bills and church announcements after the name of his friend the Reverend John Jeffray, M.A., B.Sc., and he had thought it looked fine.

'Oh,' said Dinky, 'Mighty Army—does it? But that would frighten Saucy.'

'Pshaw!' said the artist in words, 'she won't never know. And (passing hastily on to a more defensible point) I wrote Sauce because then she will know that it's us, and that all is right. Besides, you see, if the Pirates should get it, they won't be able to make anything of it—Saucy—Ease—Dinkins—Richd. Coeur de Lion—what will they make out of that? They can't speak. French!'

'Can you?' said Dinky, very abruptly indeed.

'Well, not—exactly speak it,' said Sir Toady,

rather taken aback, 'but I—ah—understand it. It's the same thing!'

'Oh, of course—*quite!*' said Dinky, without the ghost of the twinkle in his eye, for which his superior officer was watching.

Finally, however, the letter, unedited and unamended, was despatched with vast ceremony from the point of the island just at the fullness of the ebb. And the boys, watching with eagerness and anxiety, saw it making excellent time, better than the log, in the direction of Leg-o'-Mutton Bay upon the shores of the Lighthouse Isle.

The inventor watched it impressively, striking an attitude.

'What are you gettin' at?' said Dinky, falling back a step.

His companion and captain pointed dramatically to the little speck dancing in the tide race.

'You carry Toady Lion and his fortunes!' he cried.

'Well, I like that,' retorted. Dinky, 'after I did all the work! 'Sides which, ain't she *my* sister?'

But Sir Toady, wrapping an imaginary inky cloak about him, stalked away Hamlet-ically to meditate. What was work—the labour of the hands, or even the table of prohibited degrees—to an inventor, a creator?

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

THE SIGNAL SMUDGE

There were, naturally enough, quite a number of things we know, which Saucy Easdaile was ignorant of, as she went gingerly down the slim outer ladder of the Croach Lighthouse on the morning after the 'vessel' freighted with Sir-Toady-and-his-Fortunes had been committed to the deep.

For instance, she did not know that any other being more intelligent than the sea-gulls (except, of course, Dick Finnan and Billy Bryan) was within miles and miles of her. She had, indeed, often seen the tall columns of smoke which were thrown up at intervals from the next island. But Billy had explained that they were made by shepherds, or perhaps fishermen come in search of wild birds' eggs.

'Them boys don't come here,' he said, with a ring of conscious superiority; 'for the Croach birds is Government birds, and every birthday of His Most Royal Majesty Eddard, they sit on their tails, and sing 'God save the King,' beating time with their wings. Then at the end they all give three cheers, bow till the tops of their heads scrape the rock between their feet, and then—fly away about their business! Ah, it's a wonderful instinct they have—talk about Mr. Gladstone!'

'No, Billy, but do they really—really?' said Saucy, whose eyes had been opening wider and wider during this authentic narrative.

'Why,' said Billy, opening his eyes, 'did you never see the places on the rocks where they sit, all worn smooth and shiny?'

'Yes, I have,' said Saucy, 'but I never thought that it was with bowing at the name of the King.'

'Don't mind him, my honey,' said old Dick Finnan, who had come in; 'he ought to be ashamed, palming off lies on a little 'un, so he ought. It would be tellin' him, if he told suchlike seldomer, and bowed *his* head a deal more frequent.'

'Does *he* rub it on the rocks too, on the King's birthday?' said Saucy, who did not quite understand all this.

'No, no, my lamb!' said the old man; 'I mean in church and a-sayin' of his prayers. It's a fine penance Father Burke will serve you out with, Billy Bryan, when ye go next time to get the sponge passed over your slate. Faith, and if ye forget to, tell him that ye deceived a young innocent maid, I'll up and tell him myself. That I will. Then what will ye get?'

But Billy Bryan only grinned, and the elder man explained that Billy was the gull, besides a whole farmyard of other animals as well—among others, a 'blessed coot,' a 'silly quacker,' a 'cackling old hen,' a 'braying donkey,' *and* a 'gabbling goose.' Indeed, he abused his mate so much that Saucy was quite sorry for Billy, and said appeasingly, 'Oh, well, Dick—perhaps he did not mean it. And it was ever so nice about the sea-gulls all singing and bowing. And I *have* seen the rock worn smooth. So that much must be true anyway!'

Upon which Billy Bryan had the grace to be ashamed of himself. And in the first spring of his repentance, he offered to go with Saucy to the cove near Judson's Point and help her to gather Leg-o'-Mutton shells, which were her favourites—a resolution not without its serious consequences.

So it came to pass that Billy Bryan, in the fullness of his heart, digging the sand for full-sized, unbroken Legs-o'-Mutton in good preservation (and with the right indigo markings on the flanges), saw something curious lifting and swaying in a tangle of sea-weed like a water-logged boat.

'A kid's boat dug out from a lump of wreck,' he thought, and went on with his search. But at last, after Saucy, with a full satchel and a grateful heart, had gone her way to sort out and arrange her treasures, Billy, with the curiosity in trifles of lonely lighthouse-men on islands where nothing new is ever seen, went up to the storehouse for a grappling iron and pulled the rudely-shaped little log ashore. The carefully folded waterproof cover of the message yielded to his nimble sailor's fingers, and in another moment Toady Lion's message was plain before him.

He read it. 'Sauce Ease—Friends near-watch—wait—you will be delivered.—Signed Sir Dinkins and Rich. Coeur de Lion, M.A.'

'It's too many for me,' he said; 'I must get the Old Un's mind upon it.' So he hastened up in Saucy's track, admiring the way she went skipping up the stairs to the storeroom. As he passed the door he saw that she was already deep in classification.

As usual at that hour Dick was aloft, busied with his prisms and lenses. With Dinky's boat under his arm, and the paper in his fingers, Billy mounted swiftly. He laid the pieces of conviction before the shrewd, grizzled veteran with a flourish.

Dick Finnan studied them attentively for a long while without speaking. 'If the Little Un were just a year or two older,' he said slowly, 'I should know what to think.'

'You mean that she would have planted it, for to

take a rise out of us?' said Billy.

'That's what I just *do* mean,' said Dick Finnan, sitting down with the boat in one hand, and the paper propped against an oil-can under his nose. 'But that boat, such as it is, spells 'Boy!' And 'Boy,' too, without tools—jack-knife with big blade—that's what's done this. And 'Boy' has written this. See—he began with printing, then gettin' tired of that, he ended in his ordinary hand, and no great shakes of a fist it is neither!'

'But how about Australy?' said Billy, with subtlety; 'it begins with her name, or what's the same thing, 'Sauce Ease!' What do you make of that? Looks like a game somewhere, and the Little Un in it too. Else how should they know her name? Answer me that.'

'Um-m-m,' said Dick, now scratching his head in turn. 'One thing, I'm dead sure the Little Un had nothing to do with it. She's too innercent. Come to think on it—she didn't tell us much about that wreck and the voyage from Australy, did she?'

'Did you ever ask her?' demanded Billy with unusual brusqueness. Dick Finnan changed countenance a little at this.

'I can't say I did press her much,' he said; 'might awake painful memories and so on!'

'Ah, very nice—no doubt,' said Billy; 'but more like you didn't want to have to send her off the island till you went yourself. And then, p'raps you thought that somehow you might keep her even after that—if there weren't no payrients or guardians answered at roll-call. Nice thing for a sober-sided old bachelor like you to turn up at the Church of the Martyrs with a fambly all complete! Talk o' Father Burke—what would the elders say?'

Dick Finnan sighed deeply, and looked very crushed and dejected. 'I don't deny but what I might have had some such thing in my mind. There's no fool like an old fool, Billy—though you are certingly shapin' from fair to middlin' yourself!'

'Anyway,' said Billy, without pausing to discuss this, 'what I see very plain is that somebody is having a sort of a lark with us. And furthermore, it concerns that young woman wot a kind Providence sent afloat by, for me to rescue off the Race of the Croach, with not more than ten minutes of life before her! So, let the larky young chaps look out for themselves, that's all.'

The next day Billy was out early, watching for the sea-borne messenger to come along. He calculated that it would be sent off at about the same state of the tide, so he took out his tripod telescope to aid in the search. The pea-green boat also was now considered sufficiently safe to venture a little way in smooth water—that is, with the assistance of a good deal of bailing.

Thus upon successive days it came to pass that Billy was informed that if the first message had been safely received, an answering 'Smudge' was to be made on the side of the isle farthest from the lighthouse. Next, that the 'enemy' were to be surprised by being 'drawn into a trap.' Manner and time of the plot were left vague, no details being given. Von Moltke had not yet made up his mind.

But this gay confidence, and especially a chance allusion, thrown in at the last moment by Dinky, to 'the ugly Irishman with the red nose' (which Billy considered a libel and temperate Dick Finnan 'a warning'), made Billy Bryan, as he owned himself, 'jumping mad.'

Galloway Raiders Digital Edition

'I'll trap the varmin,' he said. 'I'll surprise them with something that will make them red all over—redder than my nose!'

'Don't be vindictive, Billy,' urged his companion; 'and as for the nose—well, you know, Billy, you can't say but what!'

'Shut up!' said Billy with quite unnecessary violence.

'Well, don't put on the cap, unless it comes within an eighth of your size, Billy,' said the old man mildly; 'but remember it was only the beginning of this blessed month, that you was a-sayin' to me your own self, how that you had got in the habit o' stoppin' too late at the Blue Boar over at Creelport. Ah, Billy—'

'Don't 'Ah, Billy' me!

'The day will come when you will thank them larky young shavers for the Word in Season- 'Out o' the mouths —'

'I'll thank them 'ere babes an' sucklings with a rope's-end when I get them by the collar!' said Billy Bryan viciously; 'juss let me catch them, that's all!'

And he flung out of the lighthouse in a pet to send up the two answering 'smudges,' which was the signal finally agreed upon for the 'attempt.'

It was to be made at half-past eight that night. It was Billy's first watch off duty too.

Ha, ha!

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

THE EXPEDITION LANDS

Billy Bryan said nothing to his comrade as to the sending up of the smoke signals, which would cause their peaceful isle to be hostilely invaded. He was afraid that Dick might put his foot on the r-r-revenge he had planned. Dick was getting too old to see the full humour of things.

'Ugly- Irishman - with - the - red - nose,' indeed! He would 'ugly' them!

So he moved about, whistling very softly and confidentially to himself; nodding his head, too, at intervals in a determined way. He made a curious collection; two whip-lashes of twisted thongs, each with a running loop, invaluable for lassoing when you have the knack of it, and making admirable handcuffs afterwards, when the game is caught.

Then he had a coil of very small twisted Manilla hemp, which, as he murmured to himself, he would defy a bull to break. He laid carefully aside a shorter, stouter rope (or rope's-end, vulgarly so called), with a most edifying knot on the end of it.

Altogether Billy Bryan chuckled and felt good all over, as he reviewed his preparations for the coming attack. He did not know how many boys were concerned, nor, very exactly, what was their little game. But as the eldest of a large family himself, he took no account of mere boys. He could master a boat-load, and so far as he could make out, there were only two or three at most in this thing.

Billy was right. There were two boys only, and they would have been as chickens in his grasp, but

for one thing—which Billy did not know, and which Billy could not know.

Sir Toady and Dinky had received an important addition to the invading forces. They had been heavily and unexpectedly reinforced. It was Emma who had done it.

‘I don't like you stopping here by your lone selves,’ she said; ‘it's none too safe. So I brought you Ben, you know Big Ben. Here, Ben!’

And out of the boat arose on strong, straight fore paws, like a lion at the mouth of his den, the very biggest dog the boys had ever seen, half-mastiff, half-bloodhound.

As soon as ever they heard his resonant, explosive bark they christened him ‘Boompluff’ because that was his name. Boompluff barked seldom, but as often as he did so, the welkin (whatever that may be) resounded.

Half-past eight was a somewhat awkward hour, but it had been chosen by the boys to suit the tide. They would go down with the first of the ebb, interview Saucy, and get back in time to sleep. It was awkward (that is, for Billy Bryan), because it encroached too nearly upon the sacred moment when, according to regulations, the Croach light would blaze forth upon the calm, clear northern dusk. True, all that could be done had been done; and the last thing was the preparation of the little oil-engine which made the great lantern revolve in its wonderful bath of quicksilver.

Still, an occasional glance down from the platform when Dick was busy elsewhere, had assured Billy that a boat equipped solely with a foresail and the cautious assistance of a pair of sculls, was bearing down on the point of the Isle behind which the

landing had been arranged.

Assuring himself that Saucy was sitting comfortably in the living-room, crocheting a pattern taught her by old Dick, Billy scurried downstairs and out upon the beach.

'Red-nosed-Irishman—oh, *very* well!' he repeated to himself like a litany. And the way he said 'very' might have furnished the bravest with matter for thought. Outside the shadow of the island, the sea was a mirror of gold and pearl-grey, but Dinky and Sir Toady hastened to get out of this beauty into the deeper shade. At the proper moment they unstepped the mast of the *Good Adventure*, and let her ground gently on the beach all among the Legs-o'-Mutton and the crumbly shells.

A big Spanish knife, a cheap revolver, and a huge old horse-pistol, both barrels carefully unloaded, formed their armoury—together with Boompluff. But Boompluff was to remain by the boat as rear-guard.

The boys were in no particular hurry. All things had to be done decently and in order. Saucy would certainly be at the place appointed, behind the big platform on which the lighthouse was erected. The keepers would be at their task of getting the lamp in order. The safety was complete, but still that was no reason for omitting the proper advance of skirmishers, stealthy and silent, climbing up the sand-hills on all-fours, scouting across the short grass of the links, and finally threading deviously the little craggy ravines between them and the enemy's fortress. Dinky and Sir Toady attended faithfully to details. Indeed, so much so, that all unconsciously they made 'the enemy' grill, sweat, and fall to hasty inward speech. Billy Bryan was indeed 'hopping mad.' Every five minutes he had to

change his position, as one or other of the skirmishers grew 'warm.' They on their part had not the least idea that any one was nearer to them than the hollow behind the big oil-store, at which their last message had bidden Saucy to wait for them, and where three columns of smoke had duly promised that she would meet them. On principle, however, they took every precaution they could possibly have taken, had they known that a hundred treacherous savages were hidden in the sand 'bunkers,' or watching from behind the western ridge, now outlined violet-black against the sunset.

Only his agility and knowledge of the island saved Billy Bryan from exposure. Several times he had to retreat so rapidly that parts of his baggage and equipment fell into the hands of the enemy, who, however, only wondered how it got there. The lighthouse-men must be exceedingly careless, they thought.

So, breathing very hard, and digging his toes viciously into the sandy soil, Billy lay waiting in his last retreat behind the big underground oil-store, where the boys were expecting to find Saucy. He had flung down the coil of Manilla on the short grass, and betaken himself round the corner, to await, knotted rope's-end in hand, the arrival of his pursuers. He knew by this time that they were two only. He left the door of the vault ajar, and the key in the lock. For he meant to pitch them in there, after he had handled the situation to his satisfaction with the rope's-end.

The jagged crown of rocks to the east stood out black against a faintly rosy sky, a reflection from the flaming west. Billy ground his teeth at the slowness of the boys' advance, as well as at the frequent hasty

and undignified changes of position which their methodic vigilance had forced upon him. He had, he growled, skinned one of his knees in getting up that last rocky bit. But there had been no other way. The two 'little beasts' had been one on either side of him--*hisst*-ing and emitting low mysterious whistles.

Well, just wait! He would show them!

And Billy, prone on his face, full length on the grass, agitated the rope's-end, like the tail of a whip-snake—a reptile unpleasantly familiar to Dinky in his former home.

A black round ball against the sky, peering over the edge of the ridge!

That was Dinky's head. The Tracker of Ringarooma was still to the fore. Then came Sir Toady, wiping his brow. What, no Saucy? Had she been delayed? Perhaps 'the Enemy' had been later than usual in mounting to light the lantern. Well, there was no hurry! they would sit down and rest. After all that exciting stalking of imaginary foes, both would be glad of a breathing space in which to fight their battles over again.

'Ah, so I've got ye, ye little bliggards!'

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

BOOMPLUFF TAKES A HAND

It was 'the red-nosed Irishman,' as he soon reminded them, and he was 'going to larn them,' so he was. However, for the present, only the word 'little' hurt. For with the best of intentions you cannot thrash two wriggling, squirming boys at once, holding each by his several collar. The ordinary Irishman, even if red-nosed, has but two hands, and Billy Bryan was no exception—though he wished heartily for the moment that he could belong to the *Quadrumana*, just long enough to settle a little score.

But Dinky was lithe as an eel, and Sir Toady as sturdy as a bull-calf. Hugh John had not called him Burly Brother in vain. Then Billy Bryan remembered the open door of the oil-store. He dragged the unwilling boys towards it, in spite of the fact that their boots made havoc of his shins. First he pitched Sir Toady within, as being the smaller. Then he looked about for the rope's-end to begin his share of the fun upon Dinky. The storehouse was a big vault, with barrels piled at the farther end as in a wine cellar. Ah, there was the rope. He had thrust one end of it into his side-pocket, and in the scuffle it had dropped out a hundred yards from the door. So he must go and fetch it, hauling the reluctant Dinky along with him. Whereupon Toady Lion, rising swiftly from the stone flags of the storeroom floor on which he had been flung, thrust his hand into his breast and drew out a short thick whistle with a pea rattling in it. He blew vigorously.

Billy Bryan, who had enough to do to reach the rope with Dinky's very active boot seeking out all the more tender spots of his person, wondered viciously what that other little fool was making all that noise for. Did he think to call up Saucy to beg him off? Wait till he had dressed down this chap, and then he should have something to whistle for. He reached the rope, and began his operations, whereupon Dinky started to yell with a note so loud and sustained that the Irishman, hastily clapping his hand over his mouth, was compelled to carry him to the storehouse. He did not want Dick to hear—not at least till he had paid out 'the little bliggards' for calling him 'red-nosed Irishman.' After that—well, it would not matter.

Again Sir Toady's whistle sounded, more insistent than before. He could easily have escaped, but seeing Dinky in the toils, he manfully charged in behind, harassing the enemy's rear, till Billy Bryan, driven fairly exasperated, gave him what he called 'a dhrive wid his fut,' which brought the hero for the second time severely to grass on the floor of the vault.

'Now then, Master Dinky!'

But just as he was swinging the dreaded rope's-end, something large and black, apparently about the size of a cow with the head of a lion, filled the doorway.

'BOOMPLUFF!'

Uprearing on its hind legs and exposing a row of gleaming teeth, the monster seized Billy by the breast of his coat, and tumbled him over on his back. Then it proceeded, apparently, to make a hearty meal of his knitted jersey, beginning at the neck. The choking cries of Billy Bryan rose into the

still evening air, mingled with the short snorting growls of Emma Smith's Big Ben. Together they reached Dick Finnan, high on his platform, putting the final touches to his wicks, and wondering crossly what had happened to his mate.

Dick Finnan's ideas were not very clear. Something was wrong below, down by the storehouse. It sounded for all the world as if a wild beast had escaped from a ship and swum ashore. He had heard of such things. But there was stuff in Dick. He wasted no time in vain conjecture. Indeed, the sounds that were proceeding from the combatants, hurried him up. Dinky and Sir Toady were dancing wildly before the door of the vault, and the latter was still blowing fitfully on his whistle—let us hope with the intention of calling Big Ben off.

Dick burst through them without even wondering how they got there, and entered the store-house to his comrade's assistance. By this time Boompluff had released his hold, and was now bestriding Billy's prostrate body; while that warrior was gingerly feeling the connections of his head and body, to see if as much had been left as would do him to breathe with.

At the noise behind him, Boompluff turned and half upreared to meet the fresh attack. Dick recoiled, and Billy scrambling hastily to his feet, ran along the casks and swung himself up to a cross joist.

'Here!' he cried, 'up for your life, Dick! He is mad with rage!'

And Dick 'up-for-his-lifed' to some purpose. A grip of the hand—then *heave!* A little bit of blue cloth was neatly nipped out of the slackest part of Dick's trousers, and their owner found himself in safety.

'Watch 'em, Boy!' said Dinky vindictively, rubbing

himself.

'BOOOOOO-M-PLUFF!'

Big Ben was on deck. It was his watch. There could be no mistake about that. *Click* went the door as Dinky shut it. The two men on the beam could hear the well-oiled wards go to their places. It was a self-acting lock of the most recent pattern.

Then, with a sudden spasm, they knew that they were trapped.

Almost had Dick precipitated himself down into the very mouth of Cerberus. They could see two little glowing balls of a greenish hue shining beneath them.

And the Croach light!

In a few minutes, if they did not get away, a terrible thing would happen. Never in all the years, never since stone had been laid upon stone, had the Croach been a moment late. Far away in lonely farm-houses men watched to see the light spring up at the appointed time. Hundreds of passing ships, tall corn-ships, grimy colliers, little coastwise tubs, dipping fishermen, all watched for the great Croach and the raying beam that swept out over the sea.

Dick and Billy yelled together in pain at the thought. But only the voice of Boompluff answered them—terrible, menacing, out of the darkness.

'You young dev—I mean boys—let us out. The Lighthouse! The Lighthouse!'

'You'll welt us, will you, you red-nosed Paddy,' cried Dinky from behind the door; 'you'll take the hide off us, with this very rope's-end! Ah, will you?—we'll see!'

And Dinky battered the closed door with the aforesaid article of correction.

'THE LIGHT! THE LIGHT!'

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‘Come out and fight!—not if we know it! Stop in there and fight Boompluff if you want fighting! What harm were we doing to you, I’d like to know?’

‘THE LIGHT! THE LIGHT! IT IS TIME!’

‘What do these asses say? I can’t make it out. They’re all right in there. Old Boomer can’t get at them, though he’d jolly well like to. Hear ‘im growl? It’s awful. It would curdle milk warm from the cow. Go it, Boomy!’

‘Out o’ the way and let me listen!’ commanded Sir Toady.

‘THE LANTERN-NOT LIGHTED!’

‘Oh!’

Now Sir Toady had imagination. He saw instantly great crowded passenger ships running headlong on dangerous skerries. He heard the cries of the drowning. Women and children—all owing their deaths to him. Somehow it had fallen out—somehow—and though he did not intend it, *he* would be held responsible.

He flung himself on the iron door, trying to open it. But the key had fallen, and in his hurried rush Dick Finnan had trodden it deep into the gravel and sand.

‘OPEN-OPEN! FOR GOD’S SAKE, OPEN!’ cried Dick frantically.

‘And call off that dog!’ added Billy, who had memories.

‘Then you won’t whack us if we do?’ cried Dinky, who was in the same position.

‘No, no—only open the door!’

There was a long agonised struggle outside.

‘The door won’t open—what shall we do?’ cried Sir Toady, his voice breaking.

‘Turn the key—the key must be there! In the lock!’

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But the key was not there, and each time the boys passed, they trod it deeper into the loose soil.

'Call off the dog—I'm coming down!' cried Dick, getting desperate.

'BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-PLUFF!'

The dog had something to say as to that. And he said it right from the back of his throat too. It made Billy crawl all up the spine to hear him, and even Dick the faithful hastily regained the beam to which he clung. It would be a poor way of serving the Commissioners of Northern Lights to get himself torn in pieces by a dog as big as a house.

Meantime it was dusking rapidly outside, and of course in the storehouse, except for the faint greenish glow in Big Ben's eyes, it was pit-mirk — black as the inside of a wolf, said Dick Finnan. Whereupon Billy told him to shut up. He did not like the phrase somehow. It seemed to have a bearing on circumstances.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

SIR TOADY'S CROWNING MERCY

But a great thought, a possibility, flashed along the brain of Sir Toady Lion. What glory and honour it would be, if he—he, George Picton Smith, could light the lantern himself, and set it going, to the wonderment of mankind. Night after night from Inch Duchray he had watched the kindling of that beacon from the next island, and it seemed to him that he knew all about it.

'Hold your noise, Dinky. Stop that corroboree!' He shouted for silence, as he always did when he wanted to think.

Yes, he would try! It was well worth trying, at any rate.

And the next moment he was scudding across the platform and clambering up the spidery stairs and ladders which led to the top of the lighthouse.

He had arrived nearly midway, when out of the living-room a little dark figure flitted, and stood straight in front of him.

'Out of the way, Saucy!' cried Toady Lion, and tore on upstairs. 'Come and show me!' he shouted back. It was not a time to despise any agency, however humble.

'The engine-room!' he shouted, and paused till Saucy, with large wide-open eyes and a difficulty in breathing, should come up with him. The little girl was not greatly surprised, really. She did not think it was so very wonderful that Sir Toady should be there. She had always known that he would find her

—that is, he and Dinky, of course. But the wonderful thing was, that he should want her to tell him anything. She always thought that Toady Lion knew everything. He always said he did. For Sir Toady's light was in no danger of being hidden under any bushel—not, at all events, for keeps.

'The engine-room—the engine, where is it?'

Saucy had helped to clean it—that is, she had stood at the door and handed clean cloths and oily waste when old Dick called for them. Consequently she went directly to the place.

A colza lamp was burning in a wire frame. Sir Toady Lion stood facing the row of levers and gauges. It was a critical moment. He took his courage in both hands and pulled the most likely. Nothing happened. He put it back—pulled another—still nothing! Angrily he flung himself on the motionless fly-wheel. There was a sharp, spitting explosion, a coughing noise—*buzz*, said the big fly-wheel, and away she went. So far, all was well.

'Now, don't talk, Sauce!' he said; 'I can't explain now. Show me the way up to the lantern.'

They came out in the service-room of the Croach. Above only the gallery, and the lantern glimmering bluish-grey over all. It looked very dark. Beneath the engine dunted. Could it be natural? It seemed to be going fearfully fast.

'Quick, Saucy, what does Dick do when he is at the lantern?'

'He lights the wicks!'

There were matches in a little square hole in the wall, tapers also, and presently Sir Toady was touching the circle of wicks into flame. This too was a perfect success. For all had been done that could be done, before Dick had run down to help his

comrade, suddenly attacked by an unknown peril.

But the lantern stood still—the beams were not sweeping the sea-floor as they ought, but lay motionless across it in glimmering bars.

‘Now, what else does he do—quick, Sauce?’

‘He sits down and reads his Bible! Nothing else!’

Sir Toady turned away. There was no help in womankind. Here Saucy had been all that time on a lighthouse, and had actually never found out how to do anything. Sir Toady felt that it was all over between him and the sex, from that time forth.

He tried a lever. Oh, but the engine seemed to be shaking itself to pieces, and perhaps the lighthouse with it. He pulled the handle farther round, as far as it would go. And then all at once his hands flew to his ears, for a voice, tremendous, grinding, bellowing, volleying, filled the heavens and the earth with a whirlwind of noise.

The syren!

Hastily Sir Toady shoved the lever back again. But the echoes of that mighty voice seemed for some time to possess the heavens, and the earth, and the sea. The gulls rose clamorous, and the very lighthouse seemed to rock and quiver.

‘Bumpety-bump! Bumpely-bump! Bumpety-bump!’

The engine was at it, running empty, and apparently making a thousand revolutions a second down in that terrible place. He pulled another handle that depended from the wall, and ‘DONG!’ the stroke of a two-ton bell throbbled slowly out, as if disengaging itself reluctantly from the corbelled walls and concreted floors of the Croach.

‘Oh, bother!’ cried Sir Toady, at his very wits’ end; ‘what must I try next?’

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He saw a small knob, hardly bigger than the call of an electric bell, pushed it, and with a slight *hum*, like a boy's top, the huge lantern began to turn in its bath of quicksilver. Instantly the raucous *clankely-clank* of the engine beneath softened, sweetened, and became kindly and homely.

The rays steadily swept the sea-floor. Sir Toady could see the sails of a ship glimmering white away out beyond the reefs. She seemed to alter her helm as he looked, and so bear away into the large safe night.

For a moment Sir Toady stood triumphant, looking about him, the light of the lantern shining down on his head like an aureole.

'Behold great Babylon that I have built! Alone I did it!' he seemed to say. Then very suddenly he dropped limp on a seat and began to sob.

Saucy stood aghast. She had been admiring him so. And now—strangely enough—she admired him more. She was a woman, you see, and quite understood what made him do that. Dinky would never have known. She did not tell him he mustn't—or to stop, or anything. She did not even kiss him, though this meant a distinct sacrifice.

'He might think afterwards it was mean,' she said to herself; 'yes, it would be a shame to take advantage!'

So she merely stood with her hand on his shoulder, patting him lightly at intervals, and murmuring, 'It's all right! It's *all* right!' till the hero became more himself again. She never asked him a single question.

There are many women as wise as Saucy Easdaile—no men at all.

Finally, Sir Toady intimated that the period of his

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weakness (alas, all too short for the loving little heart beside him) was at an end. He did so by pushing her hand pettishly away from his head.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

SURRENDER AT DISCRETION

'Lem'me hair alone, will you?' he said; 'I must attend to the lantern.'

'Where's Dick and Billy?' asked Saucy anxiously, after a moment.

The question aroused Toady Lion to the necessities of the case.

'They are in the big cave-place under the platform!'

'What are they doing there?' cried Saucy, astonished for the first time.

'Never mind that just now,' said Toady; 'you run and tell them it's all right. Say I've taken charge!'

He was rapidly recovering his natural manner.

Saucy sped down the dark stairs, with eyes still half-blinded by the glare up in the lantern. She snatched the wire-caged lamp in passing the living-room, and in a few minutes she was crossing the platform. Here she found Dinky wandering aimlessly about like a lost dog, and calling for his comrade.

'Toady... O Toad, you venomous little beast—wait till I get you!'

Dinky had climbed half-way up into the lighthouse, but the tremendous voice of the syren had scared the life out of him, and he had fled precipitately. There were knuckle water-marks all over his face, especially in the territory surrounding the eyes. But Dinky was not now crying. He was only very angry, and did not seem at all glad to see his sister. He did not, in the least, fall on her neck and kiss her, or anything like that. No; he

blackguarded her roundly for running away and getting them into such a mess. They would all be hanged for murder, that they would. Toady Lion undoubtedly, and also deservedly! For had he not run away, and left him (Dinky) responsible for Boompluff, and the mangled remains of the two lighthouse-men, which he was now dragging up and down their funeral vault

'It's a lie, Dinky,' said his sister, using a word that she had often been warned against by her aunt; 'it's a great big *lie*! Toady couldn't run away. He has done what you couldn't—made the lighthouse go. Nobody but him could have done it, and he has saved—oh! thousands and millions and hundreds of lives from shipwreck. All *you* could do was only to stay down here howling like a cat on a roof!'

Then Saucy went directly up to the door and listened. She could hear nothing except a low persistent growling, like the syren snoring in its sleep.

'Dick, are you there?' she cried. 'Billy!'

'BO-O-O-M—RAUFF-AUF!' remarked Big Ben with *his* syren voice so near on the other side of the door that Saucy started back.

'What's that?' she demanded of Dinky.

'Dog!' said he curtly.

'What's he doing in there?'

'Eating up the two men w'at tried to whack us! Didn't you get our messages? Didn't you make the three 'smudges,' that was the signal for us to come?'

'I don't at all know what you are talking about!' said Saucy. 'I never got any messages —I never made any 'smudges,' as you call them. I suppose you mean the smoke I've seen. I used to wonder what they were for!'

At this declaration Dinky fell back with feelings too deep for words.

'*Nous sommes trahis!*' he murmured, using the only French phrase he knew.

'It's that red-nosed Irishman,' he added bitterly; 'it's him that's done us up! I was sorry before, but now I hope Boompluff *has* et him all up—red nose and all!'

And at that moment, hearing the men stir on their beam as if clambering aloft, Boompluff loudly intimated his eagerness to comply with Dinky's bloodthirsty wish.

'Saucy—Saucy!' called Dick, 'let us out--do! It's death and destruction to be here, and the light never lit. Somebody's blowing the whole place to bits—I can hear them. Oh, and it will be reported—no light, and the syren going full tilt on a dead-clear night! We are ruined, sure. We will get six months in gaol at the least —me that's an elder in the kirk, and been a respectable man all my days—besides my brother being sergeant o' police!'

The light's lit, and he bade me tell you that he was in charge,' called Saucy through the keyhole. Then she added-

'And *he* says, you are not to bother. The whole thing is working like a watch ticking!'

'He—*who?*' cried both the men together.

'Who — why, Toady Lion, of course!' said Saucy, as if the whole world should be acquainted with the fame of that hero—as indeed it ought, since this is the second history written for that particular purpose.

'And who's Toady Lion?' cried Dick, straddling his beam—uncomfortable things, beams!

'Not that littlest imp, the one that got away?'

shouted Billy, more precise in his information.

'Yes, he has lit the lamps and started the engine; and if you have to stay here all night, I was to tell you it wouldn't matter. 'Tell them Toady Lion is in charge'—these were his very words!'

'Impudent young—' began Billy, between his teeth.

But his senior stopped him hurriedly.

'There's no help for it,' he said; 'it's some of your fool business. But now we're in it, and the best thing we can do, is to get out of it as well as we can. Speak them soft—that ramping beast would eat us wanting salt, if we went down there.'

'I never saw such a wild hyena!' said Billy.

Upon which Boompluff, feeling vaguely that he was being abused, raised his voice in a solemnising threat that filled the cavern and stifled all discussion.

'Saucy, I've been good to you, haven't I?' said the elder; 'you remember old Dick, eh?'

'And me too—Billy Bryan,' said the other, feeling that he was being left out in the cold, and not liking it. He did not want to be abandoned to Boompluff.

'You are both good dear men,' said Saucy, 'especially Dick, coz he's older, maybe!'

She added the last clause so as not to hurt anybody's feelings.

'Try and find the key of this place, Saucy, like a duck,' coaxed Dick. 'It was left in the lock, or at least this fool Billy says it was. And we've got no other, and can't get out without it!'

'It isn't in the lock now,' said Saucy, examining the dark little hole with interest in the light of the colza lantern. 'Perhaps it's fallen out.'

She set down the lantern and began to search

with her clever fingers, scattering the sand and small shell gravel of the walk.

'Here it is!' she cried suddenly. 'It had got all covered up. Now, I'm going to open and let you out!'

The key was already grating round the outside, seeking for the tiny entrance, when a hand shot over Saucy's shoulder.

'No, you don't, Sauce!' cried Dinky. 'You hold on! I want to know more about red-nosed Irishman, and rope's-ends and tying up, and hauling around by collars—people that never did him any harm!'

And Dinky calmly possessed himself of the key.

'Now,' he said, getting ready to parley, 'you in there—I've got to talk to you! Are you all fixed, Boompluff? Good old fell!'

'AUF-F-F!' remarked Boompluff in the largest capital letters, making his meaning plain as posters.

'Which of you was it that was startin' to beat me?' shouted Dinky; 'speak up there!'

'Oh,' said Saucy, wringing her hands, 'they were *such* nice men to me, particularly Dick. I can't believe it of them—not intentionally. You never did it intentionally, did you?'

'Never!' said Dick and Billy at once, from the beam, which, being very narrow, was beginning to obtrude itself upon their notice.

'It was 'the red-nosed Irishman!'' said Dinky; 'you hear, in there?'

They heard, but no one said so except Boompluff, who from Dinky's tone thought he was now going to get a full meal—this time, for certain.

'Answer for yourself, red-nosed Irishman!' cried Dinky.

'You'd better answer civil,' murmured Dick; 'think o' that light, and all the valuable property—the

property o' the Commissioners—all a-going to rack and ruin! Think o' that syren affronting God's own stars!'

'Let it,' said Billy; 'I wouldn't answer to that name, not if every Commis'ner was prayin' me on his bended knees!'

'Then I will,' said Dick. 'I ain't proud!'

'All right,' he said aloud, in as good an imitation of Billy's voice as he could muster, 'I'm sorry. Let's come to terms.'

'You *are* an Irishman, and *you* are red-nosed?'

'I am,' said Dick, taking his friend's part nobly, 'red-nosed as a hot poker!'

'And you will keep friends—you swear it—and let us take Saucy with us, without ever tryin' to prevent us. And you'll give us something to eat tonight, and —'

'Who are you?' broke in Dick; 'you seem to want a lot.'

'I'm Dinky Easdaile, Saucy's brother; and I come from Barravilla, North Queensland, if you want to know,' cried the boy indignantly. 'Saucy will tell you the same.'

'Oh, he comes from Australy too, does he?' growled Billy. 'I thought they had stopped sending the convicts there!'

'Hush!' murmured Dick, 'it's no use grouching. Give them what they want, and get rid o' them. There'll be enough to think about, if we mean to keep all this from getting reported up to headquarters!'

Aloud he added, 'Agreed—call off that dog, and chain him in the boat. We will do everything, and give you anything you can ask, in reason. Saucy knows that we will. She will be our surety.'

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'You are certain you are the red-nosed one—the Irishman?' said Dinky, who remembered the rope acutely.

'Oh, dead-sure!' said the unscrupulous Dick Finnan.

The key grated in the lock. The door fell back, and it was with unspeakable thankfulness that the two poor prisoners, aloft on their beam, saw the broad equal light-bars gliding smoothly over the acres of the sea, and illuminating the little bit of the black island which was visible from their perch.

'Here, Ben!' said Dinky. 'Come—out with you, you brute!' And Boompluff went without a murmur, but not without one speaking glance of regret at the dangling legs of his late prisoners.

'AUFF!' he said deep in his throat. Which, being interpreted, meant '*Au revoir!*'

CHAPTER THIRTY

A MARKED PARAGRAPH

Before the boys left the isle of the Croach, there was a general reconciliation, even the Red-nosed One considering his honour satisfied; especially when he found that Sir Toady's father was really one of the high and mighty Commissioners of Northern Lights, and that it was in his power (or would be when he returned) to recommend them for one of the coveted 'shore' posts.

'My father always does what I say,' concluded Toady Lion, with a confidence scarcely warranted by the facts. However, in this particular instance, he proved in the end to be right. And even from far-off Australia many a piece of crispy fluttering paper continues to arrive, addressed to one Mr. Richard Finnan, Coastguardsman, at Creelport-on-Dee, Scotland. The contents are for equal division, and are kept till a certain married Light-house-man of a ruddy countenance can fetch his wife (who does not otherwise come into this story) to call upon Mr. Richard Finnan, Coastguardsman.

Then the three all go up the town, and enter the bank together, where they remain a long time. When they come out they leave the clerks all smiling. But, properly speaking, this is looking a long way ahead, and what we have really to tell about now, is the Great Council of War which was held in the little hut on Inch Duchray, the night after the deliverance of Saucy.

It was a grave and important occasion, and Sir

SIR TOADY CRUSOE

Toady felt that they were all walking in a vain show, till they decided what was to be done with the Sword of 'That-Fellow-with-the-Unspellable-Name' which was for ever hanging over their heads.

All his private glory, even the surpassing triumph of the Lighthouse, availed the hero nothing, so long as in the end he must return to his aunt, and to the gloomy house of Easdaile Langton, which he hated.

Yet he felt that he ought to go there. His father had sent him there, and it was a sort of point of honour that he should 'dree out his weird.' But this half-willing virtue of Sir Toady's was negated without a division. For Dinky flatly refused to go back—not a single foot! He suggested running away to the Highlands and 'disguising themselves.' That would be easy in a country where everybody wore kilts.

'The only thing that puzzles me, is what to do with Toddy,

He says he won't wear petticoats, for me, or anybody!'

Sir Toady hummed the lines from a favourite chapbook of his. But even they brought no light. And indeed the boys were still wrangling late on in the afternoon, when Emma arrived with the provisions. She was astonished to find Saucy established there, and perhaps not over well-pleased to observe her evident devotion to Toady Lion.

But after the preliminaries had passed pleasantly enough, and the tea had been infused, the bony woman suddenly began grappling among her tangled and multifarious 'lower deck running-gear,' as her husband called it. From this obscure retreat

she presently produced a folded journal.

'Is that about any relative of yours?' she said, indicating a place with a score of her thumb-nail. Sir Toady took the paper and read

'SERIOUS ACCIDENT.—We regret to announce that a rather serious accident happened to the eldest son of Mr. Picton Smith, J.P., of Windy Standard, near the Rowting Bridge, on Saturday afternoon last. The young gentleman, who is at college, having previously graduated from the excellent establishment of the celebrated Doctor Commons near Edinburgh (a native of this county), had cycled southward, in order to spend his holidays in search of a younger brother who has mysteriously disappeared, leaving no trace behind.

'At the steep descent which leads to the Rowting Bridge, the brake of his machine broke, and the machine, escaping from the control of its rider, dashed into the coping of the bridge instead of making the turn. The unfortunate youth, belonging to one of our best families, was thrown over the bridge. But fortunately for his grief-stricken relatives, he fell into the only pool for miles, deep enough to save his valuable young life. He has since been carried to his ancestral home of Windy Standard, where the devoted attendance of an old family servant, formerly his nurse, and the skill of the well-known local practitioner, Dr. Thynne, are being lavished upon him. Our correspondent has called, and been informed that the unfortunate young gentleman still remains in a state of unconsciousness, and that his condition is serious, if not absolutely dangerous.'

Sir Toady sat staring at the printed words. His face felt cold and tingly. The others gazed at him as

his voice ceased. He had read the paragraph mechanically through, without at first fully grasping the meaning.

Then all at once he sprang up with a face like blank paper, and a strange drawn expression about his mouth.

'Hugh John,' he said, not loudly but with a curious halting stumble in his voice, 'Hugh John. I have killed him! I—I think—if you'll all excuse me—I must go to Hugh John!'

And he rose as if to go through the door, but suddenly changing his mind, he turned and faced them, wavered a moment, and, if the old woman had not been watching, would have fallen all his length on the floor.

But Emma Smith gathered him up very gently in her arms and laid him on the bed of the shieling of Inch Duchray. He soon came to himself, however, and was in such a hurry to be gone, that Emma made Dinky and Saucy a signal to get everything they wanted to take with them into the boat. Saucy understood, and told Dinky what to do. He was so accustomed to doing as he was bid, that he hardly noticed the difference.

In less than three hours all were safe in Emma Smith's cottage, and Sir Toady almost himself again. On the voyage he had made up his mind what to do. He would start at once for home—his own home—without going near his aunt's. The railway would not help much, for Edam and Windy Standard lay isolated among hills which had not yet been penetrated by the railway, though the local papers discussed the subject every spring in the throes of their silly season. For in the country, people do not read the news of Parliament, and before the lambing

reports and the first Displenishing Sales, there is space and to spare in the county weeklies.

Emma Smith said nothing against this plan. Indeed she approved. The boy, she could see, was suffering from shock. His manner was quite changed. He looked at you 'like a chicken straddling a chalk line,' said the mistress of the Hen Farm graphically.

'Yes, he shall go, and Ben shall go with him,' she said to herself; 'I would myself—but I have that silly old man of mine to keep from going too often to the Jolly Fishers!'

Which shows that Emma Smith had altered very considerably since Admiral Three Eyes introduced Sir Toady to her on the first day of the expedition.

Emma made no provision for Dinky and Saucy, but when the subject was mooted, they both declared that where Sir Toady went they would go; where he dwelt, they would dwell—and so on (so far as Saucy was concerned) to the end of the quotation. Dinky did not know the quotation. They are not strong on such things in Barravilla, North Queensland. But he did know that he was going to stick to Toady whatever happened. And that, you know, came just to the same thing. It is better to act up to a little bit of the Bible, than to know it all by heart.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

ONLY A LITTLE GIRL

Early the following morning Sir Toady Lion, Dinky, and Saucy departed from the Smith Hen Farm under strong and formidable escort. Emma went so far on the way with them in person, having left her husband in charge of the fowls, with directions as to hours of feeding, and amounts to be distributed, marked clearly on a slate behind the door. He had also been searched for money, rationed as to tobacco, and the chamber provided in which he was to be allowed to sleep—a kind of disused Hen Hospital mostly kept for the too persistent brooders, called by Emma her ‘Clockers.’

Boompluff went also. His vast and sombre countenance was full of natural gravity. Life was serious to Boompluff. You knew it just by looking at him, and if he did not appear pleased with you, your own views immediately took on a sober cast. In fact, you discovered that you had an engagement in another direction.

Emma Smith was to put them on the hill road, which, leaving the sea-levels a little past the shore-side station of Palmuir, strikes away into the heart of the heather, with only a shepherd's hut or two within sight of it for twenty miles. It was concerning these lonely cottages that Emma was carefully giving her instructions to the children.

‘Ye are to stop at the Rowan Tree,’ she said; ‘it's a herd's house, and the man in it (it will be a woman, at that time o' day, that ye will find there, but it's the same thing) is a decent man, though he comes

frae Wigtonshire. His name is John MacMultrie, and ye are to tell him, with the compliments of Emma Smith, that he is to make up a couple of shakedowns for ye to lie on, and not to grudge ye a bite and sup for the sake of Henry. Mind, now, ye are to say, Emma Smith said ye were to do as she asked ye, 'for the sake of Henry!' And to gie you a braxy bone for the dog, and to shut him up, or he will make a fine meal-of-meat off some o' their colly tykes.'

The strained look stayed on Sir Toady's face, and he did not seem to be listening. But at the mention of the dog, he looked up.

'What dog?' he demanded, with his eyes squarely on Emma's face.

'Ben,' she said, with a faint flush upon her stern features, and turning away her eyes as if a little ashamed; 'it's all that I have to give,' she said. 'He is *my* dog, but I give him to you—to —remember me by!'

Sir Toady, divining what was passing in the woman's heart, put his arms quickly about her neck. She did not unclasp them, but stood dry-eyed, looking stiffly out over his head.

'Ye are but a boy,' she said very softly, 'ye will maybe mind Emma Smith better if ye have the dog!'

Then Toady Lion had one of the inspirations which made him a power.

'Am I very like Henry?' he whispered in her ear, so low that none else heard.

The woman started and gripped the boy by the wrists as if she would have shaken him in anger.

'What ken you about Henry—what Henry?' she said, checking herself.

'The Henry I'm like,' said Toady Lion, adopting

unconsciously her countrywoman's accent; 'I mind you terribly o' him, do I not?'

'Laddie, laddie,' she said, holding him away from her to look, 'you are surely a changeling. They have such sometimes in my country, though I never saw one like you. Go your ways, and the Lord of Wanderers be with you!'

And suddenly, without any leave-taking, in the plain middle of the road, Emma Smith turned on her heel, and walked steadily back in the direction of the Hen Farm.

As for Toady Lion, he tramped away also, without looking back—his face with the curious bleached expression upon it, keen-set towards the point of the horizon where he believed Hugh John to be lying waiting for him. Dinky and Saucy followed their captain without any questioning. Only the great Boompluff was left without orders, standing uncertainly in the middle of the road. He looked towards Toady Lion, but he was already out of sight round the bend of the way.

So, after a marked hesitation, ancient habit and affection won the battle, and he followed his mistress. She had her apron to her face, and for a while did not hear the soft broad padding of the huge feet behind her.

Emma Smith turned at last, as if aware of a following presence. A lock of grey hair, long and lank, had somehow come loose, and hung to her elbow. She brushed it impatiently back, and with the same hand pointed sternly up the road in the direction in which the children had disappeared.

She did not speak, and Boompluff, doubt still in his big doggy heart, but obedience in his eyes, only waited to assure himself that he was not mistaken

as to his mistress's wishes; and then, wheeling clumsily, like an engine on a turn-table, he trotted heavily after his new master. Thus did Boompluff the Great pass from one branch of the notable family of Smith to another.

It was a wild and solitary landscape which the eyes of the younglings would have rested upon, had they been in a mood to notice such things. But Toady Lion was wrapped in the Inner Vision. He saw Hugh John—his well-beloved Hugh John, now grown almost to a man, but more his elder brother than even—hurt, perhaps killed. And what was bitterest, he not there—nay, worse still than that, if he had not been such a little fool about running away, Hugh John would never have been riding like that to try to find him.

'Oh, if only it had not been—if only it were the day before ever he thought of running away! If everything were to be done over again--how differently he would act!' Such cryings came instinctively from the lips of the hero, as they do from all children's hearts after any great calamity.

Dinky felt vaguely ashamed, not knowing what to do. Toady Lion had always been his leader, his guide in all things. And now, what would happen, if he were going to give way like that?

But Saucy followed the forlorn Dinky up the never-ending curves of this winding road with joy hidden under her Harris cloak. The heather was growing close to the little footway of soft, short grass, inconceivably green along its edges. Brown caterpillars, 'woolly bears,' as the naturalist Sir Toady had told her to call them, crawled across her path, humping their backs as they went. At another time she would have carried them eagerly to him.

And he would have hauled mysterious little boxes out of his pockets, into one or other of which he would have put the captives, piercing holes in the top, and filling the frail cardboard half-way up with the kind of leaves on which the creature had been feeding, each 'woolly bear' eating only after his kind.

But now Saucy knew better. There was a time to weep and a time to dance—also a time when *not* to bother Toady Lion about woolly bears.

Saucy was learning the lesson of life, the lesson of her sex, and of her sex's power—that power which makes the exercise of the franchise a vain thing. Higher and higher the three young things went, the clean, clear air coming to them over leagues of purple bells in which myriads of bees were buzzing. Often the brother and sister would gladly have sat down, but Toady Lion kept steadily on, his face tense and drawn with his inward struggle. At last Dinky grew foot-sore and openly rebellious.

'If *he* won't, then I will,' he burst out. 'I'm hungry, I am—and he has got the bag!'

So he planted himself in front of Toady Lion, calling out, 'I say, look here—we want to rest and have something to eat!'

And lo! Toady Lion went past him—Dinky was not very sure if he did not go through him—without turning his face aside one hairsbreadth.

But Saucy cooled the heats of her brother's angers (for worshippers are sometimes angry with their gods) by taking the case upon herself. She tripped along, half running by Toady's side. Then after a while she took his arm, and looked up at him.

'I can't go any farther,' she said gently; 'you see, I'm only a little girl, and I'se tired!'

So the rock melted, and in the soft light of Saucy's sisterly eyes, the quarrel was made up.

Even then, however, Toady Lion did not eat much. Hugh John—Hugh John ! He could not get his brother out of his mind. Their affection had never been marred. Of course Hugh John had 'whopped him'—of course he had 'stoned' Hugh John in return, and teased him, and called him names, and—oh, a lot of things like that. But all that was nothing, only the tumbling of playful puppies, frisking on the braes of Windy Standard.

It seemed to the boy that his heart must break. If he had been by himself he would have cried out loud. And indeed at times he could hardly help it as it was, if it had not been that he could not bear Dinky to see him. He didn't mind Saucy. Of course not — Saucy was different. She wouldn't think that a fellow wasn't manly, or anything like that, only because he felt blue about his brother. Dinky never had a brother. How then should he know anything about the matter?

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

A WISE WOMAN

Very slow, painfully dragging, achy and sore, had grown Saucy's feet before the Herd's House of the Rowan Tree appeared. It was a pleasant place, the loveliest and lonesomest in all the journey across the moors. Of course the heather hills were on every side, rock and crag, rose and grey and deep crimson, as if blood-drenched right up to the opal glimmer of the sky-line.

But down beneath the single Rowan Tree, which gave the place its name, were spread out John MacMultrie's meadows, where John Mac-Multrie's cow was grazing, and carefully fenced off, John MacMultrie's little plots of oats and rigs of potatoes. A bien and comfortable man was John, with a wife of his own, a cow's grass, the right of planting corn and potatoes in the gussets and insets of arable land, a little pocket-handkerchief of flower-garden even, with cabbages and leeks, running steeply up the hill behind, like a slate leaned against a wall.

But on the spirit of Toady Lion all this sat bitter—as it were, insulting his grief. As Emma had foretold, the shepherd of the Rowan Tree was away on the hill, and though the woman who came to the door was pleasant of face and open of eye, Saucy thought it better not to give the message till John MacMultrie himself came in. While they sat waiting, Dinky and his sister answered the goodwife's questions. Oh yes, they had been stopping down at the salt-water. They had friends on the islands—at the lighthouse, even. On her side the woman knew the herd who

had been out there, on the Black Isle of Duchray, only the year before; a weariful and lonesome place it was, not heartsome and cheery like the Rowan Tree, where there was generally at least one beggarman every two days.

'Well, this year the Duchray herd will find his blankets aired for him!' said Dinky, smiling.

But Saucy perceived that Sir Toady, generally the first in all converse with strangers, said never a word. Then very quietly he went out, so quietly indeed that even she did not see him go. She only noticed Boompluff solemnly rise and follow. For already, scorning all others, he had adopted Sir Toady as his master.

Then came a barking of joyous dogs about the house, a rout in the little lobby, the kitchen taken by storm and escalade, a submerging wave of collies, presently controlled and sent under tables and chairs by the vigorous arm and tongue of the goodwife. And then the master himself, John MacMultrie, entered, flinging his plaid in the neuk. He was heavily built, full-bearded, of an eye grave and kindly, and Saucy knew at once that he would be 'one of her people.' She had not the easy and universal confidence of Sir Toady, and it was necessary, in order that she should like any one very much, that that one should be ready to like her. She did not take it for granted that they would, which is the secret.

'Is the parritch on, goodwife?' he cried; 'faith, I could eat my bootlaces fried in a taste o' waggon-grease! And eh, bairns, ye hae surely comed a long road?'

'From the salt-water—all the road from the Islands. They have been summering on the

Duchray,' explained his wife.

Then Saucy mustered her courage, and her heart beat faster as with her eyes on the woman's face she proceeded to try the effect of her magic 'Open Sesame.'

'It was Emma Smith at the Hen Farm that sent us here,' she said very quietly, as if talking of the weather; 'she bade me say that you were to give us two shakedown on the floor and a bite - *for Henry's sake!*'

The woman looked puzzled, but the effect of the name on the man was magical enough—all indeed that could be desired.

'For Henry's sake,' he murmured; and again, 'Aye, aye—for Henry's sake—a bed and a bite and a sup! Bairns, that shall ye hae—by the word of John MacMultrie, that shall ye hae!'

He turned to his wife, who stood still and unresponsive, her eyes on her husband's face, waiting.

'Henry was my brother, years older than me, as ye have heard,' he said; 'Emma and Henry kepted the lambs thegither when they were bairns on the braes of Cluden. They were trysted to be married. But Henry died. He was little mair than a laddie—but she hasna forgotten him.'

'Aye!' said his wife, 'I hae heard o' Henry. And for his sake, as weel as for their ain, the bairns shall not want shelter and a bite. We will never miss it.'

'Are ye a' by your lone—you twa?' was John's next question.

'There was another laddie,' said his wife, 'and a big muckle dog. But they gaed oot. I wasna mindin'. They will no' be far awa' somewhere.'

'Oh,' said Saucy, now gaining confidence, 'and if

you please, would you put the dogs where they will not fight with Boompluff?’

‘And who may Boompluff be?’ said the shepherd.

‘He was Emma Smith's dog,’ said Saucy, ‘but he's Toady Lion's now. He is called Boompluff, because that is what he says when he barks. His full name is Boompluff Dowxus Dando Samson.’

John MacMultrie laughed at this sonorous catalogue, and going to the door, he bade his collies abruptly to ‘kennel up there’! Whereupon the rough-coated throng ebbed out from beneath the house furniture, and went tumbling and scuffling into the barn.

‘I do not see either dog or laddie,’ said the herd, looking all round the lonely house, ‘and we can see a far road too from the Rowan Tree.’

A fear began to oppress Saucy, and she started to her feet.

‘I will look for him,’ she said, ‘and bring him back!’

Though in her heart she did not feel too sure of that last.

‘I will come with you!’ said Dinky promptly.

‘No,’ said Saucy, ‘I will go by myself. He will listen better if *I* speak to him. Dinky is so abruptious,’ she explained, pleased with the long word, which sounded fine, ‘and you see Toady Lion is unhappy about his brother Hugh John. *I* had better go.’

‘Ah, do,’ said the woman readily, ‘and tell him that supper will be ready in a quarter of an hour—that will hurry him. I ken boys, though I hae nane o' my ain!’

Saucy went about the house to the gable-end, against which leaned the rounded peat-stack. Another sunset was flaring, orange-red on the bent,

SIR TOADY CRUSOE

ruby-red on the heather, fire-red in the sky. But Saucy never looked at the glory of flamboyant colour. She passed it as the eager reader passes the descriptions of scenery in a novel. For Saucy there was only one direction. She was true as the needle to the pole, because due north lay the way Sir Toady would take to reach Hugh John—hurt, unconscious, his condition ‘serious if not dangerous,’ as the newspaper man had reported of him.

Towards the north then went Saucy. Her feet, tired before, now moved in the evening coolness with incredible lightness. She seemed scarcely to touch the hard road, moving as one does in dreams about a foot above the ground, by just wanting to do it. The caller air filled her lungs, and she went on exulting in the thought that soon she would ‘catch up on’ her sorrowful-hearted hero.

A dear little Saucy this, learning, always learning—the selfishness dropping out of her hour by hour. It was no longer, as of yore, ‘Amuse me, Toady Lion!’ but rather ‘How much can I do for him, poor boy—that nobody else can do but myself?’

Ah, there they were—under a little over-hanging eyebrow of cliff, which the road had cut through in turning the corner. Toady Lion was sitting on a heap of road-metal, piled squarely, his feet on a still unbroken stone left ready for tomorrow, and opposite sat Boompluff, gravely putting his mind to the unwonted situation. Now he would incline his great head to one side, now to the other, obviously trying to find out what was the matter. He could do little, it seemed to him. There was no one to bite, that he could see—no one to overwhelm as he had done Billy Bryan in the oil-store. No one to blow away from the guns, as it were, by one discharge of

artillery. Boompluff hardly needed to employ his teeth with any ordinary-sized dog. He simply opened his mouth, and thundered him off the face of the earth in one awe-inspiring A-U-G-H!

All he could do now, however, was just to put out a huge paw, and draw it twice or thrice across Toady Lion's knee in mute sympathy. He even so far forgot his doghood as to whine a little, when he found that his new master took no notice of these sympathetic advances.

However, he pricked up at sight of Saucy, and rising, solemnly wagged his tail. It was thick and heavy, and made quite a breeze on such a still evening.

'Toady, said Saucy gently, 'you are to come back with me and hear about Henry. Besides, Boompluff wants his supper. Just look at him!'

Cunning Saucy! No word about himself—or about her.

Toady Lion half started, and then sinking back again into the child's impulse to be alone with his sorrow, he said, 'I *can't* go back. They are all talking—about things. I can't bear it, and Hugh John like that! I am going to stay here till it is light enough, and then go on. I would now, but I might lose the road when it was dark.'

Saucy did not argue, as grown-up persons might have done. She did not tell the boy that he could do his brother no good by stopping out there—or that, on the contrary, he would make himself ill, and so be no use when he did find him.

Oh no, Saucy never said a word about all that.

She only picked up her skirts, pulled them over her head, got a stone for her feet, and sat down on the road-metal beside him, with her chin on her

knees. Boompluff, taken in by the action, decided that it was going to be a long business. So, as there was no further use for active sympathy while Saucy was on hand, he proceeded to stretch himself. Then he yawned melodiously, ending with a click of his white teeth which sounded like the snip of tailors' scissors, and, last of all, lay down with a satisfied 'Umph!'

For a while neither said anything, but gradually Sir Toady, growing vaguely uneasy, began to watch the little girl out of the corner of his eye.

'Go back,' he said at last, 'go back and get your supper, Sauce! I—I don't want any!'

For the first time in her life Saucy disobeyed her commander, not defiantly, but with quiet restrained resolution. It certainly impressed Toady Lion.

'I am *not* going back,' she said; 'I am going to stay where you stay. If *you* do not want any supper, I don't either!'

Thus defining her position, she settled herself more comfortably, and drew her skirts closer about her shoulders. The hero of battles watched her furtively. Just at the right moment a slight shudder went through Saucy's body.

'You are shivering - you will get cold,' he cried, provoked at her unwonted obstinacy; 'get into the house, I tell you. I don't mind the cold, but I don't want you to get coughing and making a little donkey of yourself. D'ye hear, Sauce?'

Sauce heard, but the mouth drew down just a little more determinedly at the corners. 'If *you* stay, I do!' she said; 'it isn't any colder for me than it is for you!'

'You *are* a stupid,' growled Toady Lion. 'I shan't love you ever any more!'

'Can't help that,' said Saucy, rising; 'you come back and I will!'

'No, then I just shan't!' said the hero, getting on his feet, however.

Boompluff rose too, and evidently from the sulky, yielding quality in his master's voice, he took the affair for settled, and meekly padded off in the wake of Saucy towards the Rowan Tree.

Sir Toady paused irresolute for a long moment, and then—followed also.

Satisfied with her victory, Saucy was now ready to compromise, and thus ease the smart of her Toady's defeat.

At the corner of the little garden she turned and whispered, 'It's lovely here. Stay if you like, and I will bring out something when it is ready. We can eat it together.'

Inside she said to Goodwife MacMultrie, spouse of John, 'He is so *very* unhappy about his brother. Dinky has been telling you, hasn't he? Let me take him out something, please. Then he will come in, after. I don't think he feels like talking just now.'

'But he wad be far mair comfortable here,' began John MacMultrie, 'here at the table amang us a!'

His wife said nothing till she had provided a large 'bicker' of steaming porridge, a basin of good cow's milk, and *two* spoons.

These she gave to Saucy, and then turning to her husband she remarked pityingly, 'Oh, ye man—ye silly, silly man!'

Whereupon John MacMultrie looked at Dinky, and Dinky looked back at John. Neither one nor the other could make anything of this. For they were of the Eternal Outsiders.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

DAYS OF HEAVINESS

These were heavy days in and about the house of Windy Standard. If any were inclined to be light of heart, one look at Janet Sheepshanks' face cured him of that. Was this the woman, famed athwart the country, who had borne her years like a tree of the forest? From the bedside of the young master of the house she scarcely stirred night or day. Nor sleep nor rest did she crave. She scouted them.

Doctor Thynne advised a nurse. But he did not press it when he saw Janet's face.

'Thae arms were strong enouch to nurse him. He kenned no ither nurse a' his days. Nor shall he now. Nurses, indeed!'

Accordingly the question of trained assistance was settled once and for all. Mr. Burnham, the minister of Edam, and a friend of Mr. Picton Smith's, was hardly more successful in his offer of spiritual comforts.

'Ow, aye, ye can see him—ow, aye,' she said, 'naebody shall hae it in their power to say I keepit a minister oot o' the chaumer. But mind you, nae prayin', as if the laddie was at his last hour. He's better, I tell ye. Oh, a heap better! Faith, I gied Jane the housemaid *what for*, standin' blubberin' in the window-curtain as if the laddie were deein'! Aye, I was middlin' coorse wi' her. I was that!'

Thus indifferently welcomed, Mr. Burnham mounted to Hugh John's chamber, walking with his quiet professional step, which he need not have

moderated so carefully. For Hugh John never even heard him—nor indeed could hear him. Hugh John was wandering along strange paths, dwelling in houses his eyes had never seen, but which in his dreams were familiar to him as if he had long companied in them. His eyes were open day and night, and he spoke hurriedly, on and on, in a low even whisper. Once or twice he laughed, so weirdly, that it tugged at the heart-strings of those who heard him. Words and names escaped him, those of schoolmates sometimes—most of all those of his sister Prissy, of his brother Toady Lion—and of ‘Cissy.’ Generally he called Sir Toady’s name, as well as that of his sister Prissy, in loud commanding tones—loud, that is, considering that he hardly ever spoke above a hoarse whisper. But when he mentioned Cissy Carter, he always added, ‘Why does she not come?’

Then at the spoken word the face of the old woman grew terrible. There was a look in her eyes that struck home like a stiletto blade. And she hurried, almost hustled, Mr. Burnham out of the room. There were things that she did not want him to hear—that she must keep to herself. For to her Hugh John was yet but a boy going too young to college. And, of course, he had no right to be thinking about pretty Miss Carter, the daughter of Mr. Smith’s neighbour on the other side of the water—who, everybody said, was going to be married to a baronet’s son.

No, of course not! It was nonsense. He was far too young. Besides, at any rate, she must be a forward minx. What if they *had* been playmates, and later, had played at sweethearts, with crooked sixpences cut in half and so forth?

'Nonsense; Hugh John should have known better,' said the old woman with her lips when any one spoke to her on the subject, which was but seldom. Yet in her heart she cherished the low pitiful accents which told so much. She cherished the love in them, as if the words had been spoken to herself. He was but nineteen, or little more, the young master. Ridiculous! What had Hugh John, her little Hugh John (now grown a head and a half taller than herself) been thinking of?

But time and again Janet Sheepshanks crept close to listen—drawn against her will. That was why she would let none approach but herself.

This is a sadful chapter, but it cannot be written otherwise. There is brightness farther on. Let any skip and find it if they choose.

'Listen, Prissy,' said the Voice, the Voice which none shutting their eyes could have told for Hugh John's—'listen, I am only a boy. *She* told me so. But does that help it, Priss? I ask you, does it? For she let me think it, Priss, long and long. You know she did. Oh no, I—I don't complain. I am not saying a word against her—not even to you, Priss. But I must speak to somebody. It wasn't to worry about Toady Lion at all, that I was riding home. I knew the little scamp was all right. Blessed old Toadems, I wish he was here! Though he does deserve a welting, and as father's not on hand, he shall have it too when he turns up—Imp o' Sin, that he is. Oh no, it was to see Cissy Carter that *I* came.

'When did I hear about it? Oh, not in any nice way. It was on Friday night at the debating society—the Union, you know. I had a speech to make, and a fellow who wanted to knock me, handed me a slip cut from a paper—'marriage has been arranged

between'—and so on—you know the sort, Priss. Then that cad Courtenay Carling's name, and then—with all sorts of stars dancing about it—Cissy's! Very rum—it was, to sit there with all the fellows gassing and feel a knife through your heart!

'Ought to have been tarred and feathered?—Yes, of course, so he ought, the sweep. But he didn't knock me much after all. I made my speech, and put some mustard into it too—generally gave his side beans. What was it about? Oh, nothing you'd care about—I didn't myself, not a pin—something about the Present Government being worthy of the confidence of the Country—oh, just rubbish! So I went out, and started at night, and rode right through. I suppose I sprinted a bit. I know I got so sleepy I wasn't very careful on the down-grades. Would you be if you had seen *that* in print about your girl? *Oh, don't preach, Priss!* This isn't the time, when a fellow is lying here on his back with a broken head! There, you didn't mean anything that wasn't kind. I was a brute, Priss. It's only my head—muzzy a bit, I think. Where was I? Oh, yes, I got to that bridge. I knew it was coming, but I didn't remember that the hill was so steep. Like the side of a house it was, and with a double curve at the bottom like a capital S. That was what did me. I tried my brake too late when the machine was taking charge. I was riding my old one. You know, I always liked it best. Bad thing when a fellow's bike takes charge! And all in a moment the abominable thing went 'scat! Haven't used it for years, and then *smack!* I hit the parapet, and went over, as I thought, right into Kingdom Come.

I beg your pardon, sir—I didn't know *you* were there, Mr. Burnham. No, I shouldn't be talking that

way. Yes, I was just riding to look after that young rip—a day or so off in mid-summer term doesn't do a fellow any harm, eh? Yes, I am going back on Monday. Don't tell father I got a spill—only worry him. But wait till I get hold of that young lunatic, Toady. I'll take it out of his hide, see if I don't!

'Say, if you see that old fool, Janet, tell her I want her, will you? She was in here a while ago. I do believe she was snivellin' over me! Good old Janet! Of course she is an old first-chopper. They don't make any better that I can see anywhere—eh, Priss, what say you? There—what! Priss, surely *you're* not going to begin blubberin' too!'

He was quiet a while after this, but Janet Sheepshanks feared the more, for she knew what was coming now. Presently he began again, in a lower tone, more hurriedly, the words tumbling pell-mell over each other like potatoes emptied out of a basket.

"Only a boy!—well, Cissy Carter, are you not 'only a girl'? Why, you are actually younger than I am! Oh *yes*, you are. I waited behind in church and got your Bible in the pew. Your godfather gave it you when you were confirmed —and it had on the fly-leaf, 'To Cecilia Carter on the eighteenth anniversary of her Birthday.' Well, I'm nineteen. But what's the use? It isn't that, Cissy. It's because you care for—somebody else. What, you don't! Then why have you promised to marry him, Cissy? Have you forgotten the stile—the old stile, Cissy, and the crooked sixpence? I've got my half yet. I was looking at it—never mind when, Cis. You wouldn't care to know—not now! But I love you, Cis. I always have loved you. And it's a long time, even if I *am* a boy. 'Boys' can love—oh, yes they can. And I've cared about

nobody else since I was so high! Get over it?—Live it down?—Never marry your first love?—Oh, I know all that—tommy-rot! It's true of some; of most, maybe. They go trotting after the first apple-faced milkmaid they see. But I didn't, you know. I only loved—yes, I *will* say the word. I would say it out loud if it was in the Union—'I love Little Cis Carter—just Little Cis!' There!

'Gentlemen of the Union, I shall admit for the sake of argument, that my subject is one which lends itself to laughter. But, gentlemen, I speak to you frankly as a man speaks to men responsible for their actions. Now mark my words. I love Little Cissy Carter, and she is going to marry the Other Fellow! What is the verdict of this distinguished House upon the facts thus put before them? Has she the right, gentlemen? I speak of Cissy Carter, Little Cis Carter, *my* little Cissy—I hear a member of the opposition say, 'the Other Fellow's Little Cissy'—and for that remark I will hold him responsible. I shall demand a personal explanation after the House has risen. But the question I have to ask is, gentlemen, whether Cissy Carter is worthy of the confidence of the country?

Lord, Janet Sheepshanks, what nonsense I *am* talking! Why did you let her go away after what I told you? *Who* go away? Why, Cissy of course. She was here just now, you know, and you knew I wanted to speak to her. I must speak to her. Go after her, Janet, and tell her I was off my head a bit, and have been talking through my hat. But I'm all right now—Lord Chancellor on the woolsack nothing to me! Tell her to come back, like a good girl. She won't go to that - that pair of curling tongs—Courtenay Carling, a fellow I wouldn't let Prissy

speak to!—Stop her, I say, Janet. Oh, you old brute! You won't—oh, *very* well. I thought you cared about me, you—crocodile! Out of this with your tears, and your pretences. No, I shan't lie down. I shan't do anything. I hate you—you hate me, that is! For you can stop her and you won't. Fetch her back, I say. And—ah, my head! It hurts. Stop the beating, please. *Hammer and tongs—tongs and hammer!* So it goes. Old Bob Forgan and his apprentice *ding-donging* hard at it in my head! They are making a ring. Ha! ha! what a funny thing—yes, it is, an iron wedding-ring for Cissy Carter and Courtenay Carling all in the inside of my poor old head.

'Say, Janet, you used to be kind to me—do bring her back! 'Only a boy,' I know. But if a fellow's going to die, what does it matter? And, I say, try to make my head better; try something, Janet. You used to kiss it well, Janet—in old times when I was only a little paddler. Do it now, Janet—poor old moppy Janet, good old Janet that used to call me her dear boy. Lord, if the fellows only heard me!

'Hallo, you Toady Lion, where did you spring from? Oh, you little beast. It's you that we've to thank for all this, getting us into this precious mess!

'What's that you're giving me, Janet? There's no Toady Lion! Don't add lying to the rest, Janet Sheepshanks! I tell you I saw Toady passing old Carter's house just now. *He* will go back and tell Cissy I want to speak to her. *He* would do anything for me. There's nothing like a brother, after all! Hooray! Hooray! You old pig, Janet, no thanks to you, that wouldn't stir a foot. What, you are going after all? You're a brick, Janet. Now be dandy on your pins, Janet. Never mind your bonnet or the prinking of your kiss-me-quicks. Off with you!

Galloway Raiders Digital Edition

Haste! Despatch! Tally-ho, and also 'Ho, my merry men all, for 'tis our opening day!

Yes, all right, I will lie down and be tucked in, if you'll only be quick and bid Sir Toady to come up to me—at once. Mind you, at once, or I, Hugh John Picton Smith, will know the reason why!

And Janet Sheepshanks, going down through the shrubbery with despair in her heart, met a white-faced beggar-boy whom she did not know, accompanied by a huge dog. She was about to order them both to come off the grass. But looking nearer, through the rags and dirt—lo, it was Toady Lion himself, come home, just in time.

The end of this (the only) sadful chapter. *Praise be to the Pigs! sayeth the Reader.*

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

CONFIDENCES

How Toady Lion got to Windy Standard has never yet been made quite clear. He had brought Dinky and Saucy with him as far as the gipsy camp, where the fully recovered poacher now inhabited a fine new waggon, the gift of Dr. Thynne. Here he left them temporarily and pressed on, to encounter alone that which lay before him, within his brother's chamber at Windy Standard.

Was he a murderer? Must he go through the world branded like Cain? Would Hugh John be able to forgive him?

Saucy could tell nothing about the way, save that the road, white-hot and blinding with dust, had streamed back from under her feet, and that all the last day there was in her ears the sound of many waters. Dinky knew only that he was very hungry, and also, he could not tell why, exceedingly angry with his father for sending him to such a horrid country. He longed for the fleshpots of Barravilla, and had visions of cool drinks under the striped awnings of the old verandah, and the scent of his father's cigarettes all about the house.

Sir Toady has never told his impressions. But certainly he was not quite himself, for when Janet Sheepshanks met him, spoke to him, shook him into consciousness, he struck at her because she stood in the way between him and Hugh John.

But just as he recognised the face of his nurse,

grown suddenly old and grey and misty, down the stairs there came clear and high the Call—the Call the brothers used, when in the woods they had lost one another. It was imitated from a bugle they had heard ring out in the evening, from the encampment on the links, where the regulars came for the manoeuvres. It began like this: *'Lost and long, lost and long. Where away? Where away?'*

And the second part was the answer. It burst from Toady Lion's white and trembling lips now, as he flashed his hands trumpet-shaped to help carry the sound, *'Marching along, strong and strong—Nothing Wrong; strong and strong - Night and Daaaaaady!'*

But, you understand, It was just the bugle notes—not the words they had put to it—which they used.

Toady Lion rushed upstairs. That call could only come from One—could only be meant for One Other. Hugh John was the one, he the other. After him hasted Janet Sheepshanks, who never had made better time up these stone stairs of the house of Windy Standard, even when as a girl she had first entered the service of the boys' grandfather.

This is what she saw at the door of the sick-room.

Hugh John, tall, tottery, bandaged and strapped in white, was on his feet. He was holding out his undamaged left hand to his brother. His right was slung across his chest.

'Hallo, Toadums,' he was saying in his natural voice, 'so you've come at last, you little beast. You've taken your time about it. Wait till I get well—just won't I welt you for this!'

Then Janet rushed past the younger brother, crying, 'You'll kill yourself—you'll kill yourself. Get into bed, Hugh John, this instant!'

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'All right, old lady,' quoth Hugh John quietly. And so got.

'Dear, dear,' she murmured as she tucked him in, 'I declare he's mair like himsel' than I hae seen him since he was brought hame to me that day. But he might hae killed himsel', for a' that, jumpin' out of bed like yon!'

However, Hugh John did not kill himself.

Of course the case was too serious for any sudden or marvellous cure. But probably the return of Toady Lion was the fillip which got Hugh John over the fatal Dead Centre of danger into safety. These were dark days and weeks. But there was never again the same hopeless pour of painful thoughts and painful words from the stricken brain.

Toady Lion, with his instinct for all the finer soul shades, undertook that part of the case. As for Dr. Thynne and Janet Sheepshanks, they attended to the ordinary nursing and surgical departments, which, as Toady knew, though he did not say, were all they were good for.

'It's mervellus—simply mervellus to see them thegither, Doctor,' Janet confided to the Edam surgeon at his next visit. 'I'm thinkin' ye maun pit a stop to it. Man, the way he humours him when he's at his blethers. Aye, and whiles ye wadna ken whilk ane o' them was the dafter.'

'But does it excite the patient?' inquired the Doctor, scratching the gravel with his toe thoughtfully.

'Na, Doctor, I canna juist say that it does that — na, raither it micht be said to quiet him. He will lauch a weel, and sync start blackguarding Maister George, and caain' him a' the ill names he can lay his tongue to. But back he aye comes to yon talk

about 'Her'—I need name nae names—ye hae heard him, a daft thing for a young laddie like him—but, Heeven help us, what can we do?'

'And he talks about—ah—That Subject to—to his younger brother?' queried the Doctor, who, like most people, had a professional manner and speech.

'Aye,' said Janet; 'and the warst o't is, that he never speaks—about Her—to me ony mair since Maister George cam'. Na, I maun gang oot o' the room, and bide awa' till they hae dune. It's hard on me, Doctor. I think ye should put a stop till't.'

The Doctor shook his head and smiled gravely.

'Do not fret,' he said, laying his hand kindly on the withered old wrist, squared like dressed wood; 'that is the best thing I have heard yet. They seem to understand each other wonderfully, those two.'

'Oh, I'm no denyin'—he's an awfu' laddie, Maister George,' said Janet, whom excitement and responsibility had made unusually communicative, 'and has been a' his days. What do you think he brocht hame wi' him, the day he arrived?'

'I don't know—perhaps a sweetheart,' smiled the Doctor; 'it seems to run in the family to make these little arrangements somewhat early.'

'Na,' corrected Janet, 'the lassie cam' the next mornin'. It was a great muckle dog, the size o' ony ordinar' dog's kennel, and wi' an appetite like a flunkey in regimentals!'

'And you say the young lady arrived the next morning,' said the Doctor; 'faith, I must tell that to my sister. She understands that she is First—and—Only in the good graces of Toady Lion.'

'Deed, and there's a heap thinks that,' said Janet, mournfully casting a retrospective eye over the career of the perjured young Lothario; 'but this

was nae ither than his cousin Selina Easdaile frae Australia—her that the daft folk, and me mysel', shame be to me, used to call Saucy. Her brither Dinky is with her. They were even as pigs from the gutter—dirty was nae name for them. I hae gotten Saucy some cleaner mysel', but Dinky is still in the muckle bath, in soak, as it were, and there he will stay till I hae time to scrape him off wi' an oyster shell. As for the clouts they caaed their claes, Dickson, the keeper, took them awa' and buried them. I never asked him where. I made a point o't.'

'And Toady Lion—was he cleaner than the others?'

Janet Sheepshanks seemed rather to shy away from this subject.

"Deed, then, sir," she said, "he wasna that verra—no what ye wad caa' exactly clean. But the Guid's truth is, sir, that I darena separate the twa laddies for a moment. He sleeps at the bed-foot even. But this nicht, if I am spared, I will see what I can do wi' a nail-brush and the maister's muckle tub!"

So if cleanliness be next to godliness, Janet Sheepshanks was in the way of putting our three wanderers into excellent moral case.

Now what passed between Sir Toady and his brother when Janet Sheepshanks was put outside the door—and the key-hole plugged—is known only to Toady Lion. He has not told even me—and he tells me most things, or else how could I write this book? As for Hugh John, his mind is a wiped slate on the matter. A great event happened soon afterwards which lost him all remembrance of these things. It was Sir Toady who brought that event about, and on this subject, at least, there need be no reticence. I have no reason to suppose that Sir Toady is proud of

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his doings. He considers them too much in the nature of things to be any cause for pride. But he is quite willing that the facts should be known.

Well, then, here they are—but with a little preface of explanation.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

THE 'CUTTING' OF TOADY LION

Standing on the terrace of Windy Standard, and looking across the levels, over a full mile of meadow-sweet and clover, across many pleasant shrubberies, you may descry the 'Place' as it was locally called — that is, Oaklands, the residence of Colonel Davenant Carter, known to all the country round as 'the Cornel.'

His military rank was not regularly on the army list, but he had been in the service in youth, had resigned upon marriage, and received his promotion (such as it was) in connection with a neighbouring corps of volunteers. But he was a very handsome military-looking old man, with a most martial temper upon occasion — and, indeed, often upon none. At bottom, however, he was both kindly and approachable, though stiff as a poker upon all points connected with game and the privileges of the gentry. There are many like him in the land.

Now, as things were at present, there was war between the families of Montague and Capulet. And Sir Toady, in his quality of peacemaker, called down many a 'plague on both your houses,' as he told what he knew about the matter to Saucy.

'You see,' he said, 'Father's Father. An' of course what he says, *goes*. An' what he does, *is done*. But then when he speaks, *he* says everything quiet as the tide coming in. But Colonel Carter, he's different — what he says is right too, maybe. What he says, *goes too!* But oh, quite different. *Pom-pom! Beat upon the big drum, play upon the flute! The grrrrrand*

per-cession comes galum-phin' aa-long!

Sir Toady was unnecessarily graphic, no doubt, but Saucy understood, as no doubt the reader will, more about Colonel Davenant Carter from these words, than could be conveyed in a long character sketch.

'So you see,' he continued, not going further into the beginnings of things, 'the Colonel, he got up an' said in county meeting—something about roads, an' bridges, an' things—or else taxes—that my father kep' a sort o' Asylum an House o' Refuge for tramps, and poachers, and thieves, *and* robbers, and that my father hadn't no right to come there, an' sit on the bench as a magistrate—'

'Why for did he *want* to go there to sit on a bench?' asked Saucy. 'There's ever such a nice one in the carpenter's shop. Dinky and I sit there every day!'

'Oh, I dunno,' said Sir Toady hastily, who didn't want to explain; 'anyway, Father of course tells him—well, I dunno just what he *said* to him. But I know very well *how* he said it, pulling down his brows, and his eyes straight and black and small, with funny sparks in the middle, that makes you feel all trimbly, like when you go down a step in the dark when you didn't think w'at there was no step there! You know the little empty place w'at comes inside you all in a minute.'

'An' *nen*,' continued Toady Lion (which was his way of saying 'and then'), 'next thing Cissy wouldn't speak to Hugh John, 'cause her father had got mad with his.' Said we was all Raddikles or somefin'—coz Father gave the gipsies houses instead of tents across the river. An' it was a lie. Coz Father's a Cumservatif—only with a head on his shoulders. I

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heard him say so myself. But girls are just ridiculous, all scent and prinky curls an' sillinesses. Don't you ever get like that, Saucy, or I'll disown you!'

Saucy promised most faithfully to refrain.

'An' after that Cissy wouldn't speak to Hugh John. An' when he tooked off his topper to her on Sunday, when everybody was comin' home from church, she just up with her chin, an' sort o' cockatoo-ed past as if she had never seen him. And Hugh John was cut up about that—just horrid. I don't know why, but he was. Going to college has took it out o' Hugh John. It's the studyin', I think. I don't mean to do none, except just enough 'rithmetic an' log-rithems to get into the navy, and what to give tarriers when they have got the distemper!'

'Well,' said Saucy Easdaile, 'that was mean of her—to cut Hugh John—I shouldn't ever do that, I'm sure! Well, what happened next?'

'Oh,' said Sir Toady easily, 'next thing 'at happened was a funny thing (here he laughed). After 'cuttin' Hugh John, as you call it—I don't know why—blest if she didn't try the same ole game on me. ME!' cried Toady Lion, pirouetting on one heel with his arms straight out like a dancing dervish. 'Shows what *she* knew! She met me one day when she was walkin' with that scented cad in lavender kids an' a teeny-weeny swagger cane in his hand, an' I just sez, 'Hillo, Cis, how's things?'

'And she never took any notice, only walked on, with her nose in the air as if she smelt something howwid. And left me standin' there in the road like a donk-konky!

'So,' sez I to mineself, 'that's w'at bein' 'cut' is. You've been 'cut,' Toady Lion, same as Hugh John!'

'Did you feel bad about it, Toady Lion?' asked Saucy with sympathy in her eyes.

'Who—*me?*' the pronoun came with concentrated scorn from the young man's lips; 'ME! No, I just stood in the road and laughed, as loud as ever I could. An' nen, I went an' waited over by the big hedge at the turn of the road, where it is all full of briars, and I grobbled in the ditch, an' got two big gobs of mud—not clean clayey mud, you know, but greeny-black mud, like what is in ditches when they hasn't been cleaned up for a long time. *Nen* I waited.'

'Oh!' cried Saucy, holding up her hands in genuine horror, 'you never did.'

Toady Lion nodded. In his eye there was the calm of one who looks at a settled and receipted account—one that has too long been owing.

'Course I did,' he said; 'Hugh John is my brother, isn't he? An' Cis Carter can't cheek him without knowin' it! If *he* won't give her better'n he gets—well, it's my lick. So I waited, behind the hedge. The mud was nice and soft an' gobby. Cis Carter had one of those kind o' silky fluffy dresses on, all dickered up to the nines, and *he* had lavender trowsies, to match his gloves—oh, I made 'em match beeeautiful, I did.'

Saucy clapped her hands in agony.

'O Toady! tell me you didn't,' she cried, with all a woman's instinctive reverence for dress and the prettiness thereof; 'say you didn't throw that mud—say it! I really can't love you if you did!'

'Sorry,' said Toady blandly, 'but you see I did. It hit too—a bull's-eye—right in the middle of the front breadth, an' it wouldn't wash—I heard her say so afore she begun to cry. It was ruined. 'Boo-boo!' But his trowsies - O Saucy! What larks!'

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And Sir Toady Lion, that very noble savage, stopped to execute a war-dance in front of Saucy's disconsolate figure.

'Well, he come runnin' after, and tored his clothes lookin'. But he never once spotted me. He couldn't have caught me anyway. There was a hedge, *and* the ditch between us, you see. But he was that mad—and Cis, she cried. For I noticed 'fore I throwed the mud that it wasn't one of those floppy, starchy things w'at wash and come up smilin, but a real-real silk that is knocked out first round.'

Toady Lion, you are a hard-hearted little monster! cried Saucy; 'and I wish you had been caught and thrashed soundly with a stick.'

'Wasn't though,' said Toady calmly; 'no breath of 'spicion—no nothing on my ka-rakter! Good little George, all alone, gatherin' groundsel for his birds—*and* dandylion for his map-maps! Very kind to dumb an'miles, is George, 'specially to bunnies!'

'Toady Lion, you will be hanged!' cried Saucy. 'I really think I ought to tell!'

'Rubbish!' said Toady philosophically; 'have the core o' my apple instead. *That's* all right. It's nice to sit down and waggle one's legs, isn't it, when you're eatin'?'

Such, related by one of the principal actors, was the tale of the quarrel with the Davenant Carters, together with Sir Toady's solution of it, so far as he was concerned. Toady told it to Saucy Easdaile at Aunt Rachel's, before ever they started to go to the island or anything at all happened. But it has to come in here, to explain things, of course.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

THE STILL SEA

After the events mentioned in the last chapter, Sir Toady Lion, though a valiant and gallant knight, could hardly be proposed for the office of mediator in a case of such extreme delicacy. But the youth was not at all of that opinion himself. It was egregiously silly, of course; Hugh John ought, if he had been right in his head, to be ashamed of himself. But then he wasn't; and strange as it may seem, Toady Lion couldn't put him right, do what he would.

He could get his brother interested and quite like himself for a while, talking about cricket scores, and college, or hearing about Sir Toady's own wonderful adventures when he Crusoad it on the Island; or he would have up Boompluff, and get him to lay his big paw on the bed.

But somehow Hugh John wouldn't stay so. It was beyond Toady's mental surgery to make him. He slipped back in spite of all his brother could say or do. No matter how he laughed, or how quickly he thought of new jests, the grey vacant look would steal back into his brother's face, and the old wail begin all over again, 'My head—oh, my head! If only *She* would come!' And so on and on till Toady Lion, bravest of mud-throwers, fairly wept for anger and despite.

Then he set himself to circumvent that girl, as he had never done any woman before. He felt that mere natural gifts, great as they were in his case, would not serve him on this occasion. He might, he knew

from sa-aaad experience, succeed in attracting the lady's affections to himself. But then, that would not help Hugh John.

He thought this over.

Ah, but was he so sure of that? He thought it over again; It was 'that ass' in the (stained) lavender 'trowsies,' and the (torn) lavender gloves who was the stumbling-block. What if he, Toady Lion, could 'block' him, win the lady, deceive her trusting heart, and—in this condition hand her over to Hugh John! He thought of Saucy, his youngest, of Emma Smith, 'old as Mer-thooslem, as he said to himself, of the Doctor's sister, the 'rippin' girl, and some few scores of other conquests. They all adored him, and they had done so at once. He had had no difficulties—to speak of. His spirits rose. And this Cissy Carter—why, she was his already. Like that 'Johnny' who took the tourist ticket to All Gaul (and wrote a book about it after), he would go, he would see, he would conquer!

And the 'gob' of mud on the front breadth of the summer silk? Well, nobody knew anything about that but Saucy, and he knew (thought—believed) that he could rely upon Saucy.

Thus far our King of Hearts; now what thought the Doctor? Dr. Thynne was puzzled, and said so frankly enough to Janet Sheepshanks. Visibly Hugh John was getting better every day. He could sit up. Presently he would walk about. Already he could use his arm. *But*—and this time the 'but' was a big one—the medical man, do what he would, could not, any more than Toady Lion, get behind that stubborn trouble in the brain.

'It's my opinion that boy got his death-blow before he left Edinburgh at all,' he said to himself; 'bet it's

that Carter girl! It's always the way. It's the young—the very young—and the 'old fools' who really get hard hit. That crack in the river-bed at the Rowing Bridge only accentuated it. I wish I could do something. He needs a great shock—that's what *he* needs—a sort of moral can of ice-water flung over him.'

He was talking to himself in the empty drawing-room—empty, that is, except for Toady Lion hid behind the curtains. There was no reason in the world why Toady Lion should hide from Dr. Thynne. So of course naturally that was why Sir Toady did it.

However, he heard what he was not intended to hear. He comprehended about half, and the other half was received into a self-acting cell somewhere at the back of Toady Lion's big head. As a baby, he had been named Malcolm Canmore; and a certain White Rose royalist friend of his father's had hopes that in him the original royal house might be restored. The Bruces being all murderers, the Stuarts all fools, and the Guelphs—well, all Guelphs, the line of Malcolm of the Big Head might be revived in Sir Toady Lion. Salute of Twenty-one guns and all the honours!

That young gentleman, when consulted later, was willing, though not anxious. He had the qualities. He could wear a crown as well as the next man. He had the kingly quality of pleasing the sex, but, after all, it might be something of a nuisance. So he begged his father's friend to take no steps in the matter. Unless—there was a shop in London—Fuller's, he thought, the name was (and a jolly good name, too) where they made up ravishing baskets—choc'lates candied fruits—oo-ooooooooop!

And a long sucking whistle, succulent with hope,

rounded the suggestion. Thus Toady Lion compromised his birthright for a mess of 'Fuller,' pressed down and running over. And when the box came (it was long ago—there is none of it left now), he sat him down on the carpet, the opened basket between his knees, and chanted 'Dirty Peter.'

'And Good Dog Tray is happy now,
He has no time to say bow-wow!
He laps the soup up, sup by sup,
And eats the pies and puddings up!'

Where is Solomon and all his glory? Also the snows of yester-year? Echo answers where. But Toady Lion knows very well where the contents of that basket went to.

Now all this arises from the hero's big head, and from the fact that it registered the Doctor's murmured 'think,' when he remarked all to himself in the big drawing-room that what Hugh John wanted was another shock— 'like a bucket of ice-cold water thrown over him.'

'Something in that,' said Sir Toady, as he heard the Doctor's heels crunch on the gravel outside. 'Doc's no fool—at least not such a big one, as I thought he was. I'll see about that bucket o' water!'

* * *

Naturally the first thing to do was to find out about Mr. Courtenay Carling. And here was a difficulty, right at the start. For Sir Toady did not know for certain that 'Lavender Trowsies' had not seen him. He had lain still enough, it is true. He wasn't of the kind who fight and run away only in order to get caught (and whopped) another day! Oh no—this noble sportsman knew too much. The

famous collector's motto –

‘A bird hit is history,
A bird missed is mystery!’

Sir Toady applied to boys in the pursuit of mischief. His three axioms of conduct were: First—Don't do anything *very* bad! Second—Never get caught! Third—Never tell, unless you get forgiven first!

This was admirable in theory. Where it sometimes failed was in the interpretation to be put upon the qualifying ‘*very*.’

What Janet Sheepshanks thought *very* bad, what Father thought *very* bad, and especially what Aunt Rachel thought *very* bad, often differed greatly from what Master George Picton Smith thought ‘*very* bad.’

Hence arose difficulties, as always happens when theories are put to the test of everyday life. But Sir Toady always felt (yes, felt is the word) that his Father's solutions could not be disputed. Also that they had better not be, either!

Now round at the back of Toady Lion's head there was a brain-cell working away all by itself, like a charged electric battery left in an outhouse. This is what it kept saying:

‘You are going to see Cissy Carter—well, you must make yourself as nice as Prissy's Dresden China shepherd!’

Toady, trained by Hugh John, would have scorned both the words and the suggestion. But, working alone, the Cell said them for him so often that he obeyed in spite of himself.

He thought awhile. How could he get the wherewithal to dress himself? His best suit, a conscientious wash, a skirmishing rub with a rough towel, a scrape of the comb through his hair—these

were what Sir Toady intended. But the Cell at the back of his head ticked noiselessly on, translating intentions into ways and means.

'Better take the suit and dodgy little white shirt into Prissy's room. No one ever comes there. You won't be disturbed. And besides,' suggested the Cell—'Priss's dressing-case—the one that Father gave her, is there. It has got heaps of rippin' things in it that girls like!'

And so with one ear cocked to the passage, and the key turned in the lock, Sir Toady got himself up as if he were Cupid going out for a walk. He even paused undecided before the little curling-tongs which the equipment of the bag included. The spirit-lamp specially attracted him. He knew how it worked, but happily he remembered that he had heard Prissy saying that *eau-de-Cologne*, plenty of it and then rubbed well in, makes the hair all kinky. Toady had taken note of this at the time, so as to avoid *eau-de-Cologne*. But now he remembered that girls must like kinky 'nigger' curls or they wouldn't take such trouble to have them always showing under their hats. So he set himself to please them, not from any self-admiration, but simply because he had a big game to play, and it was no use throwing away a single point. He would just as soon have shaved his head, all except a tuft at the top, if he had thought that Cissy had a violent passion for pig-tails.

All the same, it was very shamefacedly indeed that he stole downstairs, receding into the boot-cupboard with extremest despatch, when he thought he heard Janet Sheepshanks after him. He reached the front door, immaculate in his white linen knickerbocker suit, collar and cuffs to match, *and a*

coral-sprigged tie done in a loose bow.

Privately he loathed himself like this, but girls liked it; and Sir Toady was willing, in the noblest manner possible, to sacrifice himself for the good of the race. Poor things, let them have a little treat sometimes. A fellow hasn't a right to be *always* selfish, dirty, and happy!

He recoiled from the front door as if he had been shot. Doctor Thynne was standing at it—luckily, as it happened, with his back to Toady. He did not see him. He was looking at the quiet and beautiful scene beneath his eyes—the flowers, scarlet and blue and yellow decking the beds, the various sparkling greens of the trees, the glory of the blue and white sky, which is the happiest-looking of all skies. And then he thought of the son of the house upstairs, whom he had come to visit, lying, as it were, becalmed in that strange Sargasso sea, between life and death.

Strange and very strange! The Doctor had often stood a moment thus and mused on the difference of the Without and Within, in the little space between ringing the bell and the opening of the door.

Never before had Doctor Thynne been so near the little Imp of Providence, who, in the highest interests, and no doubt under good angelic promptings, was arranging to assist his treatment of Hugh John's case.

The said Imp was not strictly angelic, however. On the contrary, he called Doctor Thynne 'an awkward meddling beast that had nearly got him (i.e. Sir Toady) copped, right at the start!' And he darted among the long coats hanging in the side lobby, where he kept a certain chair in permanence. This is 'a good dodge,' Sir Toady informs me, and

has 'saved his bacon' many a time. You do it this way. You hang a lot of men's big topcoats, driving capes, ulsters—'that sort of thing,' all on one peg—some more on the next one. Then you put a chair with its back against the wall, just between them. On this you can jump in a moment, and be completely hidden, safe from all pursuit. Or you can jump out on any who are passing and give them 'O such a fright!' Tablemaids are not recommended as good subjects by my authority. It appears that they are given to letting go everything with a scream, whereupon trays clatter, silver jingles, glass is smashed with a noise that brings the Powers-That-Be on the scene. In that case your bacon is not saved, but very much lost! All the same the Chair-in-among-the-Coats is 'Al' as a stance from which to snatch cakes and mince-pies as they come out from dinner. This is perfectly safe, as they are always talking so loud in there—except, of course, when Father is at home all by himself. Then he reads his book, and has ears sharp enough to hear the cat wash its face in the passage. This is to be considered strictly close-time. Everything is off then. Nothing whatever is recommended. There is a brown cane in a corner of the study—but enough said!

It was on this useful chair that Sir Toady stood while Janet Sheepshanks let in Doctor Thynne. She always came down to meet him, and, as it were, post him up with her latest views before ushering him into the presence of his patient. Lots of people do that. They instruct the doctor what they want him to say, and then are angry if he contradicts. On the contrary, however, they think he is a wonderful man if he agrees with them. Doctors should be taught these things at college. It takes some of them fifty

years to find them out. Fortunes have been lost through this.

'Well, Janet?'

'Eh, Doctor, I'm pleased to see ye!'

'Any change?'

'I canna say there is—for the better.'

'Always the same thing?'

Janet nods silently. Toady hears her do it. Then he hears something else, 'like water guggling in the neck of a bottle,' as he describes it. He is profoundly annoyed.

'Silly ole woman—sniffing again!' he grumbles to himself. 'And just when I'm going to put everything right!'

'Well,' said the Doctor, sighing softly in the pause, 'I suppose we may as well go up.'

So they go. Sir Toady waits till he hears Janet's sharp *clitter-clatter* on the hall flags, dim into tip-toe gliding as she nears the door of Hugh John's room. He knows that the Doctor, who always walks silently, is close behind her, with his head bent a little, which is his manner as he walks to a bedside.

Then there is a flash of white out at the door, down the steps, a swishing in the shrubbery, whereat Jane Housemaid, who has just come to the top of the service staircase, is startled, and thinks that 'that nasty white goat of Dickson's' has been at it again. She goes to the door, but the armadas of cloud-ships sailing overhead in the blue day are the only white things in sight, and them she does not see. For down in the meadow there is the keen *skreeh—skreeh* of a mower sharpening a scythe.

Jane Housemaid wonders if it can be Robin Craik, and if he meant what he said last Sunday in the stackyard, or if he is 'just like the rest of them.'

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Finally she decides that Robin is not—cannot be ‘just like the rest.’

Anyway Toady Lion certainly is not—cannot be. He has to pass Robin, and he is certainly ‘kenspeckle’ as far as the eye of man can reach, in his white suit, and ‘ducky little Panama,’ blown back by the breeze. But does Robin see him?

No — very much no, indeed. The Black Tracker of Ringarooma is nowhere beside the White Tracker of Windy Standard. Toady is into cover in a moment, and going along in the shadow, taking unwonted care not to soil his things. Even Dinky, aloft in a tree after young crows, does not see him, though Toady Lion goes close underneath. Only one person in all that household sees him, and the reader can guess who that is.

So Sir Toady is off, a Don Juan on the warpath—with the best of motives and intentions.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

PLAIN ENGLISH

Colonel Davenant Carter had just had three or four interviews in quick succession, and his temper was ruffled. As it had been early ruffled, it was decidedly ragged now. The first interview had been with his wife, whom he flatly accused of 'spoiling that monkey of a girl,' thereby meaning his grown-up daughter Cecilia. But there was nothing remarkable in that. The scene followed the ordinary course of such events in the house of Oaklands—a score of stormy words, six stamps of the foot, certain tears, and a slam of the door.

Then Mrs. Davenant Carter sighed, dried up the tears on a handkerchief sprinkled with lavender water (after years of experience she liked lavender best for the purpose), and without troubling her head too much about the occurrence, she proceeded tranquilly with her dressing.

Next Colonel Carter, fuming on the terrace in front of his house, biting through his cigar instead of smoking it, saw coming up the avenue a smart young man, tall, willowy of figure, and attired in a black cut-away coat, a sprigged waistcoat with green-and-gold threads running through it. The 'Cornel' could not actually see all this. He was too far away. But he divined it. He sprang down the steps with the alertness of twenty, and took thirty strides in the direction of the advancing tall (and willowy) gentleman.

They met. It was by no means in a crowd; but the young man wished heartily, from the way 'the

Cornel' grasped his Malacca, that it had been. Solitudes did not delight him—shrubberies neither.

'Sir,' said Colonel Davenant Carter, 'are you coming to my house to call upon me?'

Mr. Courtenay Carling, who was the tall and willowy young gentleman aforesaid, was understood to mumble that he was desirous of that honour. But the tremble in his voice betrayed him.

'Very well, sir,' said the Colonel, 'then I shall ask you to accompany me. I propose taking a little walk.'

And he turned with the young man into a woodland path.

'You are familiar with the scenery here, along this interesting glade?' he inquired, with a sullen accent.

The young man had (hesitatingly) been along it two or three times.

'With my daughter?' demanded Colonel Carter in yet more satin-lined tones.

Yes, certainly; now he came to think of it, Miss Carter *had* been kind enough to accompany Mr. Courtenay Carling.

'Perhaps six or eight times?'

'Oh (blushing and very nervous), not so many as that—only a very few times, indeed!'

'Always when I happened to be from home, sir?'

Mr. Carling wished that, when a Malacca cane had a gold knob on the end of it, a gentleman of the Colonel's proportions would not carry it by the middle nor waggle it so suggestively.

'Oh no—by no means!' he replied in words.

He had not, it appeared, on the occasions when he had had the pleasure of accompanying Miss Carter, been aware that her father had been absent.

'You lie, sir!' exclaimed that gentleman, in the clear, precise English for which he was noted.

To this Mr. Carling answered nothing at all. He was bereft of speech. He trembled visibly. A young lady, dressed in light summer blouses and belts and skirts, dressed with some care too, stood in a little alley, giving upon the woodland path, and saw the two men come down it together. She had the good taste to prefer the bearing of her father. But when it came to the interview which she saw ahead, she was resolved not to let him see that. As for the other—‘Good-day, Mr. Courtenay Carling!’ Cissy Carter was not afraid of anybody herself, and certainly she was not going to have anything to do with a man who was cowed by her father, whom *she* could turn round her little finger.

Mr. Courtenay was still silent. There was a green gate in a wall facing him.

‘I said, ‘You lie, sir!’ said the Colonel, bending his brows from a height; ‘did you hear me?’

Still silence.

Colonel Carter opened the door in the wall. The King's Highway passed hard by. They were upon the extreme edge of the Oaklands policies. He motioned with one hand, still holding the edge of the green door between the fingers of the other.

‘Go through that door, sir,’ he said; ‘and if ever I catch you setting your foot on my property again, I will not prosecute you for trespass—but, I will break every bone in your body.’

The door closed upon the back of the tall and willowy young man—his black coat and a new pair of lavender trousers disappearing like a conjuring trick. He came to himself standing still in the middle of the highway, and a carter, with a long ‘janker,’ or lorry for carrying logs of wood, was exhorting him in fervent supplication not to take up the whole road. A

small boy in spotless white stared at him, passed by, turned, glanced at his legs, and asked him coolly, 'I say, have you forgot your dog and string?'

The 'janker' clanked past, the carter laughing. The young man did not deign to reply to the teamster. But he came down from the heights to rebuke Sir Toady Lion, who never could help mingling duty and pleasure.

'You impudent little brute,' he said, 'I've a good mind to throw you over the hedge!'

'Do,' said Toady Lion calmly; 'there's a ditch over there. And then you would have *another* pair of pink breeches to send to the wash!'

Having fired this shot, he took to his heels. You see, he did not know why Mr. Courtenay Carling had come so hurriedly through the green door. It was not his way to insult the fallen. He was under the impression that he was getting as level as possible with a haughty conqueror.

When Colonel Davenant Carter turned from the green door his lips were moving. It was a kind of litany he was repeating. When they are much moved, and very red in the face, you will often see old military men thus busy at their devotions. Do not intrude. Good and wise children learn early not to do so.

The Colonel met his daughter face to face. She had on a pretty 'lacy' summer hat. She swung a fairy parasol. She had pretty flounces to her skirt, and pretty boots, that looked occasionally out from beneath the said flounces. She was the exact opposite of a tailor-made girl, but nevertheless she had strong views, chiefly upon men. And being of one blood, she was the sole person not in the least afraid of her father. Except Toady Lion, that is, who

had not yet arrived on the scene.

'Well, Missy,' he said, standing up very tall and straight before her (she admired the fierce way he tugged at his white moustache), 'well, Missy—so this is the way you behave!'

Miss Cecilia Carter took a little fold of her Liberty silk blouse between her gloved fingers, shook off an invisible speck of dust, and answered meekly and dutifully, 'Yes, papa!'

'Don't 'yes, papa,' me, madam!'

'Yes, *mamma*, then! And in any case don't 'Madam' me, sir!' she said, smiling and dropping him a courtesy. Then she adopted the tone of a school-girl reciting a lesson, 'Mad-ame is the ti-tle giv-en to mar-ri-ed la-dies in France! And you know I am only a lit-tle girl, papa.'

'You are a very badly behaved girl,' fumed the old gentleman.

'Badly brought up!' suggested Cissy with mock meekness.

'Hold your tongue, Missy,' said her father with a stamp of his foot.

Cissy folded her hands accurately in front of her, and composed herself to listen with a prim mouth and downcast eyes. She stroked her frock at either side furtively, and then, last of all, inserted the handle of her parasol into her mouth.

Colonel Carter could do no other than laugh, but helplessly, and, as it were, against his will. Whereat, confident in her victory, Cissy laughed too.

'It's all very well,' said her father, 'I can't be serious with you, you monkey. But all the same I am angry with you—disappointed in you!'

Cissy now began to look a little more grave.

'I have spoiled you, I know,' he said, 'but that was

because your mother was such a fool about Sam. Now Sam's a good boy, but somehow he's too clever for an old fellow like me. And I am proud of my daughter. Yes, I am; and I won't have her name coupled with a whipper-snapper like Carling—a Jessamy-Willie, a jackanapes! Why, the men won't have him in the club, though I don't suppose you will understand what that means. No, we are not jealous of the puppy. Somebody should kick him well. And (coughing here) *con-fiscate* me if I don't do it myself the very next time I set eyes on the fellow!

I refuse to be dictated to—in—in my affections!' said Miss Cecilia.

'Affections!' cried her father, 'affections, madam! Hang your affections! Let me hear nothing more about this nonsense. Girls like you should be whipped and sent to bed—kept on bread and water. You are too young, Cissy, and I won't have it. No more will I have that college-boy of Picton Smith's coming over here making sheep's eyes at you. Though he is a manly fellow enough, I believe, and of good stock. But I don't like his father. There used to be some nonsense in that quarter, I've heard, when you were both children, and of course it didn't matter then. Nor had I quarrelled with Smith at that time, and told him what I thought of him.'

'Did you say to Mr. Smith, what you did to—the gentleman you showed through the green gate just now?' queried his daughter, the flicker of a smile crossing her demure countenance.

'What, tell Picton Smith that he lied? No, Missy, I did not (here the fine old gentleman waxed hot, as his daughter intended that he should). Smith is a gentleman—I would have you know—son of old Veracity Smith on one side, nephew of Fighting

Picton on t'other! Such people don't tell lies, Missy. And Smith, stiff-necked ass though he is, about his ('cough—cough'—a bad fit) modern ideas, why, he couldn't tell a lie if he tried—not if he tried, Miss; I would have you remember that. Neither could his boy.'

'No, sir!—Thank you, sir!' said his daughter, dropping him a courtesy.

Colonel Carter glared at her, and his wrath returned.

'You are an impudent baggage,' he said, dotting i's on the ground with his Malacca; 'but I'll be master in my own house, Miss, and that I'll show you. Smith isn't at home—restless dog—running off to China about mines and concessions like a carpet-bagger. Not but what some very good people do it now—Chartered Company and all that—Colonial expansion and so on. But I say, he had a precious sight better have stayed at home and looked after his stake in the soil of his native land. And anyway, the boy is a boy, and I'm not on speaking terms with his father. So I forbid you to be either. You hear! Confounded temper, all those Smiths have—father was the same before him!'

'Whose temper, papa?' said his daughter demurely; still standing before him with downcast eyes, her fingers joined like those of armoured knights on tombs.

'Looking as if she were ginger-bread, and too good to eat,' thought Toady Lion, who came in for the tail, of the performance. 'Very well she did it too, said that young connoisseur in impudence and the pretence of meekness.

And 'praise from Sir Hubert Stanley' is praise indeed.

'Whose temper?' blustered the old gentleman, tugging yet more fiercely at his moustache; 'why, Smith's temper, of course. Assaulted me at one of our county meetings, abused me as if I had been a pickpocket, Miss—called me a con—I mean a one-idead old Tory, and a fossil —eh, what's that you say?'

I was only remarking that of course you just listened quietly and said nothing, papa!

'Me listen—I never heard a word he said. It was only the idea I was giving you. Why, I raked him fore and aft—grape and canister. I told him what I thought of him and his—hem-hem—humanitarian radicalism! He didn't forget it, I'll wager—never got in a word edgeways with me! I took care of that!'

'But you argued with him calmly, papa?'

'Did *what* calmly, Miss?'

'Oh—rebuking Mr. Picton Smith for his bad temper and so on!'

'Of course I was calm, Missy,' cried the old warrior; 'why, I was as calm as I am at this moment. What's that you say?—They can hear me in Edam, can they? Well, let them. Things are come to a pretty pass if a gentleman, standing on his own ground, cannot—'

'Let the people on the public road know who your daughter is allowed to speak to,' said Cissy; '*of* course, most reasonable! Only do speak a little louder, papa. Why, there is a grocer's van stopped down behind the wall there, and I'm sure the poor man can't hear!'

'Impudent hussy!'

Cissy dropped another courtesy, always keeping her eyes on the ground.

'Well, Miss,' said her father, 'now I've told you,

and I expect that you'll obey me. Can I depend on you?'

'No, papa!' (still with superlative meekness).

'What!' cried the family autocrat in high apparent wrath, 'do you dare tell me to my face that you would deliberately disobey me?'

'UMPHM!' nodded Cissy, still with the same meekness and humility.

'By the sacred poker,' shouted her father, 'if you were only a boy for half-an-hour!'

'A *leetle* louder, papa! The poor man yonder has his hand to his ear—!'

'Hang the poor man! If you don't obey me, I'll have you shut up—in a convent or somewhere, by Jove! It's been done before, and it can be again.'

'O papa, for shame!' said his daughter; 'and you used to be the Grand Master of an Orange Lodge—talking about convents — *ooooh!*'

'Pshaw—that was at election time, Missy!' said her father, somewhat mollified; 'and besides, then I hadn't got a disobedient monkey of a daughter!'

'Well, what must I do if I meet any of the Smiths?' asked Cissy. 'Carry a club behind my back, I suppose, and say, 'My father quarrelled with yours about Roads, Bridges, and Sanitation Acts! So—WHACK!—There's for you —that'll teach you!''

But her father refused to be drawn into argument. He contented himself with saying 'high-horsily,' as the observant Sir Toady expressed it, 'Well, madam, I expect when I say a thing, that I shall be obeyed in my own house, and by the members of my own family!'

And so saying, he squared his shoulders, tugged once more at his fierce moustache, and strode away. Cissy Carter watched him with the same expression

SIR TOADY CRUSOE

of demure humility she had preserved throughout. But when the last glimpse of the erect figure had disappeared a sudden transformation came over her.

She stuck her parasol in the ground, and lifting up the soft cream-coloured flounces of her skirt daintily, she danced towards the ribboned handle—half-a-dozen steps and then back again—as if it had been a partner who pleased her.

‘There came three dukes a-riding,
a-riding, a-riding,
There came three dukes a-riding,
With my winsome, transome, high!’

And as she chanted, there dropped from some higher sphere one of the very ‘dukes,’ all in white—white jacket, white knickers, white silk stockings, coral-sprigged tie, dainty Panama, and his fair curls tight ‘kinked’ with stolen *eau-de-Cologne*.

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

DUKE CUPID

This Duke Cupid did not say a word. He only smiled and took Miss Cecilia Carter's hand as if it belonged to him. His arm went about her waist. It was a slight 'reach-up,' but no matter. The young lady felt herself whisked off into a wild waltz, to the tune of 'The Three Dukes,' which, being hummed languorously, does very well.

'Oh, you darling!' panted Cissy, as they stopped at last; 'my, that was good Why, where in the world did you drop from? You are a peach-blossom! Whose wedding are you going to? And can I come too?'

'No, indeed you can't!' said Toady Lion, disengaging himself (so that all might not happen too easily); 'your father wouldn't let you!'

'My father!'

'Yes, just your father,' said Sir Toady; 'I heard him. I was up there on the bank. Said he'd whip you (this 'you' verged on the coaxy-woaxy 'roo' of the ancient days) if you speaked to one of us. And you'll get whipped Now!'

And he danced a little *pas seul* on the turf in front of Cissy.

'Pshaw!' remarked that young lady, 'my father does not mean half what he says. I'm not afraid of *him!*'

Sir Toady saw his lead.

'I bet you are!' he said.

'No, I'm not!' cried Cissy indignantly.

'You daren't take a walk with me—not for your life!' he said.

'Yes, I dare!' still more indignantly. 'I can do what

I like.'

'You'll get locked up-and *whipped!* Ooooooh - aaaaah!'

And he howled dolorously.

For a time Cissy's indignation was so great as to be mute. After all, why should she demean herself to talk to little boys.

'Say,' she said after a lengthy pause, 'you are Hugh John's brother, aren't you? You're so fine I hardly knew you at first!'

'T'se Hugh John's brother!' corrected Toady Lion, leaving out the 'little.'

'And he got hurt, dedn't he?' Cissy was looking a little quieter now—paler too. As she spoke she was busily rebuttoning her glove, though it had been buttoned all right before.

'His brake broke coming down a hill!' said Toady. 'He was thrown over a bridge off his cycle and a'most killed! He's very ill now. He may die. I think he will. He wants to see you—*awful*—he's all 'ee time, all-'ee-ways, speaking about *you*—asking for *you*—never anybody else. But, of course, you daren't come to see him—coz your papa would be angry and whip you!'

Sir Toady had, as he said, 'given her full volley,' and at each swiftly jerked phrase Cissy Carter grew paler and paler. She had begun by blushing, but that went off very soon.

'An', of course, you don't want to anyway!' pursued the remorseless Duke Cupid, 'coz you don't care for him no more. You are going to marry Courtenay Caning!'

'How dare you say so?' The cry came from the girl's lips as if torn from them. 'I never want to see Courtenay Carling as long as I live.'

'Well,' said Sir Toady, 'Hugh John he thinks so—he's awful ill, you know. I know Doc. thinks so. I heard Doc. say that if he didn't get what he wanted most, and get it sudden—like a *ee*-lectric shock—he would die—sure!'

'And he wants to see me?'

'He keeps asking for you all the time—turning his head this way and that—to *look if roo's coming!*'

And Toady imitated the pitiful pendulum action of the poor, weary, unresting head.

'*But roo never comes!* he added softly, looking away; 'so that Hugh John's just got to die—my Hugh John!'

The girl drew in her breath long and sharp till somehow it stopped with a click in her throat.

'Good-bye, Cissy!' cried Toady, turning away very quietly.

Cissy Carter stood white and trembling while the small boy moved off a score of paces. Then suddenly there came a strange noise and she ran after him.

'Crowed—in her froat—she did, like a funny little cockadoodle!' said Toady Lion, describing it afterwards, not unsympathetically, to Saucy Easdaile when he was telling the whole tale to his only confidante.

'An' when she comed up to me,' continued Toady Lion, 'they was just a-rollin' and a-rollin' —great big whoppers, the size o' marbles. Cryin'? No, Cissy wasn't making no noise. *Nunty-t'all!* But them big glassy ones was—well, they was just a-hoppin! They went *plunk* on my jacket and down my trowsies! An' when she catched me and hugged me—goed for to kiss me, 'twas all salt and moppily, oh, howwid!'

He paused a moment ruminating.

'But she comed to see Hugh John all right,' he

added; 'I fetched her!'

'You see it was this way,' continued the narrator to Saucy Easdaile, who was an interested, and, it must be added, admiring listener: 'Cissy Carter didn't care—*nunty-t'all*—'bout her father droppin' on her, but she was just awful particular that nobody about *our* house should see her. An' I said—I could make that all right, if she'd come when Doc. would be going.

'So we scooted. Yuss, we scooted good, just pegged it, we did—Cissy she picked up her frilly frock and scooted too. She didn't mind the brambly places. There's some tatters on it yet, I bet. But she didn't mind. *Nunty—none!* And when it came to jumping the ditches, she went over like a kite divin' and *scoopin'* when you let out more string—you know the way!

'Oh, she's all right in spots, Ciss Carter! Though what Hugh John was in such a bait to have her just come an' speak to him for—I dunno! It wasn't hardly nothing at all. For I was there all the time. *Should have gone out and left them to talk!* Well, not much! — *What*—after takin' all that trouble! I wanted to see the shock—Doctor said there would be! And I watched for the white fire to come, like Father's electric battery, and for Hugh John to jump as high as the ceiling. But he didn't! *Nunty!*

'How was it, then?' said Saucy, greatly interested; 'tell me *all* about it—every bit.'

'There's not much to tell,' said Toady Lion, 'after we got there *'twas* a frost! Gettin' there was fun, though. *I* did that! You see I knew —I mean knowed—that Janet Sheepshanks would walk with Doc-a-doc down to the av'nue gate. She always does, like as she was confablin'—no, consultin'—that's it! Well,

then, when she comes back, she always goes into the kitchen to chin with Jane Housemaid and the rest about what Doc-a-doc said, and what new slops Cookie is to get ready for Hugh John. An' nen, in pops Dickson with his gun, an' gard'ner to ask what 'veegetabbles' is wanted—he speaks just that way, slow and like rappin' on the table.

'So I watched for Janet, and it came so, of course—just like I said it would! Then I bringed out an ole cloak of father's, wot I monkey with—dress up and so on. And I paddle round the house and sort o' bother them at the kitchen door, till Janet, she orders me out. Because, of course, they are all just grillin' inside to begin chinning about Hugh John and what the Doc. had said.

'Nen, I spins round the house again, into the bushes where Cissy was hid, and hikes the cloak over her shoulders. She marches in just so, right up the stairs, and me after her, all but my legs hid in the cloak. Must have looked jolly funny from the stair foot, me an' Ciss going up like that—wif four legs, two in white silk stockin's, and two—well, I didn't see the 'tother two!

'Nen we come to Hugh John's room, an' I turns the handle ever so soft and listens. 'Good!' says I. For he was at it—same as I knowed, knew I mean—the old game! She hates me—I love her—*why* won't she come? *Why* doesn't somebody tell her? I've got something to tell her, an' I can't die without telling her!' All that same old *Rot!*

'An' nen, I makes Ciss put her ear to the crack, but she hadn't listened hardly scarcely t'all, when she throws the door wide open and rushes up to Hugh John, and catches him in boff her arms, crying sops—just *sops*, and sayin' over and over,

'Here I am, Hugh John! Forgive me, Hugh John!'

'And Hugh John, he turned his head, and—look here, Sauce Easdaile, for a minute I didn't know how it was going to turn out. I thought it was all up and he was going to die! His face went white as a boiled hankychief, an' his eyes all black, round and big as breakfast saucers. An' nen-Ciss she juss put her head down on his and I seen that Doc-a-doc knowed his business. An' perhaps getting all slopped over like that WAS the shock. 'Twould have waked me up, *I* know!

'And they stopped a while like that, saying nothin' t'all. An' nen, when I stopped whistlin' and lookin' out of the window at the bunny rabbits—awful funny things bunnies—Hugh John he was a-cryin' too—cryin' good, juss blubberin' quarts!

'What it was all about, *I* don't know!

'But I knew —knowed—that the shock *had* gone off, though I didn't see it, and 'sides, Janet Sheepshanks might come up any minute. So I took an' threw the water in a big jug over Hugh John's head. For Doc-a-doc said it was to be done like that. And I got Cissy Carter back into that ole cloak of father's, and—my Aunt Sally—if I didn't just hustle her downstairs, it's no matter! An' she cryin' all the way—fair layin' the dust. But when I got her in the scrubbery, just her an' me, she was beginning to smile already.

"You think he'll get better now?" she says, looking at me so rum, and smiling through the little tear-puddles she had in her eye-holes—such a funny thing!

'An' I says, 'Course he will, Cis Carter. You've no sense! Didn't I throw the d'canter of cold ice-water over him, for to give him a shock —same as Doc-a-

doc said?'

'For of course I wasn't going to let on that she had anything to do with it. Girls is so conceited, anyway.

'So I just said, 'Now, I want to go back to Hugh John. And you, Cis Carter, cut home as quick as you can—and tell your father, if you dare.'

'An' she says, 'I dare, and I will!'

'But I don't believe she did—it was just a 'tara!'

'So I went upstairs to Hugh John, and he was cured right enough. Never went dotty no more! *Nunty!* Shock settled *him!* 'Twas the cold water w'at did it. I frowed it like Doc-a-doc said. And after that he stayed cured. He was afraid I would throw the whole pail next time. *I* shouldn't have minded. I'd do anything for Hugh John!'

'And Cissy?'

'Oh,' said Toady Lion, yawning, 'she's one fool and Hugh John's another. But of course he was very sick —*and* dotty, and so didn't know any better. But there wasn't no excuse for *her!*'

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

THE WONDER OF THE WORLD

Then began an interesting and moving time in the history of Sir Toady Lion. He was Chaperon-in-Chief, Ambassador-at-Large, Commander of the Forces in the Field, and General Wonder-of-the-World. This small part suited his modesty to a nicety. Janet Sheepshanks' opinions on his behaviour about this time are worth culling.

'Maister George—aye, yon's a laddie,' she confided, in one of her rare fits of expansion, to Dickson the keeper. 'Withoot a doot he's at the bottom o't! But can ye catch him at it? Weel, *ye* may, wi' your gins an' snares an' rabbit-traps. But no a plain woman like me, wi' nae mair stock o' brains than my neebours!

'The laddie's better—and he has dune it! I'll swear to that! An' a' that I can find oot is juist that he threw a can o' cauld water ower Maister Hugh John!

'The Doctor said it wad mend him,' says he to me when I challenged him, 'and it did!'

'And that's every hilt an' hair that ye can get oot o' him. I telled Doctor Thynne, of coorse, as was my duty, an' he looked gye an' queer for a minute. And then says he, 'Did I say that?' As if he didna mind. So I telled him that he had said, private-like to me, that he was at his wits' end, and that what Maister Hugh John wanted was a shock, like a can o' cauld water thrown ower him!

'Well,' says he, laughing, 'I don't know what it is, but he has had the shock. I will risk my reputation on that!'

'An' I'll risk mine,' says I, that he had the can o'

water. For when I gaed ben after seein' you to the loan-foot, the laddie was fair dreepin' in his bed! I had to change his pimjammeys, as ye caa' thae daft-like things ye garred him wear.'

Hugh John himself would probably have told Janet everything, in the new singing gladness of his heart. But out of very loyalty to Toady Lion, he was compelled to hold his tongue. Though that was hard too. But there was no more vain babbling, nor wearisome to-and-fro of the head. He was weak, and when he smiled it brought the water to your eyes—if you liked Hugh John, that is. And nearly everybody did, except Colonel Davenant Carter, who did not know him. However, his daughter Cissy did, which made up.

Doctor Thynne had a chair specially brought all the way from London, so that Hugh John could get out to enjoy the woods and the fresh air and things. It was Sir Toady Lion who thought of it, and offered the contents of his missionary box to help pay for it too, as his father was away. But Doc. Thynne arranged all that, doing in fact all that Mr. Picton Smith would have done had he been at Windy Standard.

These were brave days for the children, and especially for Toady Lion. For though he pretended to look down on the whole affair, and was never tired of warning Saucy against ever giving way to a similar idiocy, he took the keenest interest in all the details of that guerrilla warfare, which was waged during these late summer and early autumn days among the woodlands and meadows between Oaklands and Windy Standard.

Dinky was his Fore-Guard—also, on occasion, his scout and tracker. He was told that his main duty

was to keep out of sight, and his mouth closed. Saucy was Rear-Guard, and took care of the lines of communications. She was also Sir Toady's Safety-valve to tell his troubles to, and, so far as he consulted with any, it was with her.

The post of honour was, of course, the little landing-stage to which Cissy tied up her boat when she crossed from Oaklands to the Windy Standard side of Edam Water. It was held by a certain General Boompluff Dowxus Dando Samson. The general lay in the bottom of the boat, and when any one came wanting to get in—he persuaded him not to!

There was no anxiety as to this portion of the battlefield.

Thus amid a woven mesh of scouting and prevision Hugh John and Cissy Carter played, unconsciously enough and in all innocence, their simple parts. Sir Toady wheeled Doc. Thynne's 'omnibus' to a retired spot. He saw that the proper things were there to talk about under the circumstances—a little babbling brook, honeysuckle, forget-me-not, robins, thrushes, and so on—larks being ruled out as too suggestive to the vulgar mind.

There was always a log or stump for Cissy to sit on and read Tennyson to Hugh John, 'or some other stuff about love,' as Sir Toady styled in a lump the romantic authors of the day.

Then he discreetly retired and—left them to it. He had done his best, though it did not strike him as very amusing business himself. Still there was no accounting for tastes, and if they liked it—well, there was no more to be said.

Sir Toady went off to a spot agreed upon, where his lieutenants of the advance and rear guards were

to report to him. If they encountered any blaeberrys, rasps, or early blackberries on their scoutings, they might bring these to report also.

At intervals the voice of Janet Sheepshanks, crying like a forlorn white-capped ewe after a lost lamb, would be heard far off in the direction of the house. At this Toady Lion would smile grimly. Well he knew that there was no fear of Janet. If she did pursue, they could hear her a mile off, exclaiming on the evil times and callous people with whom her lot was surrounded.

Dickson the keeper was a more dangerous foe and even Sir Toady, though he would on occasion throw himself boldly athwart the path of the man of the woods and head him away on some pretext of vermin or stray cat, was never quite sure that he did not see through them all—a slow, grey, inscrutable man Dickson. Things were by no means what they seemed to Dickson.

These were good days, too, for Saucy. Never had she had Toady Lion so completely to herself. He was so happy about Hugh John, that he even allowed her to be a little affectionate to himself. He would take her hand sometimes in very lonely places, or when crossing the stepping-stones, and sometimes, even, he would forget to take it away again for quite a while. On such occasions Saucy held her breath to spin out the time, not knowing how changed all this would be one day.

In hours of ease Sir Toady made poems too. Saucy thought they were 'just lovely,' and it was their custom to sing them at the top of their voices. She thought her Lord and Master did this out of the joy of his heart, and so there was pure joy in hers too. But really there was method in Toady Lion's

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noise. He knew that if they made an inconvenient row, any interested person would most likely descend upon them, and not upon the Tennyson readings which were going on a stone's-throw or two away.

Their favourite anthem was perhaps Toady Lion's famous 'In the morn see the crow,' to which Dinky did several remarkable illustrations. Here it is—the words, I mean. Mr Gordon Browne will do the pictures.

THE CROW

'In the morn see the Crow,
To the sea-shore go,
When hunger doth sharply pin him,
But he comes back at night,
With his tum-tum tight,
And a hundred worms within him,
Within him,
Within him,
With a hundred Worms within him!'

Shouted to an obvious tune (or to none at all) this is very effective, and Sir Toady always said that when the last lines were sung quick like that, they sounded like the rattle of the kettle-drums when you just can't hear the fifes!

Yet it chanced that this very excess of wisdom was indeed their undoing. Sir Toady's in this case was indeed foolishness.

They were sitting on the green hill-top, Dinky with his legs in the air, Saucy swinging on the branch of a tree, and Sir Toady kettle-drumming with all his might, marching round, puffing his cheeks, and generally swelling himself to represent a portly

drummer—indeed an entire military band; when silently, timidly almost, the green branches of the coppice were put aside and the Face of Doom appeared.

It was a mild Face of Doom, consisting at first sight of a little tuft of white hair, a pair of blinking eyes, and a mouth that was opened in surprise at the noise.

‘George—Dinky—Saucy!’

It was only the voice of Uncle Clarence, but all the same it knelled the doom of two at least of those there.

‘Run, Sauce—run, Dink!’ cried Sir Toady, as he turned to face the peril.

‘To the old barn—quick!’ he whispered, as Dinky stood uncertainly at bay; ‘off with you, quick!’

‘I don't care a wisp of hay for old Unc Clarry!’ grumbled Dinky.

‘Very likely,’ retorted Toady Lion almost fiercely; ‘but you will care the ole Harry himself for Auntie if she gets after you. And I'll bet that if Uncle Easdaile is here, Aunt Rachel is not far off!’

* * * *

Toady Lion was right. The aforesaid lady had just been entering the grounds of Windy Standard in a hired cab from the Edam Hotel when she heard the alarming noise of the ‘Crow’ being recited at the pitch of three pairs of lungs from the top of Mount Hazelnut. Accordingly she sent her Slave of the Ring to inquire. Then growing alarmed at his protracted absence (he was told to be careful and not tear his clothes), she set out in pursuit herself. Thus all unawares she stumbled upon the reading of ‘Maud’

just when Cissy Carter was informing Hugh John in a sweet low voice—an excellent thing in woman — that ‘she was here at the gate alone.’

And Hugh John, leaning towards the elocutionist, was convincing her that she was by no means alone.

Indeed, he had better grounds than he knew of for his opinion. For the next moment the august presence of Aunt Rachel loomed before the students of the works of the late Laureate. Silent she stood. Only a slight indignant rustle of the stiff visiting silk, garment of ceremony, betrayed to the trembling culprits the volcano which was raging within.

‘So,’ she said at last, the majestic black plumes of her bonnet standing out on either side, like the peaks of a Hanging Judge’s ‘black cap’—‘so, sir, this is the way you employ the hours of your pretended convalescence! And in the absence of your parent, too. Who may this young—ah, person be—a nurse, I daresay—I know the idle hussies!’

But Hugh John had grown old. His shock had given him confidence. He had not Sir Toady’s subtlety, but he had a plain directness of speech and action which did just as well.

‘This young lady, Aunt Easdaile,’ he said quietly, ‘is Miss Davenant Carter, the daughter of our neighbours at Oaklands. She has come over the river today to get news of me, and was kindly reading me some poetry!’

‘Oh,’ said Aunt Rachel, ‘well then—from what I observed, or, as it were, perceived, as I came to this place, Miss Carter has all the information on the subject of your health that she can desire! It is time you were at home. This air is decidedly unwholesome!’

And, seizing the pushing bar of the chair in her

hands, she rapidly propelled the hapless Hugh John away from his carefully selected trysting place. He could only look over his shoulder and call out bravely enough, 'Good-morning, Miss Carter; I shall come over and see you and your father as soon as I can!'

As for Cissy Carter, she stood with her hands clenched so tight, and so angry, that the fingers which were automatically keeping the place in the Tennyson, actually tore out the best-known leaf in 'Maud,' so that afterwards—long afterwards—she had to be presented with another copy (when Hugh John found it out) in memory of that day.

'So,' said Aunt Rachel, as she bumped the 'omnibus' along in a pauper's 'jolly round trot,' 'you will go and see that—minx's father, will you? Well—I shall be before you! For I shall make it *my* business to see him myself!'

CHAPTER FORTY

CASTLE CORNSHEAF

Aunt Rachel came to Windy Standard solely for the blood of her victims. Sir Toady was, she feared, beyond her reach, because Janet Sheepshanks would no doubt support him—she and Mrs. Clarence Easdaile being on dagger-and-bowl terms. And besides, the illness of his brother, though she was now sure that it was mostly a sham, would be reason enough with her poor weak brother Picton. Ah, if she, Rachel, had had her way, these children would have been *very* differently brought up! But if you sow, you must reap, you know! And so on--and so on—as long as poor Uncle Clarence was awake, or could be elbowed into saying, ‘Yes, dear—you are *quite*, right!’

But Dinky—and Saucy! Theirs was quite a different story! No excuse for them! They were in her power. And Tickler the cane, newly waxed, and Tingler the birch-rod, and Darky-Dark the boot-cupboard, and Hunger-'em, the tray of bread-and-water, were all waiting for these two in the pleasant, agreeable family residence of Langton Easdaile.

Nevertheless the hares were yet to be caught. Dinky and Saucy were safe behind the Old Barn by this time. It was a great tiled erection as high as a church, open to the roof most part of the year, but now, filled to bursting, right to the door indeed, with the ripe sheaves of a bountiful harvest. Farmer Harry Watson regarded the Old Barn as the most beautiful sight in the world. For it contained his year's rent, and in addition something over to fill the meal-ark in the corner of the kitchen.

Sir Toady Lion easily persuaded Uncle Clarry that pursuit was useless, when Saucy and her brother fled at the very top of their speed, driving the green foliage aside, exactly as the *Good Adventure* had done the waves that first time when the boys got the sails set on her.

Sir Toady and his uncle found the house of Windy Standard in an uproar. The cabman from Edam was sarcastically asking Mrs. Easdaile if the eighteenpence which he held in his hand like a loathsome thing, were meant for his hire or only his 'tip.' For if the former, he had a wife and family, and would drive round by the Poor House and arrange for them there without further loss of time.

Mrs. Easdaile was informing him that her husband was a Justice of the Peace, and would immediately commit him to a still poorer house. While the only redeeming feature of the scene was that Janet Sheepshanks, with badger-grey hackles of wrath sprouting from beneath the white mutch the boys liked so, had received Hugh John and conveyed him upstairs out of harm's way. She now mounted guard at his chamber door.

After the struggle with the cabman had ended in a Pyrrhic victory for the lady, and the enemy had retired in disorder, hurling insults over his shoulder and whipping up his horses, so as the faster to shake off the dust of Windy Standard, Aunt Rachel mounted the stairs.

'Ye will be lookin' for your room, mem?' said Janet Sheepshanks politely; 'it's there, at the end o' the passage! Aye, and ye will find a'-thing aired and in order. It's a short notice, ye will mind—but I aye do the best I can for everybody. The laddie? Na, ye canna see the laddie. He will be sleepin' the noo!

'Do I ken where ye fand him? Weel, and what for no should the young leddy no be readin' to him? It was by-ordinar' kind o' her, I'm sure. It's like that Maister George had juist run into the hoose for anither book. They are great for readin', a' the fam'ly. An' young Mistress Carter is Cornel Carter's only daughter, and if ye'll excuse me, mem, I dinna see for the life o' me what *ye* hae to do wi't! The laddie's in *my* chairge, I beg your pardon. Ye are neither his faither nor his mither, nor the mistress o' this hoose, but juist the wife o' that poor man Clarence Easdaile o' Langton—a kind Providence peety him! Aye, ye can tell what ye like to my maister. Ye hae tried that afore, and muckle ye made o't! And, what's mair, I mind the time—'

But the reminiscence was cut short by Mrs. Clarence Easdaile flouncing off in a towering passion, to search for her husband, who had been charged with the apprehension of Dinky and Saucy. As he came back empty-handed, he had now to endure a volley of scornful abuse from his wife.

She would soon find them—just wait, and they would be sorry enough. Mrs. Easdaile did search, and as a matter of fact she was somewhat more successful, in so far as she came upon Sir Toady, at the great main door of the Old Barn, busily engaged in adding a pile of sheaves to the big blonde mow that filled the interior to the very tiles of the rigging.

Seeing him thus engaged, his Aunt Rachel instantly put two and two together, and charged past him, concluding that the fugitives from Tickler, and Tingler, and Darky-Dark, and Hunger-'em, were hidden inside.

She retired discomfited, however. No trace of either could she find. Solid and uncompromising

rose the wall of sheaves to the roof. Those loosely thrown in by Toady Lion formed the only additions. Nor could she find any signs of recent disturbance, though she poked about with the broken shank of a hay-rake till she was tired out.

However, Mrs. Clarence Easdaile consoled herself with the thought that twenty-four hours at the outside would bring them to their senses. They must come into the house for food. And then—hey for Tickler and Tingler and Darky-Dark and the other dear persuaders of youth upon the rosy path of virtue!

‘That old hag’—she referred to Janet Sheepshanks—would have to remain in Hugh John's room to protect him, so there was nothing to fear from that quarter. And she herself would see to it, that George Picton Smith took nothing from the table, as she was credibly informed he had been in the habit of doing, when Dinky was in hiding at Easdaile Langton.

It was all very, *very* disgraceful, and if she had had anything to say in the affairs of the family—well, after all, it might come to that. There were courts of justice, and what did they pay judges for? She had heard of men being put in confinement for less—and their children and the management of their property given into the hands of capable relatives!

Mr. Easdaile did not explain, though he had still some tincture of law. He knew better than to know better than his wife. It was the sole knowledge which profited him very much.

Now Aunt Rachel was decidedly warm when she ransacked the barn. Sir Toady had indeed hidden his allies. He got the idea out of a certain book which describes the life of an Arab of the City.

In the walls of the barn at the ancient Home Farm of Windy Standard, now let to Farmer Harry Watson, there were old-fashioned triangular 'wickets,' that is to say, small ventilating glassless windows of the shape of the Greek letter Δ . These were too small to admit even the head and shoulders of a grown person. But the slim children, accustomed to pass everywhere, found no difficulty.

Toady Lion, therefore, selected those at the far end of the barn, at the very limit of the great mow of corn, and began to pull out the sheaves through the wickets. Dinky and Saucy assisted him, till they had formed quite a nice little cave, into which they could creep, one at a time. They continued to enlarge the space till the cavern had a wing on either side, so that those inside could not be reached by a long-handled broom, or any probing weapon of that kind.

Dinky and Saucy were therefore fully protected. The great rustling mow rose high above their heads. There was a solid fifty feet of it piled between them and the big doors of the barn. Till Farmer Watson sent that corn to threshing-mill, they were in an entrenched and impregnable city.

And then Sir Toady did some foraging. Horse blankets disappeared mysteriously from the harness-room, while plaids and greatcoats vanished from the hall—about which Janet Sheepshanks, usually on the alert, asked no questions. Provender also went the same way. *That cat* had to bear the blame of many things in Windy Standard for several days. But in that cave of rustling gold, safe among the sweet-smelling heartsome sheaves, Dinky and his sister abode all day, and slept soundly all night.

The only drawback to their complete happiness was, that though they could issue forth after

nightfall with immense precaution, and snatch an hour with Toady Lion in Keeper Dickson's cottage, they had to return in the dark and remain all night without a light. For their quarters, though comfortable and spacious, were to be held sacred from candle, lantern, or light of any kind. This was the sole stipulation made by Farmer Harry Watson, their temporary landlord.

They could stay in his barn as long as they liked. They could sleep on his sheaves. He did not care 'that'—which was a snap of his finger—for Mrs. Clarence Easdaile. *But* (it was a very big 'BUT') they were on no account to bring a light of any kind into the barn, and Sir Toady Lion had even to go bail that neither he nor Dinky carried any matches about with them.

In the daytime, Saucy and Dinky read, or talked to Sir Toady, when he could make a visitation from the house unseen. Dinky had not yet attained to the comfort of reading for himself with any ease. So it was Saucy who read to him, and it was his riotous laughter over 'Troy Town' which first drew the attention of the enemy.

It chanced that Aunt Rachel was passing down the avenue, on her way to the landing-stage, where, by her orders, Dickson was waiting for her. She was going to perform her vow in the matter of Cissy and the Tennyson readings. Sir Toady had done his best to bribe Keeper Dickson to upset the boat. But that taciturn man had only smiled grimly.

'You do *your* work, Maister George,' he said, 'and I'll do mine!'

And so Aunt Rachel, passing through the yard of the Home Farm for a short cut, heard the voices of her truants upraised in laughter, and trembled with

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indignation. In a short space she had located them, as the clear, high sound of Saucy's reading began again. However, she felt that she could allow them to wait. On her return she would speak to Farmer Watson, who would soon pull down the sheaves in his barn, and put the rebels under the authority of Tingler, Tickler, Darky-Dark, Hunger-'em & Co.! Ah, wait!

And with this reflection the amiable woman went her way.

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

THE STILE OF THE CROOKED SIXPENCE

As soon as the boat which carried Aunt Rachel was safely moored behind the tall reeds on the Oaklands side of the river, Toady Lion got into the skiff and pushed off in chase. Dickson saw him from under his heavy eyebrows. But his pipe between his teeth, and his hands busily rolling tobacco, needed all his attention. It was just a glint, and Dickson did not again look up. It was not enough to swear to, yet what he saw made the Silent Man of the Woods smile under his moustache—pretty far under, too.

Yes, Colonel Davenant Carter was at home—in the library.

No; the visitor did *not* wish to see Mrs. Carter. It was a matter of business—no name. Simply say that a lady wishes to see him for a moment on important business.

Colonel Carter was not a student, but a country gentleman, and as is usual in such cases, his library consisted chiefly of fishing-tackle, guns, fly-hooks, and pipes. There were, however, works upon field sports, the care of horses, and several manuals focussing the law of the land for the benefit of the Great Unpaid.

A faint persistent smell of tobacco hung about the chairs, which were deep and comfortably hollowed. There were also a good many small tables, such as could be easily brought to a man's elbow. These had circles and burned marks upon them—'just like a pot-house,' sniffed the visitor, who would have liked to see Mr. Easdaile try anything of the kind in her house.

'What, Rach—I mean Mrs. Easdaile—what brought you—I mean, I am very glad to see you,' cried the Colonel, rising erect out of the chair in which he had been drowsing to the hum of the bees which came to his ear from the creeper outside the windows.

Aunt Rachel yielded a gloved hand to the white-haired old soldier with the moustache, with more kindness than we have ever seen her manifest to any other. All the same she was determined to do her duty. She was not to be braved to her face by a couple of children. *She* would show them.

'You may shake hands with me now, Colonel,' she said; 'I am not sure that you will when I am finished. But I can't help that.'

'Why, Mrs. Easdaile,' said the old gentleman; 'what is the matter? Nothing serious, I hope.'

'I suppose you do not want your daughter to be made the laughing-stock of the neighbourhood?' She fired the question at him point blank.

Instantly a tinge of red began to show, not on the cheek but above the left eyebrow of Cissy's father. Cissy called that his storm-signal, but this Mrs. Easdaile did not know. Nor would she have cared if she had.

'Madam,' said Colonel Carter with dignity, lifting his head like a restive horse, 'I am naturally at a loss to know to what you refer, and if you will permit me to say so, what your interest in my daughter may be.'

'No use getting on your high horse, Colonel—not at least at this stage,' said Aunt Rachel; 'I am a plain woman—'

'That you never were!' said the Colonel, bowing a little gallantly. But the lady swept on.

I say what I think right out, whether people like it or not! (She seemed to fancy that this was to her credit.) And what I mean is, that perhaps you are not aware that your daughter spends most of her time across the river, philandering with my nephew, a boy hardly out of college. I saw them with my own eyes. She was reading to him out of some stupid poetry book, and if I had not interfered at the moment I did, I believe—I believe—that is, I have reason to suspect—that...!’

‘The young rascal!’ cried Colonel Carter, rising with the air of the avenger of blood, but yet, with a certain twinkle in his eye; ‘and after all I said too! Wait till I get my horse-whip. I shall return with you and attend to this affair myself!’

Now it was Aunt Rachel's turn to be astonished. She felt that she might have gone too far.

‘My nephew has been most foolish,’ she began, ‘but—he has just had a dangerous illness, you know, and it might have serious consequences if you were—hasty! All I meant was, that I felt it my duty to put a stop to any affair of the kind—as the only relative of these poor neglected children—during my brother's absence!’

‘Mrs. Easdaile,’ said Colonel Carter with dry dignity, ‘nobody can want more to put a stop to any folly of the kind than I do. I have already forbidden my daughter to speak to young Picton Smith. I have even threatened to send her to a convent if I ever found anything between them!’

He rose and rang the bell.

‘Send Miss Cecilia to me at once!’ he commanded, with his grandest air—so grand indeed that the maid warned Cissy that there was a lady with the Colonel, and that the atmosphere in there was thundery in

the extreme.

Cissy appeared.

'This,' said her father, 'is my daughter—Mrs. Clarence Easdaile—my daughter Cecilia.'

'I had the honour of meeting the young lady yesterday—under peculiar circumstances,' said the visitor meaningly.

'Old cat!' said Miss Cecilia under her breath.

'I am given to understand, Cecilia,' said Colonel Carter, looking at her with exaggerated sternness, 'that you have been disobeying my clear and unmistakable orders! Is that true?'

'No, sir,' said Cissy Carter simply, looking straight at her father, and wholly disregarding the visitor.

'No, sir,' echoed her father, 'what do you mean, girl? This lady (he indicated Mrs. Easdaile with a courtly bow) informs me that you have been in the habit of spending your mornings alone with a young man—her nephew—of reading to him—poetry, I understand. And even—though this I can hardly credit, of permitting him to—ah, in fact—to kiss you!'

'The lady,' said Cissy, 'is—mistaken. It—*did not come off!*'

Mrs. Easdaile rose in indignation.

'No, I took care of that,' she cried; 'I arrived in time—in time, Miss!'

Cissy eyed her coolly, and only nodded. These were the facts.

'But,' said her father, 'you have me to reckon with now, Cecilia. You remember what I said. To a convent you go, do you hear? You have disobeyed an express command, given with all the authority of a father!'

'*I beg your pardon!*' said Cissy, with a kind of

wondering reproach in her voice.

‘And what, then, is your explanation of these facts, which you do not seem even to care to deny?’ demanded her father severely.

‘Why, you gave me leave, didn't you,’ she put the question with the most charming innocence, ‘to join Mr. Burnham's League of St. Catherine?’

‘Well, madam, and what if I did?’ cried Colonel Carter.

‘We have to take various vows, you know, father.’

‘Well?’

‘And one of the principal is, that we are to visit and console the sick in their affliction!’

‘Wheeeee-ooooo!’

The Colonel's involuntary whistle was his tribute to the neatness of Cissy's excuse.

‘And so, Miss, you have only been keeping your vow?’

Cissy nodded, still with her teeth on the whiplash.

‘And now, can I go?’ she said. ‘Anything else I can do for you, or any information I can give this—ah—lady?’

‘Oh, get away, girl,’ said the Colonel, waving her out at the door with his hand. ‘I might have known. I'll attend to your case when I have come back.’

‘And now,’ he added, turning to his visitor, ‘Mrs. Easdaile, will you allow me to accompany you to the landing-stage? It is a relic of days when better relations subsisted between our houses! I dare say it was mostly my fault—old fellows get peppery, you know—and your brother, too, has a pretty stiff upper lip in his own opinion, you know!’

‘I have but too good reason to know it,’ said Mrs. Clarence Easdaile, rising and looking about for glove

and boa, though she had removed neither. 'I cannot say that either his family, or yours, appears to have been brought

up as I could wish!'

Now any one in all the world, who knew that Colonel, would have supposed that this speech would have angered him greatly. But instead a wonderfully soft light came for a moment over his face, as they stepped into the waterside path and the meadow-sweets nodded blandly about them, high as their chins almost.

'Rachel,' he said softly, 'have you forgotten that once you had the chance of altering all that —and would have none, either of it or of me?'

It was wonderful, the change, which in the tick of a clock came over the hard-faced domineering woman. Forty years seemed rolled back in a moment. She was again a young girl, moving down the same path and listening.

They came to the Stile of the Crooked Sixpence, famous in many annals.

'I will say goodbye here,' he said, helping her across; 'I notice Dickson yonder in the boat.'

And he stood silent a while, with his hat in his hand, bareheaded, the sun shining on the silver of his hair.

A light, infinitely sweet and temperate, gleamed in his eyes. They were misty too, and he saw far-off things.

'Rachel,' he said softly, 'we are old folks, you and I. Our heads are white. I do not wish you to go away thinking hardly of my foolish girl or your brother's boy. Will it soften your heart at all toward them if I remind you—of —of two foolish young people who sat and talked on this stile, without consulting their

parents about the matter—how many, many years ago? Ah, I see you remember! You have not forgotten, have you—how *they* said Good-night? Well, after all, where's the difference?’

The hardness, the dragooning frown, the nippy speech had all gone out of Rachel Easdaile's face. (She had not been Rachel Easdaile then.) And it was with a soft sigh that she shook her head and said, ‘There *was* a difference.’

‘I do not remember any,’ smiled the Colonel.

Then one of the wonderful things which happen only in real life happened, perhaps the most wonderful in all this history—therefore true, for

I could not have invented it.

Aunt Rachel lifted her eyes, almost with the young mischievous light of Cissy Carter's in them. They dwelt for a moment thus on those of the tall old man.

‘The difference was—that ours *did* come off!’ she said.

And so left him standing still where he was, bareheaded and bewildered, but, for the moment at least, full forty years younger.

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

A PAIR OF POACHERS

Aunt Rachel was not suddenly and marvellously converted. Sudden conversions are of the few miracles which do not happen. When I say that, Mr. Burnham cites the Dying Thief. But, I retort, he had not time to prove himself. He could not relapse, nor even break down. Mr. Burnham tells me to beware of being irreverent. And I am trying. I mean it most reverently. You cannot untwist a crooked tree and make it grow straight all in a moment. Not even the Lord of Nature can do that. Slowly He grew it so in His garden, and He must prune it, and bandage it, and very likely replant it under other conditions. And that is a sermon.

So with that most stubborn oak from the Easdaile policies—Aunt Rachel. She did not at once become a model of all the kindly virtues. She was not popular at Windy Standard, and only Prissy, home from school, really liked her and desired to visit her of her own accord.

‘Aunt’s all right,’ she said; ‘that is, when you stand up to her.’

But Saucy and Dinky were brought out of their intrenchments on an honourable understanding, engineered by Toady Lion, who attacked his aunt in her softened condition (Dickson told him she had been using her handkerchief in the boat).

‘D’y e mean to her eyes?’ said Toady Lion, who was more accustomed to be ordered to use his on an adjoining organ.

Dickson nodded.

‘Crying, was she—that old geezer?’ said Toady

Lion irreverently. 'I wonder what it was about. Anyway, now's the time.'

This was another of the flashes of insight which make Toady Lion immortal.

For it *was* the time.

It was agreed that Saucy and Dinky were to remain at Windy Standard till Prissy should return from her school (which was 'an awful learned college'), and then they were to go to Aunt's with her—Toady Lion coming along also as soon as he could leave Hugh John.

So ended the siege of Cornsheaf Castle. The garrison marched out with the honours of war, which were, however, immediately shorn. For Janet Sheepshanks lying in wait, pounced on them and hurried them off to be bathed. And right glad of it they were too.

'It's jolly sleeping in a barn,' confessed Dinky; 'but it does make you awful corn-seedy and tickly all down your back, like waking up on an ant-hill!'

On the whole the children were glad when the experience was over, though they cherished and magnified every incident to tell over again. The rats, rare, few, and small, grew into galloping rhinoceroses. The owl that hooted outside in the dark became a Grey Lady bewailing her demon lover. The slight hunger, natural to their age and the sort of adventure they were upon, became a veritable famine. And if they had couched upon Arctic snows, cuddling the frozen Pole itself between their knees, it would have been nothing to Farmer Watson's Old Barn—that is, if you were to believe Dinky.

But though Toady Lion, victor all along the line, so far as his aunt was concerned, had succeeded in

sweetening the relations between the houses of Capulet and Montague, Juliet was rigorously kept consigned to the garden of Oaklands, where she could be under her father's eye, while Romeo, in his big bath-chair, forlornly paraded the aisles of the greenwood, and looked across at the distant towers of the castle wherein was imprisoned his fairy princess.

Hugh John moped, and, as it seemed to the anxious fraternal eye of Toady Lion, lost ground every day.

'Letter?' suggested Toady one morning standing before the 'omnibus' with his hands deep in his pockets and his chin pressing on his breastbone, so intent was he on 'plans.'

Hugh John sadly shook his head.

'Get Cissy into trouble,' he said, and looked away with a sigh.

'Wish you wouldn't puff and blow that silly way!' cried his brother, who loathed all expression of sentiment, even when he had assisted in its nurture.

Hugh John looked at him with a weary smile, a sort of "Tis-better-to-have-loved-and-lost" smile, which always rendered Toady Lion frantic.

'You'll know some day!' he sighed.

'No, I shan't,' declared the hero with vehemence; 'when you catch me gruntin' about a fool of a girl, like as I had a pain in my little—yes, just there—well, you can hammer me all you want to. I shan't ever kick!'

But, nevertheless, though he took this tone in public (for Hugh John's good), Toady Lion was really worried about his brother.

'Horrid nuisances—girls—I mean Big Girls,' he confided to Saucy Easdaile; 'they make a fellow all

different somehow. Now there's Hugh John. He used to be jolly no end. He'd come after rats with the tarriers, climb trees, go poachin' all about on our own hook, have both old Dickson and Colonel Carter's Tom chivvying us like mad, and never turn a hair! Then all of a sudden he grows up—all in one year at college—just because that twisty-haired Ciss Carter went to her aunt's in town, and they asked him to dances and things. And when he comed back, he wouldn't do none of these things, and wore a high collar, an' gloves, even when he hadn't to. And when Ciss came over to see Prissy, Hugh John he would do nothing but stand in corners, lookin' as if he'd eaten too many green apples—awful green—and he'd keep goggin' his eyes at her like this!

Whereupon Toady Lion would stand on one leg and try his best to do justice to Hugh John's idiocy of expression when Cissy was in the room. He always ended off with, 'He was like that, only more soft and calf-y!'

Then, all suddenly one morning, Toady Lion announced his intention of going and playing another of his celebrated Lone Hands. He was going to interview Colonel Carter—himself, Richard Coeur de Lion, M. A.! And, no—he wouldn't tell even Saucy what he was going to do. He couldn't, indeed, because it was a dead secret. Which was true enough; for, as a matter of fact, Toady Lion did not know himself. He trusted in his Star, and in the well-founded belief that, in his hour of need, it should be given him what to speak. Had he not bearded his aunt in the interests of Hugh John, of Dinky, and of Saucy? After *that* adventure, he made small potatoes of Colonel Carter.

* * * *

That morning the Colonel was taking a walk. He was sauntering along his favourite glade, his hands behind his back, and his Malacca cane with the gold head under his arm. He was smiling gently, perhaps at old memories—perhaps at things still in the future—when, like the knights of old, he was aware of an intruder into the privacy which his very gamekeepers respected.

A small boy was running up and down the bed of the clear trout stream, in whose pale sherry-coloured pools the Lord of Oaklands liked to see the big half-pound trout disporting themselves. This little boy was shouting. This little boy was thrusting his hand under the stones, and, yes—actually capturing the sacred fish!

Three strides down the bank made the ancient game-preserved. The cane was now in his hand. Hot words rose to his mouth, but an amazed anger choked them.

'Hooraw—come along, you!' cried the urchin to the new arrival; 'put up 'oo trowsies an' help me catch. There's lots!'

'Who are you, boy?' gasped the Colonel; 'and what—what—what—are you doing there?'

Toady Lion stood a moment with a trout wriggling in his fingers, which presently squirmed its way out, and fell with a *plop* into the pool.

'Now *there!*' he said in a complaining tone, 'roo made me lose that one, shoutin' out like that!'

'I'll make you lose more than that, you young rascal!' cried the angry Colonel.

'Wraskel 'ooself!' retorted Toady Lion, standing his ground; 'roo touch me with that stick, an' it will

be 'sault and buttery!'

'You are trespassing, you rascal!' shouted the assailant; 'I'll—I'll—I'll skin you alive!'

Toady Lion was calm—also instructed.

'All rubbigie!' he said; 'no law again trespass, nor against playin' with your ole trout-fishes in the daytime. Boards—gameys—'Trespassers will be prosecuted'—and Cetry—all gummidge! Father, he's tried it often an' often, and they beat him.'

'And who is your father?' cried the affronted landlord.

'I'm Missur Picton Smiff's little boy—who's roo?' said Toady.

Though he knew very well. But, as Hugh John would have said, he was suffering from an aggravated attack of Toady Lionism, and for the time being, had readopted all his coaxy-woaxy fetchingnesses of pronunciation. As he wore very little clothes, and what he had on were wringing wet, he looked much like a very curly-headed cherub with great big innocent eyes, who had never had a wrong thought nor done a mischievous act in all his life.

Looks are deceitful. Favour is vain.

'I, sir,' said the defender of vested rights, 'I am Colonel Davenant Carter, and the proprietor of this preserved water. And I would like to know who gave you permission to fish here!'

'I beg roo pardon!'

Childish eyes immense and wondering, wells of innocence, beamed up on the owner of the preserved water. He could not repeat his demand. It would have been too absurd. This child was too young to understand.

'So you are Mr. Picton Smith's little boy,' he said

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more kindly; 'what will he say when knows you were here, poaching on my ground?'

'He won't say nuffin',' said Toady Lion promptly; 'he won't know. *Coz roo—wouldn't—never—tell—on ME!*'

He said the last words very softly and slowly, and with the sweetest air of trustfulness in the world. Then he added, 'Say, give me the end of that offul nice cane. I want you to pull me up the bank. Thanks offly! Now, one—two, three —and *oooop* she goes!'

And she went.

CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

TOADY LION'S DUEL

On land once more, Toady Lion gave himself a shake like a water-dog, and began to collect the varied clothes and personal chattels which were scattered along the burn-side.

He picked up also a good many trout which he had flung out. They were still 'walloping,' as he called it. But he stopped that in a workmanlike way, and then, at least partially clothed, returned to the Colonel, who had been contemplating the scene—as it were, worshipping upon the top of his staff.

'You like trouts—*fried?*' he queried. 'Well, you know the ole heather-house w'at's locked up by the pond, where the stones is kep' for the curlers in winter It's just over the hill. Dinky an' me goes there sometimes, an' we've got a frying-pan. Will 'oo come an' us'll fry some trouts now? They'se offul good just out of the water—you can't think. But oh, just go an' sneak a lump of butter, will you, and a sheet of paper—thick paper for writin' letters, you know! We'll do some in the ash—they'se prime that way.'

The very astounding nature of the demand stirred that bit of the Boy which remains in every man, however old. Also Colonel Carter, when not on his dignity, had a sense of the grimly humorous. So it came about that Cissy Carter, going hastily into the dining-room of Oaklands about eleven o'clock of a fine autumnal forenoon, found her stately father stooping at the sideboard, and transferring balls of butter into several sheets of crested note-paper.

'Why, father,' she began in astonishment, 'are you hungry? What are you doing with that but...?'

'I suppose it is my own butter, Missy,' he said sharply; 'be good enough to attend to your own work.'

And disdaining concealment (after detection) he marched out with the balls displayed on his palm.

As it was, Cissy had hard work to keep her gravity, and the task would have been quite beyond her control, if she had seen her father (who had yielded completely to the fascinations of Sir Toady) kneeling in the attitude of a half-folded joiner's foot-rule, trying to blow some damp chips into a flame, while a small boy, talking briskly all the time, was preparing half-a-dozen of Colonel Carter's own trout for the frying-pan and the roasting ashes.

Half-an-hour afterwards the same distinguished gentleman was pondering upon the fact, that, whereas he had had the choice of five or six dishes at breakfast, he had not been able to do more than taste any one of them—now he had actually eaten three trout hot from the frying-pan, done with oatmeal out of Toady Lion's private hoards, and with the butter which Lion had been brought in the crested note-paper.

'Um-m-m!' he said, 'after all, there's good stuff in me yet, for an old 'un! Come, I must be more in the open air. I feel quite in a glow.'

Toady Lion took advantage of this glow, which he at once perceived as plainly as if he had been standing with his back to the fire.

'Colonel Cart'r,' he said, slurring his words so as to get as much into the time, before he could be stopped, as possible, 'our Hugh John likes your Ciss, an' your Cissy she likes him. An' they'se goin' to be married some day—great fools *I* call them—but they are, just the same. An' my father'll give Hugh

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John some money, and you muss give Ciss some money—you see?’

The Colonel looked at first astounded, then angry, finally something twitched in his cheek, and he smiled.

‘Well, of all the...!’ he remarked.

‘Yes, an’,’ said Toady, still racing to get in his matter, ‘an’ of course Cissy will come an’ live at Our House. Coz Hugh John-he’s the heir, of course. An’ it’s got to be fixed *now*. For Hugh John’s all nohow about it—out o’ sorts and dumpy. And Doc. Thynne says that if Cissy doesn’t get to see him sometimes, he’ll die! And if you won’t let her, then I’ve come to fight you in a dooel—*An’ there’s your weapon!*’

And quite suddenly out of his jacket pocket he handed the Colonel, the butt properly foremost, Hugh John’s old revolver.

Then he produced another out of the opposite pocket. ‘You take care, they’s loaded!’ he cried, seeing that the Colonel was twiddling with the trigger; ‘I’ll show you how to handle them properly!’

‘You—young—demon!’ cried the Colonel, ‘they are indeed loaded. And was it for this that you decoyed me here?’

Toady Lion looked up with a beaming smile.

‘Only brought these in case,’ he said; ‘twenty paces by this measuring tape, and you have six pots at me and I have six at you. An’ as you’re the bigger an’ the easier to hit, you can have the best revol’r. You’ve got to take both hands to mine, you see—and then sometimes she won’t go. So I’m givin’ you the best chance. Only, if you are willin’ that Ciss should come and see Hugh John—‘course it’s all right. Only I’se not goin’ to sit still an’ see Hugh John mope and mope till he croaks, maybe—just because you won’t

let Ciss read pottery-stuff to him!

'So,' said the Colonel gravely, 'it is a case of my daughter or my life! And are you the ambassador of the family?'

'In course,' said Sir Toady, 'I have to be!— Hugh John's sick and can't—Father's on the sea, and Priss is a girl. So I have to, you see!'

'I see,' said the Colonel, with a wicker of the corner of his mouth; 'honour of the family— all that! Well, I acknowledge you as a worthy representative, and I will consider my answer. I suppose you will allow me five minutes before execution?'

Toady Lion nodded.

'You have really the best chance,' he said.

Colonel Carter squinted along the barrel of his little rusty revolver. Then he pulled the trigger, and, to his surprise, the shot went off promptly. It hit the tree he had been aiming at, too.

'Now,' cried Toady Lion indignantly, 'didn't I tell you! And there you've gone and wasted a shot you might have plugged me with! And I've no more catterages. So now I'll have to fire off one of mine to be even. 'Ware hawk! Better get behind me. She's rare and scattery, Ole Sure Shot! Behind is safest— unless she bursts, that is!'

Bang went Sure Shot, waking the echoes! Whereupon the Colonel let his weapon fall, and, throwing up his hands, cried, 'I surrender! Ciss may read all Shakespeare rather than that her father shall be carried home 'a lump of bleeding clay!'

But Toady Lion was hunting for the bullet.

'I don't want to lose that,' he explained. 'I plugged her myself, you see, put in the powder too! I thought she was jammed sure. But she wasn't, was she?'

'Certainly not, but *I'll* be jammed, if I ever come

near these things of yours again. Here, unload them and we'll talk.'

'Help me then!' said Toady Lion, getting out a penknife with a broken blade and the ruins of a file. 'I prise them up a bit. Then you take the file and hike them out—I'll show you how!'

'No, thank you,' said the Colonel; 'if you don't mind, I'll get behind a tree and see you do it!'

* * *

So, pending the arrival of Mr. Picton Smith, now on his way home from Singapore, Cissy was allowed to visit Windy Standard three days in the week, accompanied by her mother. Then Toady Lion's ingenuity was devoted to convincing the lady that she had made a mistake in the days of the week. He would turn up at Oaklands in the forenoon with such a forlorn air, and so deadly an arsenal of weapons, that the Colonel would say to his wife, 'Oh, tell him that you will come over this afternoon. I go in fear of my life all the time he is about the house. I declare the only place where I can get a smoke in safety, is in the coal-cellar! And the a worst of it is, that he's taken such a deuce of a fancy to me!'

'From what I have seen,' said his wife, 'I think that the fancy is mutual. *You* simply can't keep away from him.'

CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

THREE YEARS' HARD

It was a clear, sharp day in the 'back end.' A peculiar elation was in the air. The leaves of the copper beeches had turned red-goldy. There was frost on the last wan rakings left about the stubble-fields. The turnip crops gave forth a good smell, which came pleasantly to the nostrils of Mr. Picton Smith, fresh from tropic seas. He felt the jaded feeling going every hour, and the iron coming back into the blood. As Dickson said, 'it was the kind of weather to mak' a man feel birky.'

Mr. Picton Smith was 'birky' indeed, that morning. For he sat in the gun-and-rod-littered study at Oaklands, fully reconciled with his ancient friend.

Colonel Davenant Carter said little at this time. Mr. Picton Smith never much at any time. So the men sat looking out at the open window in a long silence—in which, however, there was no awkwardness. They both felt that it was better than speech.

Yet both were moved to break the friendly silence at the same moment.

'About that boy o' yours?' began the Colonel.

'About my son and your daughter—' said the father of the former.

Then the Colonel's black eyes flickered to Mr. Smith's blue ones, communed there a moment, with the easy understanding of men who interchange vast experiences.

'I suppose we must put our foot down, and stop it!' said Mr. Picton Smith.

'I suppose so!' said the Colonel.

'Stupid young geese!'

'Ridiculous!'

'Far too young!'

'Just so!'

Then there was a lengthy silence, during which a robin came and perched on the sill, perked his tail, fixed the gentlemen one after the other with a pupil sharp and black as the dot on an *i*, and set apparently where his ear ought to have been.

'Hum,' said the Colonel, scratching his head, 'I suppose we must. Let's have the babies up, and get the bullying over—don't you think so?'

'Oh, I don't think—we needn't be too hard on them, eh, Carter?'

The Colonel whistled 'Annie Laurie' as if he were thinking of something else. Then he looked up sharply at his companion.

'I say, Smith, how old were you when you married?'

'Let me see—why, twenty-three, I suppose,' said Mr. Picton Smith; 'but these children are only nineteen a-piece, or thereby.'

'But in three or four years,' the Colonel meditated in a far-off way, 'your boy and my girl will be twenty-three also. I say, Smith—'

'Well, Carter?'

'Suppose—it isn't likely, I know—but, suppose for a moment that the babies were still of the same mind—if *I* had no objection, I suppose *you* would have none either?—No? I thought as much. All right. My life is prolonged. Your younger son will not chivvy me round the park with a repeating rifle.'

'What on earth do you mean?'

'Oh, I'll tell you after. In the meantime let's have

the culprits up, and frighten the lives out of them. Tell them there must be nothing of this for three years at least. Your boy is to go up to Oxford and take his degree. I will take my girl abroad for languages, and then bring her home to learn how to keep house. Her mother will teach her that—and how to make jams. You need somebody over there to sit at the end of the table, eh, Smith? Sort of lonesome, your place, isn't it?

'Thank you, Carter. Yes, we'll see. Hugh John is a decent fellow, and will, I think, make a good man. But, of course, not a word of this to the youngsters.'

'Oh no,' beamed the Colonel; 'the culprits shall be prosecuted with the utmost rigour of the law! Which shall be the Law, you or I?'

'You, I think,' said Mr. Smith, smiling; 'my face will be enough!'

The Colonel glanced at him.

'Yes; you can look like that fellow—Brutus—wasn't it, who sentenced his own son. But don't overdo it. Where's Brutus Junior?'

'On the gravel outside!'

'Call him up!'

Mr. Smith went to the window and summoned Hugh John, and as he did so, he heard from above the sound of a window-sash that shut sharply down. His eye twinkled, but he said nothing.

Meantime the Colonel had rung and bidden the servant tell Miss Cecilia that her father wanted her.

* * *

'So, sir, my daughter has been letting you talk nonsense to her! Come, no denial. We are both quite agreed, your father and myself. We have not the

least hesitation—not the least in the world, sir. This must be put a stop to. We have sent for you to tell you so. No, not a word! We know all you would say. But you are not to say it! You, young man, are to be off to college, and take your degree. You, Missy, are to go packing to Dresden, where Frau Professorin Müller will keep your nose to the grindstone. Now, no tears! We have made up our minds.’

Cissy was crying; somewhat spitefully, be it said—into her handkerchief.

‘You are not just—you are cruel,’ she said, sobbing in between the short sentences; ‘then you should not have let me go—to read to him—with mother!’

Hugh John was very pale, but stood erect and determined, as if taking punishment, with his eyes glued on the carpet of the study.

‘Come, girl, no more of that!’ said her father sharply; ‘we are surely the best judges of what is good for a couple of brats like you!’

‘You are not—you are not!’ cried Cissy hotly, dabbing angrily at her eyes. Hugh John looked at her, and under the quiet of his glance the girl grew stiller also. And then, suddenly throwing herself down on a chair, she laid her hand on the table and sobbed bitterly. Hugh John moved up closer.

‘That’s enough, Carter,’ said Mr. Picton Smith suddenly; ‘hang it, man, I can’t stand this. Look here, my girl (he put his hand kindly on Cissy’s heaving shoulder), your father doesn’t mean all he says. If Hugh John goes and proves himself a man—as I would do if I were in his place, and had the hope of such a prize—and if you are a good girl—well, we won’t say what may happen at the end of three years!’

SIR TOADY CRUSOE

'Smith,' said Colonel Carter gravely, 'you agreed to leave this thing to me, and now you go and make a mess of it, just because a girl cries. A pretty time you will have of it—after. Now, out with you both! Consider yourselves severely reprimanded, bound to come up for sentence when called upon! Away with you, and let us hear no more about it. You, sir—I am speaking for your father—are to go to college tomorrow. And you, Missy, I will take you to London myself. Out with you, and make your adieus.'

Cissy threw her arms round Mr. Picton Smith's neck.

'Bribery and corruption!' cried the Colonel. 'Out of this, both of you, while there is time. Smith there is the third baby!'

* * *

The two men turned in their chairs, leaning forward a little so that they could watch the pair walking down the gravel close together. They were silent till they had turned the corner, and then, for the first time looking at each other, something very like a wink passed between them.

* * *

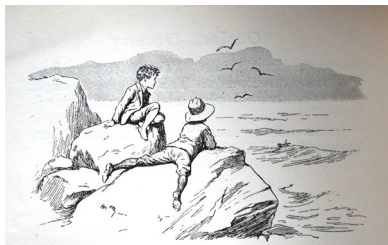
'An' so, Saucy Easdaile,' said Toady Lion, who had seen his labours crowned, 'w'en I come back from school an' college, an' all that—oh, years an' years yet—when I don't care for fun no more, and you have had to put up your hair, if you keep nice an' don't fuss, I'll marry you too. But mind you, I shan't never be such a donkey—'bout making love an' playing softy an' all that like Hugh John was. So you needn't expect it!'

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But all that, and the wonderful things which happened on Isle Crusoe to Dick and Billy, to Emma and Admiral Three Eyes, and how Dinky went Fantee over a certain wedding, must be left over till another time. This is the Book of Toady Lion, local Assistant to Providence, There have only been occasional glimpses of the grubby little boy of the wars of General Napoleon Smith. But it is the same Sir Toady for all that, in spite of his interferences with the affairs of his elders and betters.

As he says himself, 'You can't just always, all the time, make things happen as you want them to. But you *can* give them heaps of shoves the right way, if you watch out. Isn't that true, Saucy?'

And Saucy, with her eyes on her worshipful hero and taskmaster, says that it is so.



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POSTHUMOUS PUBLICATIONS

- 1915 Hal o' the Ironsides
- 1917 The Azure Hand
- 1920 The White Pope
- 1926 Rogues' Island
- 2016 Peter the Renegade

'Mayhap that is the best fortune of all – to be loved by a few greatly and constantly, rather than to be loudly applauded and immediately forgotten by the many.'

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. R. Crockett". The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized, with a prominent "S" and "C".