BORN TO WANDER VOLUME. I

BY

WILLIAM GORDON STABLES

Born to Wander Volume. I by William Gordon Stables

Chapter One

Grayling House, and the Wildery around it

"It was, I ween, a lovely spot of ground,
Half-prankt with spring with sommer half imbrowned."

Scene: An old baronial hall, showing grey over the woods near to the banks of a tributary of the silvery Tweed.

It wasn't the month for the Michaelmas daisies, for it was November.

And when the chrysanthemums opened their great eyes, and turned their faces upwards to meet the light, they felt quite put about to see those flowers still in bloom. They would have been angry, but it is not in the nature of our garden, or indeed of our wild flora and hedgerow pets, to be so. For flowers are ever meek, albeit they are lovely, and methinks that meekness and beauty, hand in hand, are inexpressibly charming.

No, the chrysanthemums were not angry, but they could not help saying to each other

"Why have the Michaelmas daisies not gone to sleep? Is not their time gone by, and is not this our month in which to bloom and beautify the garden landscape?"

Little Effie came trotting round. It was quite early yet. The sun had just got high enough to peep over the almost leafless linden trees. And wherever his beams fell on bush or brake or fern, he melted the hoar-frost, and resolved it into drops of dew, in each of which a miniature rainbow might have been seen. But round at the back of the big stone mansion, where its shadow fell athwart the old-fashioned terraced lawn, the hoar-frost still lay thick and fast.

Out from among the shrubbery somewhere came Effie Lyle. She might, as likely as not, have dropped out of a yew tree for anything any one knew to the contrary.

She stood for a moment looking up at the blue sky,her own eyes were quite as blue,her pretty lips half-parted in a smile, and her golden hair somewhat dishevelled, afloat on her shoulders; as fresh and pure as the morning itself she was, the one thing that had been wanting to complete the beauty of the wildery in which she stood.

Effie glanced down at the chrysanthemums with love and admiration, at the pure white ones, and the pink-and-white, and the crimson, and the bright, bright yellow; she gently smoothed their gorgeous petals that looked so like nodding plumes.

“I love you all,” she cried, “and I am going to kiss the Michaelmas daisies!”

But these grew on such long, long stalksfor they had to creep high to meet the sunthat Effie had to stand on tiptoe, and bend down their mauve clusters to her face.

A momentary sadness crept over her, because one of her pet flowers had left a drop of dew on her cheek.

“Why are my darlings crying?” she said. “Oh, I know!” she added, after a second’s thought. “Because they soon must die. The wicked frost will kill my pets, and thenoh yes, then, I’ll have the chrysanthemums to love.”

An additional ray of sunshine seemed to fall over these flowers when she said this. But a chill crept over the daisies, and their petals began to fold, as fold the wings of insects when night begins to fall.

The gardens around Grayling House were indeed a wildery, yet not a wilderness. It was the pleasure of their owner to let all growing things have a good deal of their own way. For he loved nature even more than art. So in summer time the big lawn that stretched down as far as the quiet river’s bankwhere the trailing willows kissed the water, and the splendidly bedecked kingfishers darted in and out from sunshine and shadewas carpeted with flowers, buttercups and daisies and nodding plumes of grasses, and clover white and red. Yet the sun had such access to this lawn, despite the bordering trees, that those wild things never grew high, but spread and spread, and intertwined, as if they really loved each other, and would not be parted for the world. A favourite lawn this for bees of every size and colour, and for a thousand strangely-shaped and gaudily-coloured beetles, which on cloudy days were content to climb up and down the grass stems and take exercise as acrobats do, but who, when the sun burst out, opened the little cupboards on their shoulders, where their wings had been carefully stowed away from the wet, unfolded these gauzy appendages, and flew away in search of wild adventures.

There were paths through this wildery that seemed to lead nowhere, and as often as not made pretence of taking you straight back towards the house again, but landed you at last perhaps in a greenwood glade, with broad-leaved sycamores, and elms around, in which blackbirds fluted in spring, thrushes piped, and the chaffinch tried to drown the notes of every other bird with his mad merry melody. And here perhaps was a rockery,

with a fountain playing and a streamlet trickling away riverwards, through the greenest of grass. On this rockery dwelt ferns that loved moisture, and creeping saxifrages, with pretty flowerets of deepest crimson, but not a bit bigger than a bee's head.

Had you wished to return from this delightful lonesome gladeand sooner or later you would be sure to wish to go back, notwithstanding its beautyyou would probably have taken a wrong turning, and after a while found yourself in a rose-covered, heather-roofed, rustic summer-house, with a little window opening over the river itself, and seats and lounges inside.

Here, on a summer's day, if possessed of a nice book, you would have found it a pleasure indeed to enjoy a rest. Not that you would have read much, had the book been ever so nice, for as soon as you had got fairly settled, and animated nature around you had got used to your presence, there would have been quite a deal to watch and wonder at. Bright-eyed birds, who had sung in the boughs till their throats were dry, would have come down to slake their thirst and bathe and plash in the sandy-bottomed shallows, scaring the gladsome minnows away into deeper, darker water, where under the weeds lived fate in the shape of a gruesome pike, with terrible teeth and eyes that never closed. Or while you were trying to read, a rabbit or even a hare would come hopping along, and stand up to stare at you. A weasel would sneak past bent on no good. A beautiful squirrel would leap to the ground, and run around on the moss, with his wondrous tail like a train behind him. Bees and beetles would go droning past, or come in by the door, and fly out through the open window, making the great spider that had his web in the corner move his horizontal jaws in hungry expectancy. Meanwhile every now and then a glad fish would leap up and ripple the stream, and the stream itself would keep on chatter-chattering, and telling the nodding, listening trees such a long story in so drowsy a monotone, about where it had been, and where it was going, and what it had seen, that presently you would get listening to the story yourself, and nodding like the trees till the book would drop out of your grasp, and you would be at the back of the north wind.

When you wakened at last, you would be unable for a time to tell where you were, till on looking out you saw the trees again, and the green moss, with the squirrel on it still seeming to look for something, and the tall crimson foxgloves smiling at you through the greenery of ferns; then you would remember that you had fallen asleep while trying to read on a summer's day in a cosy, drowsy summer cot by the banks of one of the most lovely streams that roll their waters into the silvery Tweed.

But at the time our story opens autumn, not summer, was reigning in the lovely wildery round Grayling House.

The leaves were nearly all gone off the trees, except from the oaks, those sturdiest children of our soil. Their leaves were withered and yellow, but would remain on for months to come. The oak and the beech are the wisest of all our broad-leaved trees; they put not forth their green leaves till spring sunshine has warmed the air, and long after the powdery snow has begun to fall, and other trees are bare and shivering in the blast, they still are clothed in their weather-stained garments of leaves.

Effie stooped once more to kiss and caress the chrysanthemums, then she hurried away, because she had heard her brother's voice calling,

"Effie, Effie, Effie!"

"Coming, Leonardcomingcomingcoming!" was Effie's reply, as she ran round through the shrubbery to the terraced lawn behind.

"Come and see me jump from winter into spring," cried Leonard, making a bound like a young antelope right off the lowest terrace, still white and crisp with frost, to the lawn where the grass was wet with dew, and green.

"Oh, Leonardie, Leonardie!" said Effie, pouting with her rosy lips, "why so cruel as to call me away from my flowers to see you jump?"

"You couldn't do it, Effet," said Leonard, nodding his head.

"Oh, I could! You see now."

Next moment both were at it, running up and running down, leaping from winter into spring, bounding up from sunshine into shade, and keeping up the merry game till the cheeks of each were as red as roses, and their eyes as bright as drops of dew.

As handsome a boy was Leonard at the age of ten as one could wish to see. Twins the two were, though he was the taller, as became his sex, and I do not think they had been one hour parted since the bells of the village church were set ringing to announce the double birth.

Leonard threw himself down to rest on the frosty grass, and Effie stood laughingly looking down at him.

The boy was a young Scot, and wore that most picturesque of all costumes, the garb of old Gaul, but he was not afraid of getting his bare knees frozen as he lay there. In fact, I do not think that Leonard was afraid of anything.

As I have said the lad was a Scot, there is little need to add that Grayling House and the beautiful river that went wimpling by it were on the northern side of the Tweed.

It was very still and quiet all round Grayling House to-day, and the sky was very bright and almost cloudless. There was not wind enough to bend the course of the spiral wreaths of smoke that rose straight up into the frosty air, higher than the dark-roofed pines, before it melted away into a white haze across the woods.

High up yonder among the sturdy arms of the elms were many huge nests, but the rooks were far away foraging in some farmer's field. In the other trees many an old nest was visible that could not have been seen in summernests of the chattering magpies, in the moss and lichen-covered larches; nests of the tree-sparrows everywhere high or low, great untidy wisps of weeds, with feathers sticking here and strings hanging there, nests that any other bird except a sparrow would feel ashamed to enter or go near. Then there were nests of the bold, bright-voiced cheery chaffinch close to the trunk of beech or elm, little gems of nests tricked out with lichens white and red, and looking all over like shapely bits of coral; and nests of the missel-thrush, so sturdily fixed between the tree forks that storm or tempest could not blow them down.

"I say, Effet," said Leonard, looking up, "the birds are almost too clever for me. I can count dozens of nests now up there that I couldn't find in summer. Wait till spring comesI'll be wiser then.

"Listen," he continued, "was that a mole?"

"No," said his sister, "it was only a sycamore leaf; I saw it falling."

"Hullo! here comes another, and another, and another." And off he flew, cap in hand, to catch the leaves as they fell.

He soon tired, however.

"I say, Effet, I don't call this keeping a holiday. Let's have some real fun."

"Shall we go to Castle Beautiful, and read a story to the menagerie?"

"No, not yet. Let us try to hook old Joe."

Old Joe was a monster pike, who lived in a monster pond or pool, big enough almost to be called a lake, for it covered three acres of ground, and one part of it, right in the

centre, was said to be deep enough to bury the village church and steeple. It was down at the bottom of this deep dark hole that Joe lived.

Now it was somewhat funny, but nobody about Grayling Housewith one solitary exception, namely, Peter the butler, who had been at the mansion, man and boy, for fifty yearscould tell where this monster pike had come from, or when or why he had come.

The facts are these: the loch was fed by springs, and the only outlet for the water was a lead that had to pass over a big mill-wheel, that ground oats and barley for every one in the parish. The pike could not have come over the mill-wheel. Again, he had not been there ten years, and as he weighed, to all appearance, full thirty pounds, he must have been a monster when he got there.

Captain Lyle, Leonard's and Effie's father, believed he had scrambled over the grass some dark, dewy night, and taken up his quarters in the loch. This was strange if true, and it might have been, because, at the time the pike first appeared, a tenant of the same kind was missed from a deep tree-shaded pool in the river.

The country people, however, would not share the captain's belief. There was something uncanny about the beast, they averred, and the less any one had to do with him the better.

He was a very matter-of-fact pike, at all events; for no sooner had he taken possession of his new quarters than he proceeded at once to turn out all the old tenants. Or ratherto speak more to the pointhe turned them in, for he ate them. Captain Lyle had, years before the reign of this king-pike, stocked the water with trout, and they had done well, but now none were ever seen.

Sometimes the pike condescended to show himself, or even to take a bait, when some person more daring and less superstitious than his fellows tried to catch him. More than once he had been pulled above the water, but disappeared again, hook and all, with a splash.

When he had swallowed a hook it was Joe's custom to sulk for a fortnight at the bottom of his pool, and having duly digested the morsel of blue steel, he appeared again livelier and more audacious than ever.

His size was reported to be something enormous by those who had raised him. They said his head was as big as that of Farmer Kemp's great mastiff-dog.

It was also said that Joe had once upon a time swallowed a sow and a litter of young. This tale was always retailed to strangers who happened to come to the district to fish. It was, in fact, a catch, for Joe really had done this deed; but then the sow was a guinea pig, and the young ones mere hop-o'-my-thumbs.

"Yes, Leonardie," said Effie, "let us go and try to hook old Joe."

So while Effie ran to the hall for the fishing tackle, her brother went and dug some great garden worms, and half an hour afterwards they were both in the middle of the lake, with the line sunk, and sitting patiently in the little boat to see whether or not Joe would condescend to bite.

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Chapter Two.
Glen Lyle.

“I foraged all over this joy-dotted earth,
To pick its best nosegay of innocent mirth,
Tied up with the bands of its wisdom and worth,
And lo! its chief treasure,
Its innermost pleasure,
Was always at Home.”

Tupper.

Scene: An old-fashioned parlour in Grayling House. The walls are hung with faded tapestry, the furniture is ancient, and a great fire of logs and peat is burning on the low hearth. In front lies a noble deerhound. At one side, in a high-backed chair, sits a lady still young and beautiful. Some lacework rests on her lap, and she listens to one who sits near her readingher husband.

Captain Lyle reading

“Soldier, rest! thy warfare o’er,
Sleep the sleep that knows not breaking;
Dream of battle-fields no more,
Days of danger, nights of waking.

“In our isle’s enchanted hall,
Hands unseen thy couch are strewing,
Fairy strains of music fall,
Every sense in slumber dewing.

“Soldier, rest! thy warfare o’er,
Dream of fighting fields no more;
Sleep the sleep that knows not breaking,
Morn of toil nor night of waking.”

Lyle looked up. There were tears in his wife's blue eyes.

"Is it not beautiful, Ethel?" he said. "There is the true ring of martial poesy about every line that Walter writes."

"Yes," said Ethel, with a sigh, "it is beautiful; but oh, dear Arnold! I wish you were not quite so fond of warlike verses."

"Ethel, I am a soldier."

"Yes, poor boy, and must soon go away to the wars again. I cannot bear to think of it, Arnold. When last you were gone, how slowly went the time. The days and weeks and months seemed interminable. I do not wish to think of it. Let us be happy while we may. Put away that book."

Lyle did as he was told. He took one of his wife's fair tresses in his hand and kissed it, and looked into her face with a fond smile.

Man and wifebut lovers yet.

"Heigho!" he said, getting up and pulling aside the heavy crimson curtains to look out, "heigho! these partings must come. It must be sad sometimes to be a soldier's wife."

"It would be less sad, Arnold, if I could share your wanderings."

"What, Ethel! you, my tender, too fragile wife? Think what you say, child."

She let the work that she had resumed drop once more in her lap, and gazed up at him as he bent over the high-backed chair.

"Why not I as well as others?"

"Our children, dear one. My beautiful Effie and bold Leonard."

"They have your blood and mine in their veins, Arnold. They are wise and they are brave."

Arnold mused for a little.

"And we," he said, "have few friends, and hardly a relative living."

“All the more reason, Arnold, I should be near you, that we should be near each other. No, dear, I have thought of it all, planned it all; and if your colonel will but permit Captain Lyle’s wife to be among the chosen few who accompany their gallant husbands to the seat of war, I shall rejoice, and you may believe me when I say our children shall not be unhappy.”

Captain Lyle put his arm around her, and drew her closer towards him.

“I never refused any request you made, Ethel, and if the colonel, as you say, will but permit, I will not refuse you this.”

“Oh, thank you, Arnold! thank your kind and good unselfish heart. You have indeed taken a load off mine. I feel happy now, I feel younger, Arnold; for truly I was beginning to grow old.”

She laughed a half-hysteric laugh of joy.

“You may read to me now,” she added, re-seating herself in the high-backed chair, “and it can be all about war if you like.”

He took up the book and commenced at random

“’Tis merry, ’tis merry, in Fairyland,
When fairy birds are singing,
When the court doth ride by their monarch’s side,
With bit and bridle ringing.
And gaily shines the Fairyland.”

Captain Lyle got no further just then. Hurried steps were heard in the hall, the door was thrown unceremoniously open, and in rushed old Peter the butler, pale as death, and wringing his shining hands.

“Augh!” he gasped, clutching at the wall, “they’ve done it noo! They’ve done it noo! Oh that I should hae lived to see this day o’ wreck and ruin to the old hoose o’ Lyle. Ochone! ochone! o-chrie!”

“In the name of goodness, Peter, are you crazy, or is the house on fire? Speak, man!” cried Captain Lyle.

“Hoose on fire? Na, na; it’s waur and waur than that. But still there’s hope, sir. I have him in a tub, and though he is lying on his side he’s gasping yet. Hallo! there they come.”

In rushed Effie and Leonard, bright-eyed and rosy with joy and excitement.

Effie ran to her father’s arms.

Leonard ran to his mother.

“We’ve caught Joe!” they both cried at once.

“I hooked him,” cried Effie.

“I hauled him up,” cried Leonard.

“And we both hauled him out.”

“Dool (Note 1) on the day for the hoose o’ Glen Lyle,” exclaimed Peter, rolling his eyes.

“Come, father, come. Peter put him in a tub.”

Captain Lyle followed Effie. There, sure enough, in the tub of water lay Joe, the monarch of the loch. Peter pointed to the animal’s tail.

“How strange!” said Captain Lyle, as well he might, for a huge gold ring ran through the last vertebrae, and attached to this a plate, with the letters L.L., and the date 17 plainly visible.

A few minutes afterwards Joe seemed to recover all of a sudden, and began tearing round and round the tub, his huge jaws snapping and his eyes glaring like a demon’s.

Every one started back astonished, but old Peter’s antics were a sight to see.

He seized a big wooden lid and clapped it over the tub, and set himself on top thereof. Then he addressed himself to the cook

“Run, ye auld roodas,” he roared; “run to the kitchen, and fetch the biggest kettle-pot ye can lay yer claws on!”

The pot was duly fetched, and clapped upside down on top of the lid on the tub.

Then Peter flung his cap to the roof of the hall, and shouted, “Saved, saved! The auld hoose is saved yet.”

Now after that Captain Lyle drew old Peter aside. What the old man communicated to his young master the reader may learn in good time; but certain it is, that in less than half an hour Joe found himself back once more in his old quarters, not very much the worse for his singular adventure, and that within a week a high wooden palisade was placed all round the lake, with only one gate, and that padlocked. Leonard wondered, and so did his gentle sister. They looked at each other in silence at first, then Effie shook a serious little head, and said solemnly,

“We mustn’t touch papa’s pike any more.”

“No,” replied Leonard, thoughtfully, “Joe is papa’s pike, and he mustn’t be touched.”

Leonard and Effie were the only children of their parents, who loved them very much indeed. Captain Lyle was proud of his boy, and, I fear, made almost too much of a pet of his girl Effie. He indulged them both to their hearts’ content, when they had done their duty for the daythat is, when they had both returned from the village school, for in those good old days in Scotland the upper classes were not above sending their boys and girls to the parish schools; there were of course no paupers went there, only the sons and daughters of farmers and tradespeoplewhen duty was over, then, Captain Lyle encouraged his children to play. Indeed, he seemed more like a big boya brother, for instancethan a father. He was always planning out new measures of enjoyment, and one of the best of these was what Leonard called The Miniature Menagerie.

I do most sincerely believe that the planning and building of this delightful little fairy palace saved the life of Captain Lyle. He had been invalided home in the month of January 1810about ten months before the opening scene of our taleand it was judged that a year and a half at least must elapse before he would be again fit for service. War-worn and weary though he was, having served nearly a dozen years, he soon began, with returning health, to pine for activity, when the happy thought struck him to build a palace for his children’s pets.

He communicated his ideas to Leonard and Effie, and they were delighted.

“Of course,” said Leonard, “we must assist.”

“Assuredly you must,” said Captain Lyle; “the pie would be no pie at all unless you had a finger in it.”

The first thing that the head of the house of Glen Lyle had done was to sit down in his study one evening after dinner, with the great oil lamp swinging in front of him, a huge bottle of ink, and a dozen pens and pencils lying on the table, to say nothing of a whole regiment of mathematical instruments that had been all through the French war, compasses, rules, squares, triangles, semi-circles, and what not.

The second thing that Captain Lyle had done was, with a pencil, to fill a big page of paper with all kinds of droll faces and figures.

Little Effie climbed up behind his chair before long and had a peep over his shoulder.

“Oh, papa dear!” she cried, “that is not making a menagerie.”

“I know it isn’t, Effie. I think my thoughts had gone a wool-gathering.”

“Well,” said Effie, considering, “we may want some wool for nests and things; but don’t you think, papa, that we should build the house first, and look for the wool afterwards?”

“Oh!” cried Leonard, “don’t worry about the wool. Captain Lyle, your son Leonard, who stands before you, knows where to find lots of it. For whenever a sheep runs through a hedgeand they’re always, running through hedges, you knowthey leave a tuft of wool on every thorn.”

“Well, my son, we’ll leave the wool out of the question for the present.” Then he walked about smiling to himself for a time and thinking, while the boy and girl amused themselves turning over the leaves of an old-fashioned picture-book.

“Hush!” said Effie several times when Leonard laughed too loud. “Hush! for I’m sure papa is deep in thought.”

“I have it!” cried papa.

And down he sat.

Words, and figures, and little morsels of sketches came very fast now, the secret of his present success being that he did not try to force himself to think, and my readers will find that our best thoughts come to us when we do not try to worry after them.

Yes, Captain Lyle’s ideas were flowing now, so quickly that he had to jot them down, or sketch them down here and there all over a great sheet of paper, and in about an hour’s

time the rush of thought had, in a measure, expended itself. He leant back in his chair, and gave a sigh of relief.

Once more Effie came stealing up on tiptoe and peeped over his shoulder.

“Oh, what a scrawl!” she cried.

“My dear Eff,” said her father, “that is only the crude material.”

“Leonardie,” cried Effie, “come and see the rude material.”

“Well, it does seem rude enough material,” said Leonard.

“Yes,” said Effie, “but I’m sure my clever papa will make something out of it before he has done.”

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Chapter Three.
Castle Beautiful.

"The poet may tread earth sadly,
Yet is he dreamland's king;
And the fays, at his bidding, gladly
Visions of beauty bring."

Mortimer Collins.

Scene: A green hill or knoll rising with a gentle sweep from the woods near Grayling House, on one side gigantic elm trees, with rooks busy nest-making. On the other, at the rock foot, the dark deep loch. Behind the hill, as far as the eye can see, a forest dotted with spring-green larches and dark waving pines; blue mountains beyond, and a bright sun shining down on all from a sky of cloudless blue.

It is early morning, but those rooks have been at it long before the beams of the rising sun capped the hills with crimson. There are many other voices in the woods; indeed, every tree is alive with song, but you would have to walk a long distance into the forest before you could listen with pleasure to either the merle or the mavis, so loud-voiced are those rooks with their everlasting but senseless song of "Cawcawcaw."

But listen!if indeed it be possible to listen to anythingthere is evidently a merry party coming towards the mound here, from the direction of Grayling House.

There is a manly voice singing, and there is the merry laughter of children, with every now and then the sharp ringing bark of a collie, or the deeper bay of a hound in the woods.

And now they burst into view. At the head of the procession, hatchet in hand, marches Captain Lyle himself, flanked on the right by Leonard, on the left by Effie. Behind them come men carrying baskets of tools and spades and shovels, and bringing up the rear, and limping somewhat, is old Peter himself.

What are they all doing here? Why, they are going to complete the building of the Miniature Menagerie. And if you now look behind you, and to the top of the little green

hill, you will notice rising therefrom a structure of such fairy-like dimensions, but of such grace and beauty withal, that no one could have been blamed for mistaking it for the palace of some elfin king.

Externally, and seen from a distance, it looked already complete, but a closer inspection showed that the rooms were all unfurnished as yet, and the place void of tenants.

There was much to do, but there was a merry, busy crew to do it, and what with shouting and what with talking and singing, I must say that if the din at the building of the Tower of Babel was anything in comparison to this, it must have been very great indeed.

I do not know that Effie did much to assistassist the work, I mean, for she did add to the din most considerablybut Leonard proved an able lieutenant in running here and there, conveying his father's commands, and seeing that they were executed promptly.

Well, everybody worked, and worked, and worked, and not on this particular day only, but for many days, for it happened to be a school holiday, and so, by-and-bye, everything was completed, even to the satisfaction of Captain Lyle himself, who, being a soldier, was very particular indeed.

And after everything was done and finished, and the trees and flowers in the grounds that surrounded Castle Beautiful had nothing to do but to grow, then the animals and pets were taken to this beautiful home, and duly installed therein.

And old Peter the butler, whose labours at the house itself were really not worth speaking about, he being kept as a kind of human heirloom and nothing else, was appointed custodian of the castle. For Peter, being so very old, and having been always in the country, in the woods and in the wilds, since the days of his boyhood, not only knew a deal about every kind of animal, but was also fond of all things living. It had often been remarked of Peter by the other servants that he would, if in ever so great a hurry, step on one side rather than trample a garden worm on the footpath.

"Hae!" he would say sometimes when he found one of these on the gravel, "whaur are gaun ye crawling ferlie? Whaur are ye hurryin' to sae fast? I'll put you out of harm's way at the risk o' even displeasing ye." Then he would lift it, and gently deposit it on the grass.

On a shelf in one of the rooms lay a note-book, and in this book Captain Lyle had writtenso plainly that even Peter could see to read it without those immense spectacles he used to wear when droning over the Good Book of an evening to the servantsall that it was necessary to know about the feeding and comfort of the poor wee animals who

lived in Castle Beautiful. And Leonard and Effie, being Scotch, had learned to read very early, and soon could tell by heart everything in the book.

Leonard had a very high sense of what duty meant, and even Effie knew that if we keep animals to minister to our pleasure, we ought to do our best to make them as happy as the summer's day is long.

Well, let us take a glance at Castle Beautiful and the Menagerie three months after that busy, bright spring morning I have just described. Leonard and Effie come with us to answer questions and explain things in general, and old Peter goes hobbling on in front, in a great hurry, though with little speed, to open the gates for us.

The palisade that surrounds the hill there is quite a rustic one, and so is the gate that opens through it. Even the bark has been left on the branches that compose it.

Once through this gateand mind you, old Peter takes good care to lock it behind himwe find ourselves in quite a little shrubbery, though laid down with exquisite taste and without any overcrowding. And upwards, through the grass and miniature trees, the path goes winding and zig-zig-zagging till it lands us on the flat roof of the hill, in front of the little palace.

We observe that the gravel on the path, and all round the palace, as we may well call it, is as white as snow. It is a mixture of shells and sea sand, brought all the way from the beach at the mouth of the Tweed, and being so white, it looks in charming contrast to the greenery of trees and grass.

But what strikes a grown-up person most here, is that everything about him is in miniature, dwarfed, as it were; the very bushes and shrubs have the appearance of being old, and yet they are excessively small. Here, for example, is a little forest of pine trees and larches which, as far as shape goes, might be a hundred years old, and here again is a thicket of spruce, so ancient looking, yet so tiny, that if pigeons flew about in it no bigger than humble-bees, we would not be a bit astonished, and if, flitting from bough to bough of these dwarfed elms and oaks, we saw thrushes and blackbirds not a whit larger than blue-bottle flies, we should not raise our brows in wonder.

Again, when we look around us at the tiny rockeries and flower beds and the Liliputian fountains, and then glance at the fairy-like palace itself, why, wethat is, we grown-up folksbegin to think we are giants and ogres, or that all we see around us is due to some kind of enchantment. If a regiment of real fairies came trooping out of the miniature palace, we would not be rude enough to look as if there were anything particularly strange in the matter.

But behold, Peter, who does look tall amid such surroundings, opens the hall door of the Castle, and out step Don Caesar de Bazan and the Hon. Lady Purr-a-meow.

Don Caesar shakes hands with everybody all round, and her ladyship does the same. The Don is a poodle with his hair cut in the most fantastic Frenchified fashion, and her Ladyship is a cat of the tabby persuasion, who condescends to accept bed and board at Castle Beautiful. Don Caesar and Lady Purr-a-meow go off for a scamper round the hill and through the miniature woods, and Peter, preceded by Leonard and Effie, enters the porch, and we follow, feeling all the while as big as giants. The verandah is just under the tower where the pigeons dwell, and a couple of tame jackdaws have built a nest and brought out young.

And the very first or ante-room we reach is the private apartment of Don Caesar and Lady Purr-a-meow. I really ought to have put Lady P. before Don C. in that last sentence of mine, for she alone rules king and priest in this charming little room.

Of course Don Caesar has a couch in one corner, in which he is graciously permitted to sleep at night, or enjoy a siesta during the day. Lady Purr-a-meow does not object to that, and she even allows him to have his meals here so long as he behaves himself. She does not object either to have a game at romps with Don Caesar when she has a mind to; I emphasise the she because it makes all the difference in the world if Don Caesar himself proposes the game. She whacks him at once, and sends him to bed, and she knows exactly all his tender points, and where a claw hurts most, on his nose, for example, or on his closely-shaven loins. She whacks him if he goes too near her dish, she whacks him if he barks, and sometimes whacks him because he doesn't. She whacks him if he comes too near to the window, and whacks him if he stops too far away from it. She whacks him sometimes for looking at her. If he doesn't look at her she says he is sulky, and whacks him for that; she whacks him for fun and for exercise, and to show her authority, so that, upon the whole, Don Caesar de Bazan gets a good deal more whacking than he deserves.

In this room is Leonard's and Effie's library of old-fashioned picture-books, and many toys, and a little couch near the nicely-curtained window, on which it is delightful to recline on a lovely summer evening and read while dreamy, old-fashioned music is being played by a huge musical box that stands on a table, and while a breeze, laden with the odours of the woods and the wild flowers, is stealing in at the open window, and toying with the crimson curtains.

This window opens right on the lawn, that is, on the back lawn, and here a strange sight may be seennamely, half a score of snow-white, smutty-nosed, garnet-eyed Himalayan

rabbits, brought home first by a sailor uncle, and the same number of daft-looking little piebald guinea pigs. These have houses outside, and a monstrous owl called Tom is watching them half asleep from his cage near a window, and thinking how nice one or two of them would be to eat.

But we re-enter the ante-room through the casement window, and pass on into a kind of hall lighted from the roof.

In this place there are so many pets of different kinds that it is impossible to know which to admire or wonder at first. This hall communicates with another room with a larger window, which looks over the precipice right down into the lake, where lives Joe the monster pike, and the inmates of both rooms are free to scamper or flyfor here we have both fur and feathersfrom one to the other.

In these rooms are perches and cages and pens, and shelves and nests and comfortable cosy corners of every description, and all kinds of seed and food dishes, and abundance of water and an allowance of milk; and everythingthanks to the little owners, and to worthy old Peteris as clean and sweet as though nothing dwelt in the rooms. This is the home par excellence of the happy family. The secret is, that every creature must be young when placed therein, so that they soon come to know that though they may play together, they must study each other's feelings, and neither hurt each other nor be rude to one another.

Right in the centre of the square room is a fountain playing, the spray falling down upon a charming little rockery in the middle of a stone basin. The fountain can be turned on at the will of the owner, and whenever it plays the birds take advantage of it, and fly across and across through the spray, and so enjoy a shower bath. But the white rats do not care for a bath, and when the birds, thoroughly wet and thoroughly tired of the sport, sit down on a perch to preen their draggled feathers, the cosy white rats in their garments of ermine look up at them with crimson eyes, in which dwells a kind of pity, and seem to say, "We really wouldn't be you for all the world."

What other pets are there in this happy family, did you ask? Well, there are pet pigmy pigeons, and pet kittens, a tame duck, who is greatly bullied, a sea-gull who talks like a Christian, half-a-dozen starlings, who inquire into everything, and a jackdaw who is never out of mischief, and whom Effie has serious thoughts of sending into exile.

As soon as Leonard and she appear they are surrounded, and the din is for a time indescribable. The dwarf or pigmy pigeons hover round them and alight on their shoulders and hands; the kittens chase the rats, who squeak, and pretend to be terribly afraid; the sea-gull struts about crying, "Oh! you pretty, pretty, pretties;" the jackdaw

whistles “Duncan Grey;” all the starlings start singing at once; and the idiotic duck can’t think of anything better to do than stand flapping his wings in a corner and crying, “What, what, what, what!”

We tear ourselves away from this happy family at last, and make tracks for the bird rooms, or aviaries. One room is devoted to British, the other to foreign birds, all nicely assorted and sized, so that they live in the utmost unison. There are soft-billed birds and hard-billed birds, so there are both seeds and mash to suit their palates. Here again we have fountains, one in each aviary, and these, when playing, are a source of never-ending delight.

When the sun is shining upon the foreign aviary, what a sight it is to see those birds, in all their brilliancy of colour and beauty, flitting from bough to bough in their bonnie home; but if you want music you must enter the adjoining room, where the birds of Britain dwell. Gaudy their plumage may not be but, oh! their voices are very sweet.

All round both these rooms grow trailing plants, that hang over the aviaries like great green plumes, and when night falls and the Chinese lanterns are lit, and the fountains all playing, the whole place is indeed like a fairy palace.

But it is summer on the occasion of this visit of ours, the grass is green, and flowers are everywhere out of doors, in beds and rockeries, peeping through the moss, hiding under trees, and covering every porch and verandah with masses of foliage and lovely flowers.

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Chapter Four.
Gipsy Life.

"Calmly the happy days flew on,
Unnumbered in their flight."

Anon.

"Moon the shroud shall lap thee fast,
And the sleep be on thee cast,
That shall ne'er know waking.
Haste thee, haste thee to be gone!
Earth flits fast, and time draws on
Gasp thy gasp, and groan thy groan,
Day is near the breaking."

Scott: "The Dying Gipsy's Dirge."

Scene: The ante-room of the fairy palace, Effie reading, Leonard listening. Don Caesar de Bazan and Lady Purr-a-Meow all attention.

Man never is but always to be blest. The delightful and happy life our Leonard and Effie had lived all the long sweet summer through could surelyone would thinkhave left nothing to be desired.

Both were little naturalists in their way, though they did not know it; both were poets also, though they wrote no verses, for their hearts were attuned to the music of the wild woods, the song of birds, the rippling laughter of the rill, the whisper of the low wind through the trees, or even the dash of the cataract and roar of the storm. No beetle or other insect was there, in all the romantic country through which they passed on their way to and from school, that they did not know all about; every wild flower was a friend; and the little furry denizens of the forest, that dwelt in old tree stumps, or had their cosy nests among the verdant moss or the beds of pine-needlesall knew them, and never fled at their approach.

Curious children both were, for they cared but little for company in their rambles; they were indeed all in all to each other. And even though they knew well that a welcome-

home awaited them every day, they made no great hurry, and hardly ever went back from school without a bagful of delicacies for their pets in the fairy palacegreen food and seeds for the birds, worms and dead mice or dead birds for the owl, and nuts for all who cared for them.

They ought to have been very happy, and so they were, yet Leonard was continually planning strange adventures.

The kind of books they read had much to do with the formation of the boy's character, as they have on the minds of all boys. But in those good old times there were fewer writers for the young than we have now, so poetry was more in fashion, and books of travel and weird tales of ghost and goblin, and old, old, strange stories of romance.

Sometimes Effie read while Leonard listened, but just as often it was the other way.

"I tell you what I should like to have," said Leonard, one day, throwing down his book. "What do you think, Effie?"

"Oh! I could never guess. Perhaps a balloon."

"N-no," said Leonard, thoughtfully; "some day we might perhaps get a balloon, and fly away in it, and see all those beautiful countries that we read of, but that isn't it. Guess again."

"A large, large eagle, like what Sinbad the Sailor had, to carry us away, and away, and away through the skies and over the clouds and the sea."

"No, you're not right yet. Guess again."

"A real live fairy, who would strike on the black rock where they say all the treasure is buried, and open up a door and take us down into the caves of gold and gems and everything beautiful."

"No," said Leonard. "I see you can't get at it."

"Well, tell me."

"Why, a real gipsy-waggon to wander away in, when summer days are fine, and see strange people and strange places."

"And tell fortunes, Leonie?"

“Well, we might do that, you know.”

“Ah! but summer isn’t anywhere near yet; the chrysanthemums have only just begun to blow. Then we couldn’t go far away, because poor papa and mamma would miss us quite a deal, and who would feed our pets?”

“Why, Peter, to be sure. He does more than half now. And although winter will come soon, summer will return, Eff, and the woods grow green again, and the birds begin to sing once more, and the streams be clear as crystal, instead of brown as they now are.”

“Well,” said Effie, “it is worth thinking about. Would Don do?”

Don was the donkey.

“Yes, I think Don would do first-rate. I’m sure he wouldn’t run off.”

Effie laughed at this idea.

“Don would do. Don must do,” continued Leonard, “and the carpenter would help Peter to build us a cartno, a van, with a canvas roof. It would be no end of good fun. And really, Eff, I’m so full of the notion that I must run right away and tell father.”

Leonard burst into the room where Captain Lyle was writing.

“Father,” he said, “what can I do for you?”

“Nothing at present. Oh! yes, you can though.”

“Well, I’ll do it.”

“Leave me alone.”

Leonard’s face fell, and his father began to laugh.

“Father,” said Leonard, “when I grow a great big big man, and you are old, old, and white-haired, and crawling about on crutches like Admiral Boffin, with perhaps a wooden leg and a hook for an arm”

“Thank you for the prospect,” said Captain Lyle.

“How can you imagine such things?” said his mother, much amused.

“Oh! because I wish him to be just like that.”

“Indeed, sir, why?”

“Why, to give me the chance to be so good to him, you know, because he is so good to me.”

“Well, now,” Captain Lyle said, “let us come to the point. I don’t admire the prospect of crutches, hook arm, and a wooden leg, and I hope you’re not a true prophet, but you’ve got some new scheme in your noddle, and you’ve come to ask a favour. Anything in reason, Leonie. Sit down, lad.”

Then the boy took a seat and unfolded his plans, and coaxed, and teased, and what not, till he had gained his father’s consent, and then off back to Castle Beautiful he went. As he scrambled over the fence Effie knew he had succeeded, because he was singing, and because he had not troubled to open the gate.

Spring returned. The snow left the woods and the fields; it lingered long in the ditches and by the wayside, and made one last sturdy stand on the hill-tops, but was forced to fly from even there at last. Then the honeysuckle on the hedgerows unfolded its leaves, the blackthorn itself began to bud, and the larch woods grew green. The dormouse and hedgehog, who had slept through all the wild weather, rolled in leaves at the tree foot, showed their pinched and weary wee faces at their holes, wondering if there was anything yet to eat. The squirrel had eaten his very last nut, and stretched himself on a bough to enjoy the glorious sunshine.

The rook and the mavis, the blackbird and hedge-sparrow had built their nests, and laid their eggs ever so long ago, only the chaffinch and the green linnet were waiting for still warmer weather, and the lark wanted the grass or corn to be just a little higher, while the rose-linnets sang for more leaves to hide their nests from prying eyes.

But the brooklets, bright and clear now, went singing along over their pebbly beds, the river rolled softly on, and the silver sallows and weeping willows bent low over the water, and westerly winds were blowing, and sunshine was everywhere.

Leonard’s waggon or caravan was built and ready. It was the lightest thing and the neatest thing ever seen in the shape of a one-horse conveyance, that horse, be it remembered, being a donkey. The little house-upon-wheels had not two but four small wheels, and instead of being built of wood its sides and roof were canvas.

It was a gipsy cart of the neatest description, and Effie as well as Leonard was delighted with it, and as for Don, the donkey, so proud was he when put into the shafts that he wanted to gallop away with it, instead of walking at that slow and solemn pace which respectable thinking donkeys usually affect. But Don was no common ass, I can assure you. He was not called Don as short for donkey. No, but because he had been brought from Spain by Captain Lyle, and there, I may tell you, they have the very best donkeys in the world. Don was very strong and sturdy, and very wise in his day and generation; his colour was silver-grey, with a great brown cross on his shoulders and back, while his ears must have been fully half a yard long. Need I say he was well-kept and cared for, or that he dearly loved his little master and mistress, and was, upon the whole, as quiet and docile as a great sheep?

Well, even while the spring lasted, Leonard and Effie had many a long delightful ramble in their little caravan, and were soon as well known all over the country for miles around as the letter-carrier himself, and that is saying a good deal.

But in the bonnie month of May Captain Lyle, and Mrs Lyle as well, had to make a long, long journey south. In fact, they were going all the way to London, and in those days this was not only a slow journey but a dangerous one as well, for many parts of the road were infested by foot-pads, who cared not whom they killed so long as they succeeded in getting their money and their valuables.

Farewells were spoken with many tears and caresses, and away went the parents at last, and Leonard and Effie were left alone.

When they had fairly gone, poor Effie began to cry again.

“Oh, Leonie!” she said, “the house seems so lonely now, so cold and still, with only the ticking of the dreadful clocks.”

But Leonard answered, and said,“Why, Effie dear, haven’t you me? And am I not big enough to protect you? Come along out and see the Menagerie.”

It was not half so lonesome here, at least, so they thought. They were high above the woods, and the sun shone very brightly, and all their curious pets seemed doubly amusing to-day, so before long both were laughing as merrily as if they were not orphans for the time being.

Three days passed away, and on the morning of the fourth, when, after breakfast, old Peter the butler came shuffling in, Leonard said,

“Now, Peter, of course you are aware that I am now master of the house of Glen Lyle?”

Peter bowed and bowed and bowed, but I think he was laughing quietly to himself.

“Very well, Peter; straighten yourself up, please, and listen. Miss Lyle here”

“That’s me,” said Effie, in proud defiance of grammar.

“And myself,” continued Leonard, “are going away for a week in our caravan in search ofahem! the picturesque.”

“Preserve us a’!” cried Peter, turning his eyes heavenwards. “What’ll your parents say if I allow it?”

“We will write to them, Peter. Don’t you worry. We start to-morrow. You will look after the Menagerie till we return. And we will want your assistance to-day to help us to pack.”

“Will naething prevail upo’ ye to stop at hame?” cried Peter, wringing his hands.

“Nothing. I’m master, don’t forget that.” This from Leonard.

“And I’m mistress,” said Effie.

So poor Peter had to give in.

They spent a very busy afternoon, but next morning the caravan was brought to the door, the brass work on Don’s new harness being polished till it looked like gold. Effie sprang lightly in, Ossian, the big deerhound, who stood nearly as high as Don, went capering about, for he was to be one of the party.

Up jumped Leonard. Crack went his whip, and off they all were in a hand-clap.

And poor old Peter fell on his knees and prayed for their safety, till on a turn of the road the woods seemed to swallow them up.

“Now we’re free! It’s glorious, isn’t it, Effie?”

“It’s delightful.”

“Aren’t you glad you’ve come?”

“Yes, aren’t you?”

“Yes. Which way shall we go?”

“Oh, away and away and away, through the forests and fens, through the woods and the wilds, on and on and on.”

“I say,” said Leonard, after a pause, “it would be a good thing to give Don quite a deal of his own way, and if he wants particularly to go along any road, just to let him go.”

“O yes, that will be such fun. I’m so happy, hungry. I feel it coming on now.”

“Well, by-and-bye we’ll dine. Agnes made such a splendid pie; it will last us quite two days.”

At noon they found themselves in a dark pine wood, the bare stems of the trees looking like the pillars supporting the roof of some majestic cavern. Here they stopped and unlimbered, because there was a little stream where Don and the deerhound could drink, besides nice, long, green grass for the donkey.

They had a portion of the pie for dinner, and it was more delicious, they thought, than anything they had ever eaten. So thought Ossian. But of course hunger is sweet sauce.

Then they tied Don to the wheel of the cart, and hand in hand went off to cull wild flowers. They gathered quite a garland, and put this round Don’s neck on their return, then turned him loose again to eat for an hour, while Leonard took a volume from a little book-shelf, and read to Effie a few chapters of a beautiful tale.

But the sun began to decline in the west, so they now put Don to, and off they went once more.

They came to cross roads soon, and as Don evinced a desire to turn to the right, they allowed him to do so.

In the Deep Dark Forest.

The sun sank, and set at last, and they hurried on more quickly now, for though they intended to sleep in the caravan, still they wanted to be near a house. But gloaming fell,

and the wood grew deeper and darker, so at last Leonard, telling his sister not to be frightened, drew in off the road, so that the caravan was closely hidden among spruce trees.

There was light enough, and no more, to gather grass for Don, who was tied fast to the branch of a tree. Ossian was fastened to the axle so that he might keep guard over all, and Leonard and Effie prepared for bed, determined to get up as soon as it was sunrise.

This being their first night out, and the place being so lonesome and drear, they were afraid to have a light, lest it might attract evil-disposed persons to the caravan, although it was all forest land around them.

They were sitting quietly talking over the events of the day, when suddenly the voices of people chanting a hymn fell on their ears, and made them quake with dread.

“Who can it be?” whispered Effie, clinging to her brother.

“They cannot be bad people,” he said boldly, “singing a hymn; bad people do not sing hymns. I will go and see. I’ll take Ossian with me.”

“And I, too, will go,” cried Effie. So hand in hand, with the faithful dog by their side, and guided by the solemn song that rose on the night air at intervals, they walked slowly onwards through the wood.

All at once, on rounding a spruce thicket, the light of a fire gleamed over their faces and figures. They would have retreated, for they had come to see, not to be seen; but from a group of wild-looking men and women who were gathered round the log fire in this clearing, a little gipsy girl not bigger than Effie sprang up and rushed towards them.

She was bare-footed and bare-legged, and her black eyes sparkled like diamonds in the firelight. Round her head and shoulders she wore a ragged little tartan shawl.

“Walk gently,” she whispered, or rather hissed. “Hush, hush! do not speak. Granny is dying.”

She took Leonard’s half-unwilling hand as she spoke, and led them forward to the light.

There was silence for a little while, for all eyes were turned upon the new-comers.

Gipsies all undoubtedly, and of the very lowest caste, dark, swarthy, ragged, and wild-looking.

Lying with her head in the lap of a tall woman was an aged crone, her face almost as black as a negro's with age and exposure.

The fire blazed higher, its gleams reaching to the highest pine trees, and lighting up the faces of all around.

It was a strange, a weird scene, almost awful in its impressiveness. Once again the voices rose and swelled on the night air. Even bold Leonard felt his heart beat faster, while Effie's hand trembled in his.

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Chapter Five.
Strange Adventures in Wood and Wild.

"How sweet it is when mother fancy rocks
The wayward brain, to saunter through a wood;
An old place full of many a lovely brook,
Tall trees, green arbours, and ground flowers in flocks."

Wordsworth.

Scene: Still in the forest around the log fire, but the dying gipsy has raised herself to nearly a sitting position, her dim and hollow eyes are fixed on Leonard, and she beckons him to her side. As if under a strange spell, the boy obeys, leaving Effie kneeling by Ossian, and clasping his great neck in her terror.

"Fear not," the gipsy gasps, "I knewyourfather. And his father. Kind, kind to me and mine were both."

She took Leonard's little white hand in her dark claws, and opened its palm towards the firelight. "Neverneverwill old Nell Bayne read another fortune. But look; that line will lead you far ayont the seas. You are born to wander, born to roam over the ocean, by mountain, stream, and plain. Yet list! the water is not made to drown you, nor hemp nor lead to take your life, yet list! again,

"When dead yon lordly pike shall float,
  While loud and hoarse the ravens call,
Then grief and woe shall be thy lot,
  Glen Lyle's house must fall."

The aged crone dropped the hand she held, and sunk back into the arms of her nurse, while the other gipsies, with scared faces, gathered closer round and knelt beside her.

Neither Leonard nor Effie saw nor heard anything more. They fled away from the firelight out into the darkness of the woods, which they much preferred to the solemn scene they had just witnessed.

They walked in the direction, as they thought, of their caravan, but after a while Ossian, whom Effie held by the collar, stopped short, and then began pulling them in quite another direction. The noble dog knew the road though they did not.

They were soon back now at their house-on-wheels. It was a gloomy night's experience, but they slept none the less soundly, and when they awoke in the morning Leonard felt as happy as if he were king of Elfinland, and Effie his little queen. The sun was shining in a sky of unusual brightness, and the woods all around were musical with the songs of a thousand joyous birds.

Leonard made a fire of sticks, and boiled his kettle in true gipsy fashion, and after everybody, including Don and Ossian, had enjoyed breakfast, away they went again.

The country soon grew more open, and they were not at all sorry to leave the darksome pine woods. They had nothing whereby to tell the time, except the sun, and this was, in some measure, their guide also as to the direction they were taking, but of course they left a deal to Don.

Sometimes, on coming to cross-roads, Don, as if he was quite aware of the responsibility that lay on his pretty striped shoulders, would stop short and eye all the three roads that lay before him. Ossian would then caper round him and bark, upon which Don would shake his long ears as much as to say,

"Don't you be quite so fast, master; I know well enough what I'm about. Catch me going wrong if I can help it."

Then having made up his mind Don would tramp on again.

Now Don was a wily old donkey, and I'm not sure that in choosing a road he did not consult his own interest much more than that of his little owners. For Effie soon noticed that if one road was hilly and the other level, Don chose the latter. Again, he kept going northwards and east, for he was very partial to a nice fresh green juicy thistle, just sufficiently thorny to tickle his tongue, and the farther north and the nearer the sea he got the fatter and finer the thistles grew.

"But it doesn't matter, Eff, you know," Leonard would say, "one road is as good as another."

Next evening found them bivouacked near a pretty wee country cottage. The good-wife of this humble home made them come in and sit by the fire, and she regaled them on

barley scones and butter with delicious milk to wash it down, and made them tell their story over and over again.

Then the children all came round Effie, and she told their fortunes, something good for each of them, and sent them all to bed happy.

The wanderers slept as before, but the good-wife of the cottage was up before them, and had boiled fresh eggs for their breakfast, and made them coffee. And so good was she, that she even packed a little hamper and put it in their caravan, and blessed them and wished them God-speed. And the children gathered round the door, and all of them cheered with might and main as the caravan rolled away from the door.

A Dismal Night.

But though the morning was bright and blue and lovely, clouds banked up over the sky soon after noon, and just as they found themselves once more in a pine forest, where also grew great oaks and elms, behold, big drops of rain began to patter down on the dry road, sending up cloudlets of dust, and before they could draw into the shelter of the trees, the storm was on them with all its force.

It was not a still summer storm, for while the thunder pealed and crashed, and the lightning hissed among the falling rain, the wind blew with terrible force, bending the trees like fishing rods, and strewing the road with broken branches.

Nor did the rain cease when the squall blew over, but continued to pour down.

Night came on this evening a full hour before its time, and still the rain rained on.

The bivouac was once more in a wood, and oh! what a fearful night it wasthe thunder deafening, the rain looking like streams of fire in the glare of the lightning. But our tired little wanderers fell soundly to sleep amidst it all, and though some drops came through the canvas, and even fell upon their faces, it did not wake them. Only when the birds had been singing for fully two hours they opened their eyes, and wondered where they were now.

The day was very hot and close, and the sun so bright that the roads, much to Don’s joy, soon dried up.

The country through which they were now passing was very grand and wildly picturesque. Hills on hills successively rose on every side around them; they crossed

romantic single-arched bridges, over deep ravines, far down at the bottom of which streams went foaming on through a chaos of great dark boulders, which had fallen from the beetling cliffs below, and to which wild flowers clung in patches, with here and there a dwarf pine or silver-stemmed birch.

Slowly, but surely, the roots of these tiny trees were loosening the rocks.

What a lesson this reads one of the virtues of perseverance! For listen to this: the thickness of the rootlets that do the work is no greater than that of a stocking wire, the rate of their growth in length is not a hundredth part of that of the motion of a watch's hour-hand, the strength they expend in a given second would not be enough to lift or move the tiniest midge or fly that alights upon the page you are reading. But these rootlets have faith, and faith moves mountains. They keep on growing and creeping into every crevice, and in time, lo and behold! tons of solid rock are detached, a thunder shower perhaps being the last straw to break the camel's back, and down it thunders to the bottom of the ravine, smashing trees and crunching other rocks, till it all reaches the bottom with the force and speed of a little avalanche.

Sometimes they passed over broad open moors, the heather on which was still green, and would be for months to come, but patched all throughout with low flat bushes of golden furze, the scent from which perfumed the air all round, and must have penetrated even to the clouds. The lark, high in air, thrilling out his wild melody, and the rose-breasted wee linnet were the only songsters on these lonely moorlands.

They went very slowly to-day, often stopping to let Don rest, and to cull the wild flowers that grew everywhere in glorious luxuriance.

Little toddling children ran from cottage doors and waved their caps and cheered them, and called them show gipsies, and all sorts of funny names. Sometimes they stopped at these houses to get water for Don and Ossian; then the bairnies came all in a crowd, holding out tiny palms to have their fortunes told.

Effie, in her saucy little straw hat, and her long cloak of crimson, did not look at all unlike a real Romany. She always told good fortunes. The boys were to grow up into bold, brave, good men, and go and fight for their king and country, and come back with hats and plumes on their heads, stars on their manly breasts, spurs on their heels, and great swords jangling at their sides. The girls were to grow up good and kind and truthful, and some were to marry princes, who would come riding for them on white palfreys with scarlet trappings and manes and tails that touched the ground. Some were to marry great warriors, and others would have to be content to wed with honest John Ploughman, or perhaps to marry the miller.

Effie was the house-provider, and often wanted to buy eggs and butter and bread and milk, and she was very much, astonished at the kindness of all these cottagers, for none of them could be prevailed upon to accept any money.

“Bless the dear wee innocent,” a woman would say, “so far away from its mammie. I won’t have this money.”

“Isn’t she wise-looking?” another would add.

“Just like a wee witchie.”

Thus on and on and on went these amateur gipsies for a whole week, and I do not know really which enjoyed this strange wandering tour the most, Leonard, Effie, Ossian, or Don.

But it was not all humble folks they came across, though nearly all; for the fact is they avoided big houses. Leonard said he wanted to mingle with the people. And so they did; but once, and once only, two ladies came up to them in a wood just as they were harnessing up, and about to start on the afternoon journey.

Effie had made all the outside front of the caravan quite gay with wild flowers, and a great garland of primroses, ivy, and wild hyacinths, and was tying it round Don’s neck, when the ladies alighted from their horses, and came to speak to her.

“You are not an ordinary gipsy child, I know,” said one. Effie only opened her blue eyes wider, and looked at the lady, who was young and most pleasant to behold.

But Leonard lifted his hat, and replied boldly,

“We are wanderers, lady.”

“How romantic! Is this little Red Riding-Hood? How beautiful she is! How my father would like to see her! Could you ride on my horse, dear, and come to the Hall with me?”

“No, thank you,” said Effie. “I would not ride without a habit.”

“Quite right, dear,” said the other lady, laughing.

“But,” said Effie, afraid she had spoken unkindly, “if we come to the Hall, we must all come.”

“Delightful! And my brother shall paint you. Is this the wolf?”

“That is Ossian, my father’s deerhound.”

“What a noble fellow! Where does your father live, and what are your names?”

Leonard lifted his hat again. “Pardon me, lady,” he said, “for replying instead of my sister. Father lives in London, at present. My name is Incognitus, and my sister’s name Incognita. My sister has already introduced you to the dog, permit me to introduce you to the donkey. His name is Don.”

The young ladies pouted, and looked half-inclined to be cross, but finally laughed such a pleasant, merry, ringing laugh, that Don pricked up his ears, and joined in with such a terrible lion-like roar, that the very hills rang for a mile around. It was not often that Don did give way to a fit of merriment, but when he did nobody else was able to get in a word until the strength of his lungs was quite exhausted.

He stopped presently, and helped himself to a fresh green thistle that was growing handy.

Meanwhile Ossian jumped up and kissed one of the ladies, as much as to say,

“Don’t be afraid, Don often makes that row. He is only an ass, you know, but there isn’t a bit of harm in the whole of his body.”

“Come on then, my dears. Why, Lily, this is quite an adventure. What a providence it was that we rode in this direction! I would not have missed such an adventure for anything I can think of.”

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Chapter Six.
In a Smuggler's Cave.

"But now we go,
See, see we go,
To the deepest caves below."

Dibdin.

Scene: The interior of a cave on a lonely hillside; a huge fire of wood and peat is burning in a kind of recess hewn from the solid rock. A large cauldron is boiling over it, and the smoke and flames are roaring up the chimney. Wild-looking men, unkempt and unshorn, are eating and drinking on stone benches around the cave. There is a big oil lamp hanging from the roof, and that and the firelight shed a dim uncertain light throughout the cave.

"And so," said one of the men, who appeared to be captain of this gang of smugglers, "Captain Bland and his fellows have promised to be here to-night."

"That is what he told me," said another. "The lugger has been dodging off and on the coast for days, and there is a sloop all ready down at the steps near St. Abb's waiting to take the stuff off."

"Well," said the first speaker, "it is long past midnight, and as dark as pitch. No bothering moon to-night to interfere with the work. We should turn a pretty penny by this cargo. Ha! ha!" he laughed, "you Scotchmen didn't know how to work the oracle on this hillside till we Saxons crossed the border and showed you. Scotchmen are"

Five men sprang to their feet in a moment, and dirks were flashing in the lamplight.

"Hold, you scoundrels, hold!" cried a tall and handsome man in the garb of a sailor, rushing into the cave, and throwing himself, sword in hand, between the belligerents.

"What!" he continued, "quarrelling when we should be busy at work. I came in good time, it seems."

The Scotchmen sheathed their dirks, but sulkily.

“Right, Captain Bland,” said Rob McLure, “only Long Bill there thought fit to insult us wi’ his Saxon brag. We had the cave afore him, and did weel in it, and we’re independent yet, and fit to clear the English bodies out o’ the country, tho’ we’re but five and they are two to oneay, and give their bodies to the corbies to pick.”

“Bill,” said Captain Bland, “you began this unseemly squabble; it is for you to apologise.”

“I do so heartily,” said Bill; “I bear no grudge against the Scotch.”

“Nor I, nor I, nor I,” cried half-a-dozen voices. Then hands were shaken all round, and peace restored.

Bland pitched down his caplong black ringlets floating over his shoulder as he did soand sank into a seat, as if weary.

“Give me food and drink; the long walk has quite tired me. Your Scottish hills, McLure, are hard on Saxon legs. By the way,” he added, “two of my fellows are outside, and they’ve caught a couple of gipsy creatures; they may or may not be spies. Bring them in, the little ones may be cold and hungry.”

In a minute more Leonard and poor Effie stood trembling before the smuggler chief.

We left them about three days ago in a lovely wood, with the greenery of trees, the song of birds, sunshine, and flowers all around them. They had gone to the Hall, as the young ladies called their home, and had created quite a sensation.

There was such an air of romance about the whole affair that everybody at the great house was charmed with them. Leonard and Effie were the hero and heroine of that evening, at all events, while Ossian made himself quite at home on the hearthrug, very much to the disgust of a beautiful Persian cat, whose place he had coolly usurped.

The young ladies again cross-questioned the little wanderers, in the prettiest and most insinuating way possible, but succeeded in obtaining no further information. But Effie read their fortunes without having her hand crossed with either gold or silver. No prince on gaily-caparisoned palfrey was to come riding to the Hall to beg for the hand of either, nor soldiers with sword and spear and nodding plumes come riding their way. Effie disposed of both in quite a humdrum fashion, which, although it did not please the

young ladies, set every one in the room laughing at their expense. Their future spouses would be celebrated rather for negative than positive virtues.

"For neither would be guilty of any great crime,
  Such as murder, rebellion, or arson;
One lady would wed with a wealthy old squire,
  And the other would marry the parson."

Leonard and Effie left the Hall that night, and a powdered servant carried a hamper to the caravan. Both insisted on bidding their kindly entertainers good-bye that night, saying it was certain they would be off very early next morning.

And so they were, long before a single wreath of smoke had begun to up-curl from even the kitchen chimneys of the great Hall.

The weather had continued fine, and although the nights were very dark, the wanderers did not mind that a bit, because they could hide their caravan under trees, so that, although they could see no one approaching, no one could see them. In two days' time they bivouacked for the night near the cave in which we now find them prisoners, the faithful dog standing guard by their side.

About sunset they had started off to climb the hill, which was very high. They lost their way coming back, and got belated. Where they had wandered to they never knew. But much to their sorrow they were met and captured by these terrible men, who looked so fierce and ugly that Effie was afraid to let her eyes rest upon them.

Captain Bland asked them many questions, which Leonard answered faithfully and truthfully. Then a consultation was held in a corner of the cave. Captain Bland soon returned.

"Now, young squire," he said. "We have made up our minds what we are going to do with you."

"I hope, sir," said Leonard, boldly, "you will send Effie home, even if you kill me."

The smuggler smiled.

"We won't have any killing in the matter, but just answer me one question now, for you are too brave a lad to tell a lie. What do you think we are?"

“Why, smugglers, of course,” replied Leonard. “I have often read of such people as you. Those men make whisky in the cave, and you take it away in a ship and sell it.”

“I see you know about all. Yes, I take this whisky away in a ship to France, where they make it into brandy, and then I bring it back and sell it. Well, you’ve seen so much, and know so much, that I’m going to take you and your sister away in my ship with me.”

“And Ossian?” said Effie, anxiously.

“Well, he can go too. I couldn’t make you into brandy,” he continued, laughing, “else I would, but we will turn you into gold.”

“Oh, sir!” said Effie, with round wondering eyes.

“Don’t be afraid, little Red Riding-Hood. I’m not going to eat you, and you won’t be hurt, and in good time I trust you will be landed once again at your father’s house. Now keep your minds easy. There is a room in there with plenty of skins and plaids, and a lamp burning, where you can sleep soundly and safely till morning.”

“Pray, sir, what about Don and our caravan?”

“I’m going to send one of our brave and gallant fellows back with it to your father’s house.”

“Oh! tell him to haste then, and to be so good to Don,” Effie implored.

“There, there, my little maiden, go to bed, and all will be right.”

The apartment into which this robber captain showed them was well removed from the larger cave. The passage that led to it was so concealed by a door, painted and fashioned so as to resemble the rocks, that no one could have guessed at its existence.

Having bade them good-night, and wished them sound repose and pleasant dreams, Captain Bland left them, and they now began to gaze around them and wonder. Although lofty, it was by no means a very large apartment, but it was furnished in a style of luxuriance that quite astonished our little wanderers. The walls were draped all round with tapestry, the floor covered with thick soft carpets; there were chairs and couches, and a library of books, near which stood a harp, while the light from coloured lamps diffused a soft radiance around. Nor had creature comforts been forgotten, for here, on a little sideboard, stood a joint of meat, a game pasty, and cruets of wine.

“You heard what the robber captain said, didn’t you, Effie? We are quite safe, and I’m hungry. Sit in, Eff, and have some supper. This pasty tastes splendid.”

For a time, however, Effie could not be prevailed upon to eat, but she finally relented so far as to taste a tiny morsel. Then, as eating only wants a beginning, she allowed Leonard to help her freely.

In about half an hour the door of the apartment was opened after a knock, the curtain that hid it was drawn aside, and Captain Bland himself came in.

“Ha!” he said, “I’m glad to see you enjoying yourselves. I’m going away.”

Effie’s face fell, and he noticed it.

“Not for long, my little Red Riding-Hood,” he said, kindly. “I’ll be back early in the morning. I only came to tell you that if you want anything, you are to go to the door at the other end of the passage, and knock. Don’t be afraid. You are quite safe. Good-night, again.”

“Leonard,” said Effie, “that is a good robber, and I’m sorry he has gone. He puts me in mind of the story of the good robber in the Babes in the Wood. I hope there isn’t a bad robber, though, who will want to kill us.”

“We must say our prayers, Eff, and never fear.”

“I wish though, Leonie, that we had not come away so far from home gipsying. Poor papa and mammawhat will they think?”

About two hours afterwards, when both were sound asleep, they were suddenly awakened by a noise in the room. They started from their couches and looked about, Effie terribly frightened, and Leonard just a little. It was a stone dropped from the roof, and there it lay.

“Hist!” cried a voice from above, in a loud whisper, “are you asleep?”

“No,” from Leonard. “Who is it, and where are you?”

“Don’t be afraid; it’s only Zella, the little gipsy lass you saw in the woods when her granny was dying. I am up here outside on the hill, talking down to you through a little hole.”

“Can you take us away out of this place?” asked Leonard.

“No, no, no. I could not even come to you, and if they found me here they would kill me.”

“Well, why did you come?”

“To help you, if possible.”

“What can you do?”

“I can take your donkey and cart, and drive away to your homeI know where it isand get assistance.”

“But they are going to take us away in a ship.”

“Well, you are safe, so far, only don’t say I came.”

“Oh no!” said Leonard. “We are so thankful. Take poor Don, and hurry away. He will be safe with you.”

“Yes, and I’ll be so good to him.”

“Good-night.”

“Good-night.”

The strangest part, reader, about this little interview, if so it could be called, was that Ossian had never even barked or growled, but lay looking very wise and wagging his long tail.

“I’m sure,” said Effie, “she is a good girl, else Ossian would have been angry.”

They slept again more soundly now, and it was far into the next day before they awoke. Perhaps they would not have wakened even then, had not a knocking at the door aroused them.

“Are you all alive, little ones? Breakfast is waiting.”

It was Captain Bland’s voice.

“Yes, thank you,” cried Leonard; “we’ll soon come out.”

Having finished their toilets, with all speed they hastened to the large cave.

“My men have all goneonly myself here,” said the robber chief, as Effie called him. “Now, dears, eat heartily; you have a long journey before you. By-the-bye, your donkey wandered away somewhere by himself last night. Very likely some farmer has found him. But my men have been sent to look everywhere about, and it is sure to be all right.”

The journey was indeed a long one, for it was nearly evening before they arrived at a little village near the sea. The captain took them into an inn there, and they had an excellent supper, the smuggler chief telling them stories that made them laugh.

“I suppose,” said Leonard, quite bravely, “there is not much chance of our escaping?”

“Not much,” said Captain Bland, laughing. “You’re going to kidnap us, aren’t you?”

“Well, I daresay that is just the word, young sir. And now, if you’re finished, we’ll march; the boat is waiting.”

Once on board the lugger, sail was set immediately, with neither noise nor shouting, and away southward through the darkness, with the stars overhead and the black waves all around, went the smuggler’s lugger Sea-horse.

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Chapter Seven.
Life in the Lighthouse.

"The winds and the waves of ocean,
Had they a merry time?
Didst thou hear from those lofty chambers
The harp and the minstrel's rhyme?

"The winds and the waves of ocean,
They rested quietly;
But I heard on the gale a sound of wail,
And tears came to mine eye."

Longfellow.

Scene: A prettily-furnished room in a building that forms part and parcel of a lighthouse, on a small lonely island on the coast. The island is little else save a sea-girt rock, though on one green side of it some sheep are grazing. Effie and Leonard standing by the window, gazing silently and somewhat sadly over the sea.

Effie (speaks). "It is nearly a month, Leonard, since Captain Bland sailed away and left us here. I wonder if he will ever, ever come back."

Leonard. "Oh! I am quite sure he will, unless"

Effie. "Yes, unless his ship is wrecked, and he is drowned, and poor papa never, never knows where we are."

Leonard (laughing). "Why, Eff, what a long face you pull! It is always 'ever ever' or 'never never' with you. Now I dreamt last night he would return in a week, and I'm sure he'll come. No use looking out of the window any longer to-night, Eff. The sun is just going down, and the sea-birds are all going to roost in the cliffs beneath the window. And it is time for the great lamps to be lit. Come on, Eff; let us go up with old Grindlay."

Effie checked a sigh, cut it in two, as it were, and turned it into a laugh, and next minute both were out on the grass among the sheep, and gazing up at the whitewashed tower, which seemed so very tall to them.

“Ahoy-oy-oy!” sang Leonard, with one hand to his mouth in true sailor fashion. “Are you up there, old shipmate?”

“Ay, lad, ay,” a cheery voice returned. “Come up and bring missie.”

They were pattering up the stone stairs next minute, and soon arrived panting and breathless at the lamp room.

Old Grindlay was there, and had already lit up, and by-and-bye, when darkness fell, the gleam from the great lamps would shine far over the sea, and be seen perhaps by many a ship homeward bound from distant lands. It was very still and quiet up here, only the wind sighing round the roof, the occasional shriek and mournful scream of some sea-bird, and the boom of the dark waters breaking lazily on the rocks beneath. Old Grindlay sat on a little stool waiting for his son to come and keep watch, the two men, with old Grindlay’s “old woman,” as he called his wife, being all that dwelt on the island, and no boats ever visited it except about once a month.

Old Grindlay was kindly-hearted, but terribly ugly. As he sat there winking and blinking at the light, he looked more like a gnome than a human being. His son’s step was heard on the stone stairs at last, and, preceded by a cloud of tobacco smoke, he presently appeared. He was a far more cheerful-looking being than his father, but Leonard and Effie liked the latter better.

“Come, my dears,” said the little gnome, “let us toddle.”

“Keep the lights bright, Harry lad; I think it’s going to blow.”

Down the long stairs they went, and away into the house. The supper was laid in the old-fashioned kitchen, and cheerful it looked; for though it was July a bit of fire was burning on the hearth. It was wreckage they used for fuel here, and every bit of wood could have told a sorrowful, perhaps even tragic story, had it been able to speak.

“Something tells me, children,” said old Mrs Grindlay, as she cleared away the remains of the supper, “that you will not be long here. Hark to the sound of the rising wind! God save all at sea to-night!”

“Amen,” said the gnome.

“Amen,” said Leonard and Effie in one breath.

“Gather close round the fire now, children, and let us feel thankful to the Great Father that we are well and safe.”

The old woman began knitting as she spoke, the gnome replenished the fire with a few more pieces of wreck to drive the cold sea air out of the chimney. Then he lit his pipe, and sat down in his favourite corner.

After a pause, during which nothing was heard but the roar of the rising wind and the solemn boom of the waves, and the steady tick of an old clock that wagged the time away in a corner,

“Why,” said Effie, “do you think we’ll soon go?”

“I cannot tell you,” replied the old lady, and her stocking wires clicked faster and faster. “We folks who live for years and years in the midst of the sea, have warnings of coming events that shore folks could never understand. But the house won’t seem the same, Effie, when you and Leonard are gone awayheigho!”

“Well,” said Effie, “I’ll be so sorry to go, and yet so glad.”

“Tell us a story,” said Leonard, “and change the subject. Hush! what was that?”

A wild and mournful scream it was, and sounded close under the window.

“That is a cry we often hear,” said the old lighthouse keeper, “always before a storm, sometimes before a wreck. It’s a bird, I suppose, or maybe a mermaid. Do I believe in them? I do. I’ll tell you a strange dream I had once upon a time, though I don’t think it could have been a dream.”

Old Grindlay’s Dream.

“It was far away in the Greenland seas I was, sailing northwards towards Spitzbergen. I was second mate of the bonnie barque Scotia’s Queen. Well, one dark night we were ploughing away on a bit of a beam wind, doing maybe about an eight knots, maybe not so much. There was very little ice about, and as I had eight hours in that night, I went early to my bunk, and was soon fast asleep. It must have been well on to two bells in the middle watchthe spectioneer’swhen I awoke all of a sudden like. I don’t know, no more than Adam, what I could have been thinking about, but I crept out of my bunk in the

state-room, where also the doctor and steward slept, and up on deck I went. I wondered to myself more than once if I really was in a dream. But there were sails and rigging, and the stars all shining, and the ship bobbing and curtseying to the dark waters, that went swishing and lapping alongside of her, and all awfully real for a dream. I could hear the men talking round the fo'c's'le, and smell their tobacco, too.

"Well, Leonard, I went to the weatherside, and leant over to calculate, sailor fashion, our rate of speed, when I noticed something like a square dark shadow on the water at the gangway. There was nothing above to cause so strange a shadow, but while I was yet wondering a face appeared in the middle of it, the face of a lovely woman. I saw it as plain as I see dear wee Effie's at this present moment. The long yellow hair was floating on the top of the water, and a fair hand beckoned me, and a sweet voice said, 'Come.' I thought of nothing but how to save the life of what I took to be a drowning woman. I sprang over at once, though I never could swim a stroke, and down I sank like lead. There was a surging roar of water in my ears, and I remembered nothing more till I found myself at the bottom of the sea, with a strange green light from a window in a rock a kind of dazzling my eyes. The woman's face and long yellow hair were close beside me, and the fair arms were round me.

"I tried to pray, but I was speechless. Then the rock in front seemed to open of its own accord, and next minute I was inside. But oh! what a gorgeous hallwhat a home of delight! There were other mermaids thereay, scores of them. There was light and warmth all around us, that appeared to come from the precious stones of which the walls were built, and the glittering pillars that supported the roof.

"Such flowers, too, as grew in snow-white vases I had never seen before!

"Then music began to float through the hall, slow and solemn at first, then quicker and quicker, and all at once the marble floor was filled with fairiesthe loveliest elves imagination could paintall mingling and mixing in a mazy dance with waving arms and floating hair, and all keeping time to the music. The mermaids, too, left the couches of pearl on which they had been reclining, and were carried through and through the air, the ends of their bodies covered with long floating drapery of green and crimson. Then some of these strange creatures brought me fruit and wine, and bade me eat and drink. I fain would have spoken, but all my attempts were in vain.

"Suddenly our ship's bell rang out clear enough, ting-ting, ting-ting, ting-ting, ting. It was seven bells, and all the mermaids and fairies melted away before me, the music died away as if drowned, the surging of water returned to my ears, and next moment my head was above the sea, and I could see the stars shining down, and looking so large and near and clear, as they always do in those northern seas. In a minute I had caught the chains,

and swung myself on board. I went to bed. In the morning I awoke, and laughed to myself as I thought of my dream, but my laughing was changed to wonder when I found every stitch of my clothing wringing with salt water, and when the spectioneer told me that he had seen me with his own eyes come on deck at two bells and go below at seven. Then I told him and the rest the story, and we all agreed that it was something far more than a dream."

Effie sat looking into the fire for some time in silence; then she said,

"Were there no mermen in that lovely hall, and were they very noble-looking and gallant, like my dear papa in uniform?"

"No," said old Grindlay, "I don't think mermen would have been admitted into such a place any more than the great sea-serpent would."

"Why not?"

"Because, missie, they are such ugly old customers. I've never seen one, that I know of, but a mate that sailed with me said he had, and that it was uglier than the faces we sometimes see on door-knockers, and uglier than any baboon that ever grinned and gibbered in an African forest."

"How terrible!" said Effie.

"Oh, I should like to meet one of those!" said Leonard. "And I've been told that the mermaids wouldn't live anywhere near where these mermen are, and that instead of dwelling down in coral caves and marble halls at the bottom of the green sea, where the sunbeams flash by day, and the moon shines all the way down at night, these mermen live at the bottom of the darkest, deepest pits of the ocean, where there is nothing but mud and slime, and where the young sea-serpents and the devil-fish grow. No, the beautiful mermaids I don't think ever do any harm, but the mermen are badbad!"

"Granny," said Effie to Mrs Grindlay, after a pause, "tell us a pretty story to dream upon."

"Did I ever tell you the story of Butbutbut?"

"No, never. Do tell us about 'ButButBut,' and begin, 'Once upon a time.'"

“Well, then, once upon a time there lived, far away up on the top of a mountain, a little old, old woman, and this little old woman had a very lovely young daughter, who lived with her in a cave on the mountain top. And one day her mother said,

“‘Dear love, all the provisions are done. I must go away down to the plains and buy some. I have no money, but shall take a small bagful of precious stones.’

“So away she went, leaning on her stick and carrying a basket. She looked very feeble, her old cloak was ragged and worn, and, as she crept along, she kept saying to herself, ‘butbutbut.’

“Well, at last she got down to the village, and entered a grocer’s shop.

“‘What can I get for you, ma’am?’ said the grocer.

“‘I want some nice ham, and some nice eggs, and some fresh butter. I have no moneybutbutbut’

“‘Oh! get out of here with your “buts,”’ cried the man. ‘Who would trust the like of you, with your old age and your rags?’

“So he chased her away.

“Then the old woman crept away to the fishmonger’s.

“‘I want,’ she said, ‘some nice fresh salmon, and some nice prawns, and a delicious lobster. I’ve no moneybutbutbut’

“‘Oh, get out of here!’ cried the fishmonger, ‘with your “buts.” Who would trust you with your old age and your rags?’

“And he chased her down the street.

“Then she entered the butcher’s.

“‘Give me a tender joint of mutton,’ she said. ‘I’ve no moneybutbutbut’

“‘Oh!’ cried the butcher, ‘get out of here, with your “buts.” Who would trust you with your old age and your rags?’

“And he called his dogs, and they chased away the poor old woman, and tore her cloak worse than before.

“Then she went into the baker’s.

“‘I want a loaf or two of bread,’ she said. ‘I’ve no money, butbutbut’

“‘Don’t say another word,’ said the baker. ‘Here are two nice new ones, and some new-laid eggs. Don’t thank me. I respect old age, and I pity rags.’

“So the old, old woman crept back to the mountain top, and she and her beautiful daughter had a nice supper.

“And now the strangest part of the story begins, for although the baker’s trade increased every day, his store of flour appeared never to diminish. He got richer and richer every month, and was soon in a position to buy a pretty little cottage and furnish it in the prettiest style imaginable; and when he had done so he went and laid his fortune at the feet of Mary the Maid of the Mill. In other words, he went wooing the miller’s daughter.

“After a modest pause for thought and consideration she consented, saying as she did so,

“‘I don’t marry you for sake of your money, John, because I have quite a deal of gold and silver.’

“‘What! you?’ said John.

“‘Yes, me,’ said Mary.

“‘Butbutbut’ said John.

“‘But, how did I get it? Well, I’ll tell you. A poor old woman, crawling on a stick and all in rags, called the other night, when the wind blew high and the snow was falling fast, and because I took her in, and sheltered herjust only what anybody would do, Johnshe left me a bagful of pretty stones. She said she didn’t want them, as she knew a hill where they grew, and I took them to the jeweller’s, and they paid me so much for them that I am quite wealthy, and I’m going to marry for love.’

“So John was indeed a happy man.

“But that same evening, first the butcher called, and then the fishmonger, and then the grocer, all dressed up in their Sunday clothes.

“So John hid behind a curtain, and as soon as they came into the room, all three proposed to marry Mary the Maid of the Mill.

“Then Mary looked down at them, and laughed and said,

“‘Really, gentlemen, you do me too much honour, butbutbut’

“‘But I’m the happy man,’ cried John suddenly, popping out from behind the curtain.

“‘You!’ they all shouted in disdain.

“‘Yes, I. I’m very sorry for you, butbutbut’

“‘But what?’ they all cried.

“‘But I’m going to kick you all out,’ said John; ‘that’s the “but.”’

“Then Mary ran and opened the door, and as they ran out John kicked the grocer, then the fishmonger, and last of all the butcher, and they all fell in a heap on the pavement.

“Well, Mary and John got married, and a merrier wedding never was in the village, and when it was all over a gilded coach drove up to the door and took them away to spend the honeymoon in a beautiful seaside village.

“And the old lady was in the carriage and her pretty daughter, but the ragged old cloak was gone, and in its place a robe of ermine and scarlet.

“And Mary and John lived happy together ever after.”

“Of course,” said Effie, “the old lady was a good fairy.”

“Oh yes!” said Mrs Grindlay, “butbutbut”

“But what, Mrs Grindlay?”

“But it’s time for bed.”

What a terrible night it was. The wind blew and roared around the building till the whole island seemed to shake, the waves beat and dashed against the rocks, and the spray flew far over the lighthouse itself, and every now and then, high over the howling of the storm and the boom of the seas, rose that strange, eerie scream, like the cry of the sea-bird, but it sounded far more plaintive and pitiful, like

"The drowning cry
Of some strong swimmer in his agony."

And one sentence was mingled with the prayers of Leonard and Effie before they sought their couch

"God save all at sea to-night."

Born to Wander Volume. I by William Gordon Stables

Chapter Eight.
"The Wreck! The Wreck!"

"The breakers were right beneath her bows,
  She drifted a dreary wreck,
And a whooping billow swept the crew
  Like icicles from her deck.

"She struck where the white and fleecy waves
  Looked soft as carded wool;
But the cruel rocks, they gored her sides
  Like the horns of an angry bull."

Longfellow.

Scene: The lighthouse island on the morning after the storm. The sea all around it, still covered with foam-capped waves. The wind dying away, but rising every now and then in uncertain gusts. No vessels in sight, but a long, low, rakish craft wedged in the rocks beneath the lighthouse, and fast breaking up. The whole scene bleak and desolate in the extreme.

"It is the lugger, sure enough," said old Grindlay. "Heigho! what an awful affair, to be sure! And there can't be a living soul on board. Captain Bland and all must have gone to their account."

"And she is breaking up," said his wife. "Goodness grant she may disappear entirely before the young ones see her."

"Oh!" cried Leonard, rushing into the kitchen; "the wreck! the wreck! It is the lugger. Oh the poor robber chief!"

"He is dead, my dear," said Mrs Grindlay solemnly. "No, no; I can see him from our window, where Effie is crying. He is under the wreck of the masts amidships and alive, for he waved his hand to us. Oh, save him, Mr Grindlay, if you can!"

“Ah, lad, I fear nothing can be done!”

“I’ll go, I’ll go! Effie is not afraid; she says I may go. I’ve gone over worse rocks than that with a rope. He is alive, and I will save him. Quick, bring the rope, and an axe and saw.”

“The boy is a hero,” exclaimed Mrs Grindlay. “Do as he bids you, old man; the lad is in God’s own hands.”

“I am no hero. I only want to save the captain. He could not help kidnapping us, and he was so kind to Effie.”

The forepart of the lugger was wedged into a cave, close under a black beetling cliff, fully fifty feet in height. It was over here Leonard was going. There was no denying him. He had already thrown down the axe and saw to the wreck, and now, both Mr and Mrs Grindlay assisting, the rope was wound twice round an iron stanchion at the cliff top, which might have been used before for a similar purpose, or by men in search of eggs. Leonard’s legs were through the bight, and next minute he had disappeared over the cliff, and was gradually lowered down, and though half drowned with the driving spray speedily reached the deck.

Effie stood in tears at her window, praying. It was all the child could do.

Leonard staggered aft and knelt by the side of Captain Bland, and poured some brandy from a flask into his mouth.

“Heaven bless you, boy!” he muttered, “and if the prayer of such as I am can avail, Heaven will.”

Leonard hardly heard him, but he knew his meaning, and now set to work with axe and saw. It was a long and tedious job, but it was finished at last, and the smuggler chief was clear, and sprang to his feet, but staggered and almost fell again.

After a while, however, his numbed legs gathered fresh strength, and, helped by the boy, he settled himself in the bight of the rope, and was drawn to bank safe and sound.

The rope was again lowered, and Leonard mounted next, and not a minute too soon.

“Look, look, look!” cried Bland, pointing away to windward. “Run for our lives!”

A strange sight it was, that awful coming squall. Right away in the wind’s eye was a long dark cloud, fringed beneath with a line of white. Forked lightning played incessantly

across it, or fell through it like streams of blood or fire. It grew higher and higher as it came nearer and nearer; then with a rush and a roar it swept upon the island, and the very lighthouse seemed to rock in the awful embrace.

It was the last effort of one of the most terrible gales of wind that ever strewed our coast with wreckage, and with the bodies of unfortunate men. When it disappeared at length, and went howling away over the mountains, the sun shone out. It shone down upon the place where the lugger had lain, but not a timber of her was now to be seen.

How the Rescue was Effected.

Just three weeks after their arrival in London, Captain and Mrs Lyle were back once more at Grayling House. They had only received one letter from Leonard, though he had written several, but mails in those days took long to reach their destination, and often arrived only after many strange adventures.

As the carriage drove up through the long avenue with its tall trees of drooping birch, wonder was expressed by the parents that Leonard and Effie did not come bounding to meet them, as was their wont.

“Surely, dear,” said Mrs Lyle, “something must be very much wrong. Hurry up, coachman.”

Old Peter did not hide his grief. He met his master and mistress wringing his hands, with the tears flowing fast over his wrinkled face, and word by word they had to worm out of him his pitiful story.

Captain Lyle did all he could to comfort his wife, and pretended to laugh at the whole affair. It was only a boy’s freak, he said, and only a brave boy like Leonard would have done or dared so much. He loved the lad all the better for it. No doubt the little caravan and the truants would return in a day or two.

But though he spoke thus his mind was ill at ease, and he determined at once to start a search party, and this was all ready in less than two hours. No less than a dozen horsemen were told off to scour the country, and get news at all hazards. But, lo! just as they were starting off, what should be seen coming along up the avenue but the caravan itself, driven by a bare-armed, wild-looking gipsy girl?

Captain Lyle hurried her along into his study, and there she told her story.

The search party was instantly disbanded; a different kind of action was needed now, and needed at once. He told his wife the whole truth. He thought this the better course, and she bore it bravely.

That same evening, as fast as horses could go, Captain Lyle was speeding along on his way to Berwick, where he had heard that a Government sloop-of-war was lying.

He posted on all night, and next morning Berwick was in sight, that romantic old town in which so many battles have been fought and won in the olden times, that its walls, now only mounds, are lined with human bones.

There was no sloop-of-war in sight in the beautiful bay. Fishing-boats there were in scores, some just sailing in, others still far out in the bay. But at the custom-house Lyle learned that the Firefly had just recently departed on a cruise in search of the very lugger which had sailed away from near St. Abb's with Leonard and Effie on board, and if the captain of the sloop came across her he would no doubt give an excellent account of her.

Meanwhile the customs officials told him that everything that possibly could be done would be done, and as soon as anything happened, he, Captain Lyle, should be communicated with post haste.

So there was nothing for it but to return at once to Glen Lyle.

On the very night of his arrival another strange thing happened. A visitor called, who turned out to be an emissary of Captain Bland's.

This man, who was pleasant and even gentlemanly in address, begged to assure Captain Lyle, first and foremost, that unless he gave his word of honour that no attempt would be made to detain him, he would not deliver the smuggler chief's message.

Lyle gave his word of honour.

Secondly, that unless the sum of two thousand pounds was paid as ransom, the children would never more be seen at Grayling House; but if, on the other hand, the money was sent, they would be restored in less than a fortnight.

Captain Lyle consulted with his wife. They were on the horns of a dilemma, for of late years the estate of Glen Lyle had sunk in value, and although they were willing to pay the ransom, it was, sad to think, an utter impossibility.

The matter was put fairly and honestly before the smuggler's emissary.

Could the half be raised?

Captain Lyle considered, and allowed it could.

Well, the emissary said he would communicate with Captain Bland, and return again and inform him of that worthy gentleman's decision, but no attempt must be made to follow him, or all communication would cease between them.

And Captain Lyle was fain to assent.

Then the emissary mounted his fleet horse, stuck the spurs into his sides, and disappeared like a flash.

The man tore along the road, determined to put the greatest distance in the least possible time betwixt himself and Grayling House.

Little recked he of a coming event.

About a mile from the house the road crossed a stream by a steep old-fashioned Gothic bridge. He was just entering one end of this, when up at the other sprang, as if from the earth, a tiny half-clad gipsy girl. She waved a shawl and shrieked aloud. The horse swerved, but could not stop in time, and next moment the animal and its rider had gone headlong over the parapet, and lay deadto all appearancenear the stream below.

The girl dashed down after them, wrenched open the man's coat, tore out some papers, and waving them aloft, went shouting along the avenue back to Grayling House.

"My dear child," said Lyle, as soon as he had scanned the papers, "how ever can I reward you?"

"You were good to granny," was all the girl said.

Lyle at once sent off to the relief of the wounded man, but made him prisoner, for the letter he held was the emissary's instructions.

He was back again next day at Berwick. There he heard that the Firefly was in harbour, but had discovered no trace of the smuggling lugger, though she had been south as far as the Humber.

“No,” cried Lyle, exultingly showing the papers, “because the villain Bland has gone north, and my children are captive on an island on the west coast of Scotland.”

A council of war was held that evening, and it was determined that the sloop-of-war should sail in search of the smuggler on the very next day.

“She may not be there yet,” said the bold, outspoken commander of the Firefly. “We may overhaul her, or meet her on her way back. And it will be best, I think, for you to come with us.”

And so it was agreed.

The capture or destruction of the smuggler and Bland had for years defied both custom and cruisers in his fleet lugger, but if Captain Pim of His Majesty’s sloop-of-war was to be believed, the Sea-horse lugger’s days were numbered, and those of her captain as well.

Away went the Firefly, but long before she had ever left harbour the smuggler had left his prizesviz, Leonard and Effie, on Lighthouse Island, and gone on a cruise on his own account, his object being to complete his cargo from among the western islands, where smuggling was rife in those days, and at once make sail for France, going round by Cape Wrath for safety’s sake, as was his wont.

As for the result of the visit of his emissary to Grayling House he had not the slightest fear.

The Firefly encountered fearful weather. Summer though it was, she took nearly a fortnight to reach Wick, and then had to lie in for repairs for days. After sailing she was overtaken by a gale of wind from the south, which blew her far into the North Sea.

Now it was the custom of Captain Bland, in making his voyages, to keep a long way off the coast, and out of the way of shipping. Had it not been for the gale of wind that blew the Firefly out of sight of land, this ruse would once again have served his purpose aright. As it was, early one morning his outlook descried the sloop-of-war on the weather bow. Well did Bland know her. He had been often chased by her in days gone by. It was evident enough to the smuggler now that his emissary had been captured or turned traitor; so his mind was made up at once.

“Ready about!” was the order.

The Sea-horse, in a few minutes, was cracking on all sail, on her way back to the island, Bland having determined to remove his little prisoners therefrom, and sail south with them to France, in spite of every risk and danger.

Both vessels were fleet and fast, but if anything, the lugger could sail closer to the wind.

Several times during the long chase, which lasted for days, the Firefly got near enough to try her guns, but not near enough for deadly aim. The shots fell short, or passed harmlessly over the smuggler.

The last day of the chase was drawing to a close. The island was already visible, when suddenly Bland altered his plans and tactics, seeing that the Firefly would be on him before he could cast anchor, and effect a shipment of the little hostages. He put about, and bore bravely down upon the cruiser, and despite her activity crossed her stern, and poured a broadside of six guns into her. Down went a mast, and the wheel was smashed to atoms.

Bland waited no longer. He had done enough to hang him, and night was coming on.

Night and storm!

Yonder was the gleam of the lighthouse, however, and he did not despair.

It grew darker and darker, and just as he was abreast of the lighthouse, and bearing down towards it, the storm came on in all its fury, and twenty minutes afterwards the Sea-horse was a wreck. His hands took to the boats, or were swept from the decks, leaving him to lie buried under the wreck just as Leonard found him.

On the arrival of the Firefly, the little wanderers were so overjoyed to see their father, and he to have them safe once more, that the wild escapade of which they had been guilty was entirely forgotten between them.

The old lighthouse-keeper and his wife detailed the circumstances of the wreck of the lugger, but singularly enough they forgot to mention the saving of the life of Bland himself. He was therefore supposed by Captain Pim to be drowned.

So ended the wonderful adventures of Leonard and Effie as amateur gipsies.

But about a week after they arrived at home, to the inexpressible joy of old Peter, to say nothing of the poodle dog, the cat, and all their pets at the Castle Beautiful, after binding papa down to keep a secret, Leonard told him all the rest about Captain Bland, who, Effie assured him with tears in her eyes, had been so, so kind to them both.

But long before this Bland was safe in France, and for a time he sailed no more on British coasts. The seas around them being, as he expressed it, too hot to hold him, he determined to let them cool down a bit, so he took his talents to far-off lands, where we may hear of him again.


Freeditorial