

HARRY MILVAINÉ
BY
WILLIAM GORDON
STABLES

Harry Milvaine by William Gordon Stables

Chapter One. In the Land of Brown Heath. Child Harold.

Young Harry Milvaine stood beside the water-tank, and the water-tank itself stood just outside the back kitchen door. He was hardly high enough, however, to look right over it and down into it, though it was full to the brim—overflowing in fact, and the water still pouring in from the spout that led from the house-top. But Harry was of an inventive turn of mind, young though he was, so he went and fetched a stable bucket, and very heavy he thought it; but when he turned this upside down and mounted on the bottom, he was possessed of a coign of vantage which was all that could be desired.

Harry had mastered the situation.

He now watched with intense interest the bright clear bubbles that were floating about on the surface. Bright clear bubbles they were and large as well, and in them was a miniature reflection of all the surroundings, the Portuguese laurel trees, the Austrian pines, the vases on the stone pillars of the gate, with their trailing drapery of blood-red nasturtiums, the rose-clad gable of the stable, and last but not least his own wondering face itself. And a queer little face it was, no saying what it might turn like in after life. Neither fat nor lean was it, certainly not chubby, regular in features, and somewhat pale. But it was Harry's eyes that people admired; that is, whenever Harry stood long enough still to permit of admiration, but he was a restless child. His eyes then were very dark and almost round, and there was a depth of expression in them which sometimes made him look positively old.

Yes, those beautiful bubbles were mirrors, and looking into them was just like peeping through a looking-glass into fairyland. Harry clapped his tiny hands and crowed with delight. They went sailing about, here and there all over the surface; then a happy thought struck Harry and he called them his ships. The vat was the deep blue sea, and the bubbles were ships. Ships of war, mind you, and Harry was a king, and there were enemy's ships there also. Every now and then two or even three of these bubble-ships would meet and join; then of course there would be a desperate fight going on, and presently one would disappear, and that meant victory for the other. Sometimes one of the bubble-ships sailing all by itself would suddenly burst, and that meant a vessel gone down, perhaps with all hands; for Harry had heard his father speak of such things.

On the whole it was altogether as good as a play or a pantomime.

It was raining—yes, it was pouring, and Harry was wet to the skin, and had been so for an hour or more. But he did not mind that a bit. In fact, I am not sure that he was even conscious of it; or if conscious of it, that he didn't prefer it. At any time, when a heavy shower came on, Harry loved to get out in it, and run about in it, and hold up his palms to catch the drops, and his face to feel them patter on it, only they fell on his eyes sometimes and made him wink.

Well, but one might get tired even of a pantomime after a while, so by and by Harry left the vat, and left his ships to shift for themselves.

"I won't be a king any more," he said to himself. "I'll go and be a forester. Good-bye, ships," he cried, "I'm off for a run. By and by I'll come back again and see you—if you're good."

Eily, his long-haired Collie dog, who had been sitting wistfully watching her young master all the time that the naval warfare was going on, was quite as wet as he; and looked the picture of misery and forlornness; but when Harry proposed a romp and a run, she forgot her misery. First she shook pints of water out of her massive coat, then she jumped and capered for joy in the most ridiculous manner ever seen, making leaps right round and round like a teetotum and pretending to catch her tail.

The rain rained on, but away went the pair of them, running at full speed as if their very lives depended on it.

Down the lawn and through the shrubbery, and out at the gate, which they did not stop to shut, and across a road, and through a long field, and past the Old Monk oak, past the great mill-dam, past the mill itself, and they never checked their headlong speed till they were right into the forest.

Not a forest of oak but of pine-trees, with ne'er a bit of undergrowth, for Harry's home was in Scottish wilds. No, never a bit of undergrowth was there, and hardly a green thing under the tall, bare tree-stems, that looked for all the world like pillars in some vasty cave. And all the ground was bedded deep with the withered pine-needles that had fallen the year before. Among these grew great unsightly toad-stools, though some were pretty enough—bright crimson with white spots.

Now Harry had a pet toad that he kept in a little box deep hidden among the pine-needles at the foot of a tree. He went straight for him now, and pulled him out and placed him on one of the very biggest and flattest of the toad-stools. And there the toad

squatted, and Eily barked at him and Harry laughed at him, but the great toad never moved a muscle, but simply sat and stared. He did not seem half awake. So Harry soon grew tired of him; he was not fast enough for Harry, who therefore put him back again in his box, covered him up with the withered needles, and told him to go to sleep; then away went he and Eily shouting and barking till the woods rang again. Soon they came to a brawling stream. It was fuller than usual, and Harry got a great piece of pine bark, and launched it for a ship, and ran alongside of it, on and on and on till the streamlet joined the river itself, and Harry's ship was floated away far beyond his reach.

The river was greatly swollen and turbulent with the rains, and its waters were quite yellow. Trees were floating down and even corn-sheaves—for the season was autumn—and now and then stooks of golden grain. Harry paused and looked upon the great river with awe, not unmingled with admiration.

“Wouldn't I like to be a sailor, just,” he said, “that is,” he added, turning round and addressing Eily, “a real sailor you know, Eily; and go and see all the pretty countries that nursie reads to me about when I'm naughty and won't sleep.”

Eily wagged her tail, as much as to say, “It would be the finest thing in the world.” For Eily always coincided with everything her little master proposed or said.

“And you could go with me, Eily, of course.”

“Yes,” said Eily, talking with her tail.

“And there would be no more nasty copies to write, nor sums to do.”

“No,” said Eily.

“And, oh! such a lot of fruit and nuts, Eily; but, come on, I want to make faces at the bull.”

“Come on, then,” said Eily, speaking with her eyes this time. “Come on, I'm ready. We'll make faces at the bull.”

So off they ran once more.

The bull was a splendid Highland specimen, with a rough buff jacket, hair all over his face and eyes, and horns as long as both your arms outstretched. Just such an animal as Rosa Bonheur, that queen of artists, delights to paint.

He dwelt in a field all by himself because he was so fierce that no other creature or human being dare go near him except a certain sturdy cowherd, who had known Jock, as the bull was called, since he was a calf.

Jock was quite away at the other end of the field—which was well walled—when Harry and his canine companion arrived at the five-barred gate.

“I know how to fetch him down, Eily,” said Harry. Then he called out as loud as he could: “Towsie Jock! Towsie Jock! Towsie! Towsie! Towsie!”

The great bull lifted his head and sniffed the air.

“Towsie Jock! Towsie! Towsie! Towsie!”

With a roar that would have frightened many a child, he shook his great head, then came on towards the gate, growling all the while in a most alarming way.

“Towsie Jock! Towsie! Towsie?” cried the boy.

Jock was at the gate now.

His breath blew hot and thick from his nostrils, his red eyes seemed to flash fire.

“Towsie Jock! Towsie! Towsie!”

The bull was mad. He tore up the earth with his fore-feet, and the grass with his teeth.

“Towsie! Tow—”

Before Harry could finish the word, greatly to his horror, the bull threw off the top bar with one of his horns, and in three seconds more had leapt clean over.

But Harry was too quick for him, and what followed spoke well for the presence of mind of our young hero.

To have attempted to run straight away from the bull would have meant a speedy and terrible death. He would have been torn limb from limb. But no sooner did the bar rattle down, than both Harry and Eily sprang to the stone fence and jumped over into the field, just as the bull jumped out of it.

Jock was considerably nonplussed at not finding his tormentor where he had expected to.

“Towsie! Towsie!” cried Harry, and the bull leapt back into the field, and Harry and Eily scrambled out of it. This game was kept up for some time, a sort of wild hide-and-seek, much to Harry’s delight; but each time he leapt the wall he edged farther and farther from the gate.

The bull got quieter now and kept inside the field, and pretended to browse, though I do not think he swallowed much. He followed along the stone fence all the same, but Harry knew he could not leap it. In the adjoining field, which belonged to Harry’s father, great turnips grew, and Harry went and pulled two of the very biggest, and threw over the wall to the bull.

“Poor Jock!” said the boy, “I didn’t mean to vex you.”

Jock eyed him a moment as if he did not know what to make of it all, then began quietly to munch the turnips.

And Harry stole back and put up the top bar of the gate.

Meanwhile the rain continued unremittingly, but being wet to the skin, Harry could not well be wetter, and that is how he consoled himself. The afternoon was already far spent, by and by it would be dark, so he prepared to hurry home now.

He knew his way through the forest, but there were many attractions—a wild bee-hive for instance in a bank. He must stop and beat the ground above it, then bend his ear down to hear the bees buzz, till at last one was sent out to see what the matter was and whether or not the end of the world had come.

A hole where he knew a weasel lived; he would have liked to have seen it, only it would not come out. Rabbit’s holes, that he crept towards on hands and knees, and laughed to see the bunnies scurry away. A deep water-pit where queer old-fashioned water-rats (voles) lived, some of whom came out to look at him and squeezed their eyes to clear their sight. And so on and so forth. It was quite gloaming before he got near the lawn gate; and then, when he did find his way inside among the shrubbery, he found the sparrows were just going to bed, and bickering and squabbling at a terrible rate, about who should have the dry boughs of the pines, and who should not.

Meanwhile he was missed. He was often missed for the matter of that, but he had seldom been so long away on such a night.

His father was an easy-minded farmer, who tilled his own acres; he was reading the newspaper in an easy chair, and his mother, a delicate, somewhat nervous, lady, was sewing near the window.

When the evening shadows began to fall, the nurse tapped at the room door and entered. "Has Harry been here, mum?"

"No, Lizzie; don't you know where he is?"

"Haven't seen him for hours, mum. I made sure he was here."

"Oh! you silly child, to let him out of your sight like that. Go and look for him at once."

"Where is the child, I wonder," she continued, addressing her husband. "Where can Harold be?"

"Mm? what?" said Harry's father, looking lazily over his newspaper. "Child Harold? Gone on a pilgrimage perhaps."

"Oh! don't be foolish," said his wife, petulantly. "Well, my dear, how should I know. Very likely he is up in the dusty attic squatting among the cobwebs, or rummaging for curiosities in some old drawer or another."

But Harry was not upstairs among the cobwebs, nor rummaging in any drawer whatever, nor talking to John in the stable, nor playing with his toys in the loft, nor anywhere else that any one could think of.

So there was a pretty to do.

But in the midst of it all, lo! Eily and Harry both presented themselves at the hall door, and you could not have said which of the two was in the most miserable plight. Both were so wet and so bedraggled.

"Oh! please, dear mamma," said Harry, "I'm so hungry and so is poor Eily."

His mother was too happy to scold him, and his father laughed heartily at the whole affair. For Harry had neither sisters nor brothers.

While the boy was being stripped and re-dressed in dry clothes, the dog threw herself in front of the kitchen fire.

Presently they both had supper. If Harry was pale while playing at bubble-ships in the water-vat, he was rosy enough now, and verily his cheeks shone in the lamplight.

Before he knelt down that night by his mother's knee to say his prayers, she asked him if he had done much wrong to-day.

"Oh! yes, dear mamma," was the reply, "I did tease Towsie so."

Harry Milvaine by William Gordon Stables

Chapter Two.

Adventures in the Forest.

At breakfast next morning young Harry was much surprised and concerned to be told that he was going to have a governess.

“A guv’niss,” he said, pausing in the act of raising a spoonful of oatmeal porridge to his mouth, “a guv’niss, papa? What’s a guv’niss? Something to eat?”

“No, child; a governess is a lady, who will do the duties of a teacher to you, learn you your lessons and—”

“Mamma can do that.”

“And give you sums to do.”

“Ma does all that, papa.”

“And go with you wherever you go.”

Harry leant his chin upon his hand thoughtfully for a moment or two; then he said:

“Mm, will the guv’niss go high up the trees with me, papa, and will she make faces at Towsie?”

“I don’t think so, Harold.”

“I don’t want the old lady,” said Harry.

“Your leave will not be asked, my dear boy.”

“Then,” said Harry, in as determined a voice as he could command, “I shall hate her, and beat her, and bite her.”

“I’m afraid,” said Mr Milvaine, turning to his wife, “that you spoil that child.”

“I’m afraid,” returned Mrs Milvaine mildly, “I have received assistance from you.”

Harry's governess came in a week. It was surely a sad look-out for her, if she was to be hated and beaten and bitten.

She was not a prim, angular, starchy, "tawsey"-looking old maid by any means. At most she had seen but nineteen summers; fresh in face, blue-eyed, dimpled, and with beautiful hair.

Harry soon took to her.

"I sha'n't beat you," he said, "as long as you're good."

The attic was cleared of cobwebs and rubbish, and turned into a schoolroom, and studies at regular hours of the day commenced forthwith.

Harry determined to make his own terms with his "guv'niss." He would be good, and learn his lessons, and do his sums, and write his copy and all that, if she would read out of a book to him every day, and describe to him a scene in some far-off land.

She promised.

Before commencing lessons of a forenoon, Miss Campbell read a portion of one of the Gospels to him, and then she prayed. Miss Campbell was one of those girls who are not ashamed to pray, not ashamed to ask mercy, help and guidance from Him from whom all blessings flow. Before leaving school Miss Campbell took the Book again, but now no other portion would he allow her to read except the Revelations. There was a charm about these that never, never palled upon the child.

But always in the evenings "Guvie" had to devote herself to a different kind of literature, and the books now were usually tales of adventure by land and at sea.

Miss Campbell did try her wee pupil with "Sandford and Merton." I am sorry to say he would have none of it. The "Arabian Nights" pleased better, but he could not quite understand them.

For Sunday reading nothing delighted Harry better than Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." I am happy in being able to put this on record, and boys who have not read the work, have a real treat in store for them.

So Miss Campbell and her pupil got on very well together indeed; and many a delightful walk, ay, and run too, they had in the forest. They were a trio-now, because Eily always

made one of the number. She went to school as well as Harry, and if she did not learn anything, at all events she lay still and listened, and that is more than every dog would have done.

Harry introduced his "Guvie," as he called her, to his pet toad, which she pretended to admire, but was secretly somewhat afraid of.

"John told me, Guvie," he said one day, "that toadie would go to sleep all winter, so I'm going to put a biscuit in his box for his breakfast when he wakes, then we won't go near him till spring-time comes."

They say the child is the father of the man. I believe there is much truth in the statement, so that, in describing Harry's character as a young boy, I am saving myself the trouble of doing so when he is very much older, and mingling in wilder life.

He was impulsive then and brave, fond to some extent of mischief of a mild, kind nature, but he was tender-hearted. One day in the forest he came to the foot of a great Scotch fir-tree.

"There is an old nest up there, Guvie. I'm off up."

She would have held him, but he was far beyond her reach ere she could do so. He stopped when about ten feet above her.

"I knew, Guvie," he cried, with a roguish smile on his countenance, "that you would try to catch me if you could. Now come, Guvie, catch me now, if you can."

"Oh! do come down, Harry dear," the poor girl exclaimed. "You frighten me nearly to death."

"Don't die, Guvie dear, there's a good Guvie; I'm only going to the top of the tree, to the very top you know, no farther, to pull down the old nest, else the nasty lazy magpie will lay in it again next year, and not build a new one at all."

"Do, Harry, come down," cried Miss Campbell, "and I'll give you anything."

"No, no, Guvie; papa always says, 'Do your duty, Harold boy, always do your duty.' I'm going to do what papa bids me. Good-bye, Guvie, I'll soon be back."

And away he went. It seemed, several times ere he reached the top, that he would be back far sooner than even he himself expected, for little branches often gave way with a crack that sent a thrill of horror through Miss Campbell's heart.

"Oh! what if he should fall and be killed," she thought.

But presently Harry was high high up on the very point of the tree. He proceeded at once to throw down the great nest of sticks and grass and clay; no very easy task, as he had to work with one hand, while he held on with the other.

But he finished at last, and the nest lay at Miss Campbell's feet.

The wind blew high to-day, and the tree swayed and swayed about, just like a ship's mast at sea.

"Oh! Miss Guvie, do try to come up," cried the boy, looking down. "It is so nice; and I can see all over the country. Wouldn't I like to be a sailor. Do come up."

But Miss Campbell only cried, "Do come down."

When he did obey her at last, she could contain herself no longer. Down she must sit on a bank of withered pine-needles and give vent to sobs and tears.

Then the boy's heart melted for her, and he went and threw his arms around her and kissed her, and said:

"Oh! Guvie dear, don't cry, and Harry will never, never be quite so naughty again. Don't cry, dear, and when Harry grows a big man, he will fight for you and then marry you."

She was pacified at last, and they started for home.

"I'll keep firm hold of your hand," said Harry, "and then you won't cry any more, and nothing can hurt you."

"We'll both want brushing, won't we, Harry?" she said, smiling.

It was true. For Harry's jacket was altogether green, with the mould from the tree, and he had transferred a goodly portion of it to her velveteen jacket, while hugging her.

"Ha!" laughed Harry; "we are both foresters now, Guvie. What fun! All green, green, green."

But Harry had given his governess a terrible fright, and she tried to make him promise that he would not climb trees again.

The boy held his wise, wee head to one side for a few seconds and considered.

“That wouldn’t do, Guvie,” he said. “But when I go up a tree you shall come with me. There now!”

“But, dear child, I cannot climb trees.”

“You could a beech?” quoth Harry.

“Well, I might a beech, a little way.”

“If you don’t climb a beech, I shall go a mile high up into a fir,” said the young rascal.

So poor Miss Campbell had to consent, and in the depth of the forest where many lordly beeches grew, “Guvie” took lessons in climbing.

It certainly is no difficult operation for even a girl to get out on to the arm of a beech tree. One could almost walk there, and the branches are as clean as a table.

The governess was further commanded by her lord and pupil to take books with her up into the trees and read to him.

When summer came, and the beech trees were one mass of tender green leaves, with the bees all singing their songs, as they flew from flower to flower, it was far from unpleasant to get up into leafland, and while away an hour or longer with a delightful book.

Sometimes indeed they went high enough to let a branch shut out the view of the earth entirely, and then it was like being in fairyland.

One beautiful evening in the latter end of June Miss Campbell and he went out for a stroll as usual.

Eily did not follow them. Truth to say, Harry had shut her up in the saddle-room.

There was much to be seen and noticed, and oceans of wild flowers to cull, and there were birds’ nests to be visited, many of which contained only eggs, while others had in

them little half-naked, hairy “gorbals,” that opened such extraordinary big gaping yellow mouths, that they could have swallowed a church—that is, if the church were small enough.

There grew not far from the five-barred gate, mentioned in last chapter, an immensely large and beautiful beech tree; and it had its branches close to the ground, so that it presented no great difficulty to get up into it.

Miss Campbell had never been this way before, but to-night her guide led her hither, under pretence of showing her a tree with a hawk’s nest in it.

The hawk’s nest was up there in the pine tree-top right enough, and it was not an old one either, for when Harry kicked the tree and cried “Hush-oo-oo!” out and away flew the beautiful and graceful bird. Then they came to the beech tree.

“Let us get up here and read,” said Harry; “the sun isn’t thinking of going down yet. I don’t think the sun is moving a bit. I don’t suppose he knows what o’clock it is.”

As soon as they were safely and securely seated, and Miss Campbell had read a short but stirring story to her pupil, Harry pulled aside a branch.

“Do you see that grass field?” he asked.

“Yes, dear.”

“Well, do you know who lives there?”

“No, Harry.”

“Towsie.”

“And who is Towsie?”

“Why, silly Guvie, Towsie is Towsie, of course; Towsie is his Christian name; Jock, I suppose, is his papa’s name. Towsie Jock, there now!”

“What nonsense are you talking, dear?” said Miss Campbell.

“Why, telling you about Towsie Jock, to be sure. Towsie Jock is so funny, and what faces he makes when I make faces at him! Mind you, Guvie, I don’t think he quite likes to be called Towsie Jock. And I wouldn’t either, would you, dear Guvie?”

“I haven’t the remotest idea, Harry, what it is all about, nor who or what Towsie Jock, as you call him, or it, is.”

“Oh, haven’t you, Guvie? Well, you shall see. Mind you it isn’t a hedgehog. Something, oh, ever so much bigger.”

As he spoke Harry slipped like an eel down from the tree. He accomplished this by sliding out to the tip of the branch, out and out till it bent with his light weight, and dropped him on the ground.

Harry went straight to the gate, the top bar of which he had previously, in one of his lonely rambles, taken the precaution to tie down. He looked now to see that the fastening was all secure, then commenced to shout.

“Towsie Jock! Towsie Jock! Towsie! Towsie! Towsie!”

Jock was at a distant corner of the field, his favourite corner, on high ground, where he could see the country for miles around. He was standing there chewing his cud and looking at the sky. Perhaps he was wondering what kind of a day it was to be to-morrow.

Suddenly he thrust one ear back to listen.

“Towsie! Towsie!” came the shout in shrill treble.

“It is that monkey again,” said Towsie, to himself. “If I can only pin one horn through him, I’ll carry him all round and round the field, at the gallop too.”

Miss Campbell, from the tree, first heard a dreadful bellowing roar, which ended in one continuous stream of hoarse explosions, as it were.

“Wow-ow-ow-ow-ow-ow-ow,” and next moment, to her horror, she saw a gigantic horrid homed bull coming tearing towards the gate, his nose on the ground, and his tail like a corkscrew over his back.

“Harry, Harry!” she screamed. “Oh! fly, Harry, fly!”

“He can’t get over, Guvie,” cried Harry, coolly. “Let me introduce you, as papa says. That is Towsie Jock. Towsie! Towsie! Towsie Jock! Towsie Jock!”

“Wow-ow-ow-ow-ow-ow!”

On came the bull as mad as ever bull was.

Miss Campbell shouted again, and screamed with terror.

“Harry, come, oh, dear Harry, come up. For my sake then.”

“But he can’t get over, I tell you, Guvie.”

“But I’m fainting, Harry.”

“Oh, in that case I’ll come, Guvie. Papa says, ‘Always, whatever you do, Harry, be kind and polite to ladies.’ I’m coming, Guvie. Don’t fall till I get hold of you.”

And none too soon.

“Wow-ow—woa!”

Next moment the gate flew in splinters with the awful charge of that Highland bull.

Miss Campbell’s head swam, but she clutched the rash boy to her breast, and thanked God he was saved.

Meanwhile the bull was at the foot of the tree. He first commenced an attack upon it with head and horns; every time, he battered it he shook it to its uttermost twig and leaf. But Miss Campbell and Harry had a safe seat in a strong niche between two great branches, with another branch to sit on and one behind.

At every blow the bull reeled back again.

The governess was white and trembling.

Harry was as cool as a hero.

He looked down and enjoyed the performance.

“Isn’t he naughty and wicked!” he said.

“Won’t he have a headache in the morning, Guvie!”

While attacking and battering the tree, Towsie Jock was silent, only the noise of the “thuds” resounded through the forest.

“If I had a big turnip now,” said the boy, “to throw down, Towsie would eat it and go away, oh! so well pleased, and not naughty at all.”

Towsie soon saw that to knock down that sturdy old beech was impossible; he commenced, therefore, with angry bellowings to root round it with his feet.

But even of this he soon tired. He stood up, red-eyed and furious-looking, and sniffed and snorted.

“May I cry ‘Towsie’ again, Guvie?”

“Oh, no, no, no.”

“He can’t climb the tree, you know. He’ll go away presently, then we can get down and run, Guvie dear.”

But Towsie had evidently no such intentions. He stood there for quite half an hour, then he began to chew his cud again. That was a pacific sign, and Miss Campbell gave a sigh of relief.

Towsie Jock was a good general. He had tried and tried in vain to storm the citadel, that is, the tree; he had tried to batter it down, and he had tried to undermine it; now the only thing to do was simply to lay siege to it.

And this he did by quietly lying down.

Meanwhile, far away in the east, they could see, through the greenery of the branches, red or crimson streaky clouds, and they knew that gloaming was falling, and that gloaming would soon be followed by night.

The red clouds grew a lurid purple, then grey, then seemed to melt away, and only a gleam of light remained in the west. That also faded, and next a bright, bright star peeped in through the leaves at them, and all grew gloomy around.

Still the bull lay still.

Miss Campbell took a scarf from her neck and bound one of Harry’s arms tightly to a branch, lest he might sleep and slip from her grasp. For Harry had grown very silent.

“Harry, dear,” said Miss Campbell, “say your prayers.”

“Guvie,” replied the boy, “papa tells me I should bless my enemies; must I pray for Towsie Jock?”

“If you like, dear.”

Then Miss Campbell bethought her of a story, the funniest she could remember, and began it.

Harry laughed for a time. But he soon grew suddenly silent.

He was fast asleep!

Meanwhile more and more stars came out, cushat’s croodle and song of bird gave place to the deep mournful notes of the brown owl, and the gloaming deepened into night.

Harry Milvaine by William Gordon Stables

Chapter Three.

The Search for the Lost Ones—an Ugly Fight.

Great was the anxiety at Beaufort Hall, as Harry's home was called, when the shadows fell and the stars peeped out from the sky's blue vault. Poor fragile Mrs Milvaine was almost distracted, but her husband took matters more easily, more philosophically let us call it.

"Don't fidget, my darling," he said, "they'll turn up all right in a short time. Just you see now, and it won't do the triflingest morsel of good to worry yourself. No, nor it won't bring them a minute sooner."

"They may have fallen into the river," said Mrs Milvaine.

"Well, I don't deny that people have fallen into rivers before now, but the probability is, they haven't," replied the farmer-laird. (A farmer who owns the acres he tills.)

"They may have lost themselves in the forest, and may wander in it till they die."

"Nonsense, my love."

"Harry may have climbed a tree, fallen down and been killed, and Miss Campbell may even now—"

"Stop, stop, dear! what an imagination you have, to be sure?"

"They may both be gored to death by that fearful bull, their mangled bodies may—"

Mr Milvaine put his fingers in his ears.

But when eleven o'clock rang out from the stable tower, and still the lost ones did not appear, then even the laird himself got fidgety. He threw down his newspaper.

But he did not permit his wife to notice his uneasiness. He quietly lit his pipe.

"I'll go and look for them," he said, and left the room. He returned presently wrapped in a Highland plaid, with a shepherd's crook in his hand, much taller than himself, and

that is saying a good deal, for this Scottish laird stood six feet two in his boots, and was well made in proportion.

He bent down and kissed his wife.

“Don’t fret, I’ll soon find them,” he said. “They have gone botanising, I suppose, and have lost themselves, and are doubtless in Widow McGregor’s cottage, or in the cleerach’s hut.”

Out he went. Rob Roy McGregor himself never had a more manly stride.

He went to the stable gallery first, or rather to the foot of the stair.

“John!” he cried,—“John! John!”

“Yes, yes, sir,” was the reply, and a stream of light shot out into the darkness as John threw open the door.

“Miss Campbell and Master Harry are lost somewhere in the forest. Bring a bull’s-eye lantern, and let us look for them. Bring the rhinoceros-hide whip, too; we may come across some poachers.”

In five minutes more master and man had started.

John was nearly as tall as his master. This was partly the reason why the laird had engaged him. Coachmen do not often have great brown beards and moustaches, but John had; coachmen do not often wear the Highland dress, but John did, and a fine-looking fellow he was when so arrayed. But every horse and every cart about this farmer-laird’s place was big. The dog-cart had been specially built for him, and there was not another such in the country.

Away they went then.

It was half-past eleven when they started, and twelve by watch when they found themselves in the forest.

“It is always hereabout they do be,” said John. “Just hereabouts, sir.”

Then they shouted, singly.

Then they shouted again—together this time; shouted and listened, but there was no answering call.

There was a rushing sound among the tall spruces, and a flap-flap-flapping of wings, as startled wild pigeons fled from their nests away out into the dreary depths of the forest.

There was the too-whit, to-who-oo-oo of an owl in the distance, but no other sound responded to their shouting.

“We’ll go straight on to the widow’s,” said the laird.

“Right, laird.”

So on they went again, often pausing to wave the bull’s-eye, to shout, and to listen.

All in vain.

When they reached Widow McGregor’s cottage all was darkness and silence within.

They knocked nevertheless, knocked again and again, and at last had the satisfaction of hearing a match lighted, then a light shone through the door seams, and a voice—a somewhat timorous and quavering one—demanded:

“Wha’s there at this untimeous hoor o’ nicht?”

“It’s me, Mrs McGregor; me, Laird Milvaine. Don’t be alarmed.”

The bolt flew back, and master and man entered.

Of course the lost ones were not there, and the widow shook and trembled with fear when she heard the story.

She had only to say that the cleerach, who was a kind of forest ranger or keeper, had seen both the lost ones that afternoon gathering wild flowers.

“We’ll go to his house at once.”

It was only two miles farther on.

They bade the widow good-night, and started. She told them, last thing, that she would go to her bed and pray for them.

But they had not gone quite one mile and a half, when a brawny figure sprang from behind a tree, and a stentorian voice shouted:

“You thieving scoundrels, I have you now! Stop, and hold up your arms, or by the powers above us I’ll blow the legs of you off!”

The flash of John’s lantern revealed a stalwart keeper with double-barrelled gun presented full towards them.

“It’s me and my man John,” said the farmer, quietly. (The author is not to blame for the honest laird’s bad grammar.)

“Heaven have a care of me, sir,” cried the cleerach. “If I’d fired I’d ne’er have been forgiving mysel’. Sure it was after the poachers I was. But bless me, laird, what brings you into the forest at such an hour?”

The story was soon told, and together they marched to the cleerach’s cottage. A one-roomed wooden hut it was, built in a clearing, and almost like that of a backwoodsman. The only portion not wood was the hearth and the chimney.

All the information the cleerach could give them was hardly worth having, only he had seen Miss Campbell and young Harry, and they were then taking the path through the forest that led away to the river and past the field where the bull was.

“Then goodness help us,” exclaimed the farmer. “I fear something has happened to them.”

Nothing could be done till daylight. So the three sat by the fire, on which the cleerach heaped more logs; for, summer though it was, the night was chill, and a dew was falling. It was quite a keeper’s cottage, no pictures on the walls except a Christmas gift-plate or two from the London Illustrated Weeklies, and some Christmas cards. But stuffed heads and animals stood here and there in the corners, and skins of wild creatures were nailed up everywhere. Skins of whitterit or weasel, of fougart or pole-cat, of the wild cat itself, of great unsightly rats, of moles and of voles, and hawks and owls galore.

Scotchmen do not easily let down their hearts, so these men—and men they were in every sense of the word—sat there by the fire telling each other wild, weird forest tales and stories of folk-lore until at length the daylight streamed in at the window—cold and comfortless-looking—and almost put out the fire. “Will you have breakfast, laird, before you start?” The laird said, “Yes.”

The fire was replenished, and soon the keeper's great kettle was boiling. Then in less than five minutes three huge dishes of oatmeal brose was made, and—that was the breakfast, with milk and butter.

Towsie Jock never moved from under the tree all the night long. Poor Miss Campbell was weary, tired, and cramped, but she dared not sleep. Once or twice she caught herself half-dreaming, and started up again in fright, and thanked Heaven she had not gone quite to sleep.

How long, long the stars seemed to shine, she thought! Would they never fade? Would morning never, never come?

But see, through the green leafy veil a glimmer of dawn at last, and she lifts up her thoughts in prayer to Him who has preserved them.

How soundly Harry sleeps in her arms! How beautiful the boy looks, too, in his sleep! The young image of his stalwart father.

The light in the east spreads up and up, and the stars pale before it, and disappear. Then the few clouds there are, begin to light up, and finally to glow in dazzling crimson and yellow.

She is wondering when assistance will come. But the sun shoots up, and help appears as far away as ever.

“Towsie, Towsie,” mutters the boy in his sleep, and smiles.

A whole hour passes, and hope itself begins to die in the poor girl's breast, when oh! joy, from far away in the forest comes a shout.

“Coo-ee-ee!”

Then a shrill whistle. Then silence. She knows that assistance is not far off, if she can only make them hear. She knows that the silence which succeeds the shouting means that they are listening for a response.

She tries to answer, but no sound much louder than a whisper can she emit. The cold dews have rendered her almost voiceless.

Now she shakes and tries to arouse Harry.

“Harry, Harry, awake, dear!”

“Whe—where am I?” cries the boy, rubbing his eyes.

“In the forest, Harry; in a tree.”

“Oh, I remember now,” says Harry, smiling, and looking down; “and there’s Towsie. What a jolly sleep I’ve had, Guvie! Have you?”

Again came the shout, this time somewhat nearer.

“Answer, dear; answer, I’m so hoarse. Cry as loud as you can.”

Harry did as told. It would hardly be heard fifty yards away, however.

But it had one effect. It roused Towsie Jock. All his wrath seemed at once to return, and he prepared once more to attack the tree.

“Towsie Jock, Towsie, Towsie!” sang the boy.

For the life of him he could not help it.

“Wow-ow-ow-wo-ah!” roared the bull.

That was a sound that could be heard for one good mile at least.

The three men advancing to the rescue heard it.

For the first time since he had left home the farmer-laird felt real dread and fear. In his imagination he could see the mangled bodies of his son and the governess, with the bull standing guard over them.

“Come on, men. Great heavens! I fear the worst now.”

Milvaine had his strong, tall crook, John his terribly—punishing hide whip, the cleerach had a double-barrelled gun.

The bull—infuriated now beyond measure—came roaring to meet them.

The cleerach fired at his legs. The shot but made him stumble for a moment; it had no other effect. On he came wilder than ever. He seemed to single the farmer himself out, and charged him head down. Mr Milvaine met the charge manfully enough. He leapt nimbly to one side, striking straight home with the iron-shod end of the crook. It wounded the bull in the neck, but ill would it have fared with the farmer had he not got speedily behind a tree.

Whack, whack, whack. John is behind the bull with his whip of hide.

The bull wheels round upon him ere ever he can escape, and runs him between his horns against a tree.

John has seized the horns, and thus they stand man and brute locked in a death grip.

The farmer has stumbled and fallen in running to John's assistance. The cleerach is loading again, when help comes from a most unexpected quarter, and Eily herself rushes on the scene.

She at once seizes the bull by the hock. The roar he emits is one of agony and rage, but John is free.

Eily easily eludes the bull's charge. He follows a little way towards the gate, then turns, when she fixes him again. And this game continues until the bull is fairly into the field.

Whenever the bull turns Eily seizes his hock; whenever he gives her chase she runs farther into the field, barking defiantly.

"I think, men, we may safely leave the brute to Eily," said Laird Milvaine; "but where can the dear children be!"

"Safe, safe, safe!" cried a voice from the tree.

Miss Campbell could speak now.

"Thank God!" was the fervent ejaculation breathed by every lip.

An hour afterwards Harry was in his mother's arms, laughing and crowing with delight as he related to his mamma all the fun of what he called the jolly match with Towsie.

His mother's eyes were red with weeping, but she was laughing now nevertheless.

Harry Milvaine by William Gordon Stables

Chapter Four.

Harry Milvaine, Landed Proprietor—His Bungalow, and how he Built it—"I'll be a Sailor, to be Sure."

Were I to tell one-half of the adventures of the child Harold, as his father called him, I would fill this whole book with them, and would not have space to say a word about his career as a youth and young man. So I shall not begin.

No more vivacious reader of books of biography, travel, and adventure, perhaps ever existed than Harry Milvaine was when about the age of ten. I have often wondered when he slept.

At midsummer in the far north of Scotland there is light enough all night to read by. Harry took advantage of this, and would continue at a book from sunset till sunrise.

The boy had a deal of independence of character and real good feeling.

"I must have light to read by all night in winter," he said to himself, "but it would be unfair to burn my father's candles. I'll make some."

There was an odd old volume in Mr Milvaine's library, called "The Arts and Sciences," which was a very great favourite with Harry because it told him everything.

It taught him how to make moulded candles. He possessed a tin pen-and-pencil case. This made a first-rate mould. He collected fat, he got a wick and fixed it to the bottom of the case and held it in the position described by the book, then he poured in the melted fat, and lo! and behold, when it cooled, a candle was the result. He worked, in his own little tool-house, away down among the shrubbery at the bottom of the lawn, and made many candles. John, the coachman, admired them very much, and so did the female servants.

"Dear me?" said one old milk-maid, "it's your father, Master Harry, that should be proud of his bonnie, bonnie boy."

This old milk-maid had a beard and moustache that many a city clerk would have envied, and she was reputed to be a witch accordingly, but she dearly loved little Harry, and Harry loved her, and made a regular confidante of her.

She did not give him bad advice either. One example in proof of this. Harry came to her one day in great grief. He was not crying, but his mouth was pursed up very much, and he was very red in the face.

“Oh, Yonitch, Yonitch!” he exclaimed, in bitterness, “what shall I do? I’ve shot papa’s favourite cock.”

“Shot him dead? Have you, dear?” said Yonitch.

“Oh, dead enough, Yonitch. I fired at him, and my arrow has gone clean through his breast. I don’t think I really meant it, though.”

Yonitch ran down with him to the paddock to view the body, and there certainly never was a much “deader” cock. The arrow was still sticking in his breast.

“What shall I do? Shall I bury the cock and run away?”

“That would not be brave, dear. No Highlander runs away. Go straight to your father and tell him.”

Harry did so.

“What’s the matter, lad?” said his father. “Hold up your head. What is it?”

“Papa,” replied the boy, not daring to look up, but speaking to a plough that stood near. “Papa, I took my bow and arrows—”

“Yes, boy.”

“And I went down the paddock.”

“Well?”

“And I fired at the cock.”

“Yes.”

“And I’m afraid he—wants to be—buried.”

“Well, well, well, never mind, boy; I forgive you because you’ve come like a man and like a Highlander and told me. We’ll put the poor cock in the pot and have him for dinner.”

“Oh, no, no, dear papa,” cried Harry, looking up now for the first time, “I could not bear to see him cooked.”

“Well, go and bury him yourself, then.”

Harry ran off happy, and Yonitch and he dug a grave and buried the poor cock’s corpse, and it took Harry a whole week’s work in the tool-house to fashion him a “wooden tombstone,” and write an epitaph. The epitaph ran as follows:—

here lies
papa’s poor coting chiney cock
croolly slane by harry
with his bow and arrie.

he sleeps in peas.

That tool-house and workshop of Harry’s was quite a wonderful place. And wonderful, indeed, were the things Harry turned out of it. I’m not joking. He really did make good useful articles—boxes, picture frames, a footstool for his mother, a milking-stool for Yonitch, and an extraordinary rustic-looking, but comfortable, arm-chair for his father. It had a high back and a carpet bottom, and seated in it, on the verandah on a summer’s evening, with his pipe and his paper, papa did look the very quintessence of comfort and jollity.

But Harry might often have been seen at the village carpenter’s shop, taking lessons in the useful art of joinery.

In return for the high-backed chair, his father presented him, when Christmas came round, with a turning lathe. Then I think that Harry’s cup of bliss was full to overflowing.

But his workshop soon proved too small to hold all his belongings. He secured a piece of ground from his father in a quiet and sheltered corner of the paddock, and within this he determined to do great things, as soon as spring brought out the daisies, and the ground was dry.

Now let me tell the reader, before I go a line farther on with my story, that though I am bound, in justice to my young hero, to say that he never neglected his lessons, nor his prayers, dear lad, still I do not wish to make him out a greater saint than perhaps most boys of his age are.

He is painted from the life, mind you, and I have not hid his failings from you. Nor need I hesitate to say that a fight between Harry and some village lad was of no very rare occurrence, and it was no uncommon thing to meet him coming homewards after one of these tulzies, with his jacket all covered with mud and his face all covered with blood.

So there! I hide nothing, good or bad.

Harry was going to do great things then with his bit of ground. He felt himself to be a small landed proprietor, a laird in miniature. He thought and planned in his spare moments all the livelong winter. He even put his plans on paper. This he did in the stillness of night, by the light of his own moulded candles.

Harry was immensely rich—at least he thought himself so. He had a money-box in the shape of a dog-kennel that stood on the mantelpiece of his own room, and goodness only knows how much money it did not contain. For years back, whenever he had received sixpence or a shilling from a relation or friend, pop! it had gone into the kennel. Half-crowns were too big to go in, but he changed them for smaller coins, and in they went. There was one whole sovereign in and one half one.

But Harry had not depended altogether for his riches on the charity of friends and relations. No, for he was a wealthy dealer in live stock. Not cattle and horses, nor sheep and pigs. Harry's was a London market, and a world-wide market. His medium for sale was a paper called The Exchange and Mart, and his stock consisted of canaries, siskins, and British birds of all kinds. The latter he found in the woods and wilds, and reared by hand. He also sold guinea-pigs, white rats, piebald mice, hedgehogs, and snakes.

So no wonder he had amassed wealth.

And now spring came. The robin left the gateway where he had been singing so sweetly all the winter, and went away to the woods to build himself a nest. The primroses came out in the copses, and as soon as the blackbird and thrush saw them they started singing at once.

The trees all burst into bud and then into leaf. The young corn grew green in the fields, seeing which the lark tried how high he could mount and how loud he could sing.

And the wind blew soft and warm from the west, and the sun shone forth bright and clear, and dried up the roads and the fields, and chased every bit of snow away from the glens and straths, only permitting it to remain here and there in the hollows on the mountain tops.

Then Harry prepared for action.

It may be thought strange that Harry had no companions of his own age. But I am writing the history of a strange and wayward boy, a boy who never wanted or sought for companionship, a kind of miniature edition of Robinson Crusoe he was, only he liked Yonitch to come and look at his work sometimes. There was also the joiner's man, who used to come up now and then and give Harry hints about "this, that, or t'other." So the boy did not feel lonely.

Andrew was this joiner's man's name. He was a kind of Jack-of-all-trades.

And never went about without his snuff-box.

He was very fond of Harry. In two evenings he dug and levelled and raked all Harry's estate for him, and Harry was duly thankful, because digging is very hard work.

Harry bought snuff for Andrew, and Andrew was happy.

Wire fencing now occupied our hero's attention. He went all by himself (accompanied by Eily, of course) to a neighbouring town to buy the galvanised iron mesh, and found that the money he had taken from his kennel for this purpose was more than sufficient.

Next he planned his garden, and laid out and gravelled his walks, bordering them nicely with old bricks. He gravelled quite a large space at one end, because here he was to build his house.

The floor of this was laid first and plastered over with a mixture of Portland cement and sand, and when dry it was as hard and firm as marble.

Then the uprights were put in, one for each corner, and the roof put on. At this work he received valuable assistance from Andrew, and paid him in snuff.

The roof Andrew thatched, and when the house was built, it was a very rustic and very romantic one indeed; partly bungalow, partly summer-house.

Lovely flowering climbers were planted, quick growing ones, wild convolvulus and clematis, with a few roses, and before the summer was half done all the walls were covered with a wealth of floral beauty.

Inside everything was neatness and regulation. One end was the working end, tool-bench, and lathe. All the rest of the house or room was like a boudoir, a sofa, chairs, a bookcase, brackets, candlesticks, a mirror or two, flower vases—all perfect and beautiful.

And all devised by Harry's own hands.

Am I not right in saying he was a kind of second edition of Robinson Crusoe?

The garden, too, was well planted, and all along the wire fence, entirely covering it, were wild convolvuluses.

Miss Campbell was permitted to visit the hermit Harry in his charming abode. But not to mention lessons. Harry's was quite a pleasure-house, and lessons would have been out of keeping altogether in it. But she had to read stories to him.

Yonitch was another invited guest. She did not read stories. But she told the most wonderful fairy tales, and even ghost stories, that ever any one listened to.

One day, when Harry was away fishing, his father happened to look into his quarters and took the liberty of having a peep through his books. They were nearly all books of adventure and travel, and mostly sea stories, with just a sprinkling of poetry.

Harry's father went away—thinking.

How was this to end? He wished his son, his only son, to remain at home with him, to grow up with him, and help to farm his little estate. But those books? What could the boy's bent be?

That evening, after supper, he asked Harry straight what he would like to be.

Harry had an old-fashioned way of speaking, as boys have who are brought up by themselves, and only hear their elders talk.

He cocked his head consideringly on one side and replied—

“Oh! a sailor, papa. There can't be any question about that.”

“Ah! boy, I’ll send you to school, and that’ll knock all that nonsense out of your head.”

Harry looked at his father wonderingly. He could not understand what his father meant any more than if he had talked Greek.

“Draw your stool near my knee, my lad, and I’ll suggest to you what you’ll be, and you shall choose. Well, then, first and foremost, how would you like to be a doctor? Fine thing to be a doctor, drive about in a beautiful white-lined carriage, have the entrée of all the best houses, have a splendid house yourself, and—”

“Nasty man!” said Harry.

“Who?” said Mr Milvaine.

“Why, the doctor to be sure. Dear papa, I wouldn’t take physic myself even, and I’m sure I wouldn’t ask anybody else to. No, papa, I’ll be a sailor.”

“Well, how would you like to enter the Church? how would you like to be a clergyman? No one in the world so highly respected as a clergyman. He is fit to sit down side by side with royalty itself, and his holy mission, Harold—”

“Stop, stop, papa. I say my prayers every morning and I say my prayers every night, but somehow I go and do naughty things just the same. You know I tree’d poor guvie for a whole night, and I tease poor Towsie, and I slew the Cochin China cock. No, no, dear papa; I’m not good enough to be a clergyman. I’ll be a sailor.”

“Well, how would you like to enter business, and rise, perhaps, to be Lord Mayor of London, and ride in a gilded coach, and live in a house like a palace—”

“Papa, papa, don’t; I would rather live in the beech tree in the forest than in a palace. I’ll be a sailor.”

His father bent down, and took Harry’s hand in his. “Wouldn’t you like to stay at home and help your papa, when he grows old, to farm, and take your poor old mother to church every Sunday on your arm?”

“If you wished it very much, papa; but you see, papa—”

The boy ceased speaking, and gazed into the fire for fully a minute.

Then up he jumped and clapped his hands.

“Ha?” he laughed, “I have it, dear papa. I have it. I’ll do both.”

“Both what?”

“Why, I’ll go to sea first, and visit all kinds of strange places and strange countries, and kill, oh! such lots of lions and tigers and savages; and then, papa, come back and help you to farm, and take my mamma to church. Isn’t it fun?”

His father laughed, and took up his pipe. Shouldn’t wonder, he thought to himself, but there may be some little truth in that old saying: “The child is the father of the man.”

Harry Milvaine by William Gordon Stables

Chapter Five.

The Story that the Swallow Told.

That garden and that bungalow was a continual source of delight to young Harry. All the improvements which he was constantly carrying out inside the room itself, he planned and executed without assistance, but Andrew the joiner used to come up of an evening pretty frequently, and give him advice about the garden. So it flourished, and was very beautiful.

Andrew was often out and about the country doing odd jobs at the residences of the gentry, and whenever he could beg a root of some rare plant or flower he did so, and brought it straight home to the young laird, as he called Harry.

And Harry would give him snuff.

Not, mind you, that it was for sake of the snuff that Andrew did these little kindnesses to Harry. Truth is he dearly loved the boy.

A harum-scarum sort of a young man was Andrew, and there were people in the parish who said he was only half-witted, but this was all nonsense. Andrew came out with droll sayings at times—he was an original, and that is next door to a genius; but the truth is he had more wit and a deal more brains than many, or most of his detractors.

Andrew was tall and lank, and not an over-graceful walker, but he had a kind face of his own and black beads of eyes, round which smiles were nearly always dancing, and it did not take much to make Andrew laugh right out. A right merry guffaw it was too. Sometimes it made the dogs bark, and the cocks all crow, and the peacock scream like a thousand cats all knocked into one. That is the kind of young man Andrew was. He came from the low country, and spoke a trifle broad. But that did not matter, his heart was as good as any Highlander's.

Harry and his friend frequently went to the forest together, but never again near Towsie's gate, because the boy had promised not to tease the bull any more. A promise is a sacred thing, and Harry knew this. The boy had a hundred friends in the forest. Yes, and far more.

For he loved nature.

And there was not a bush or tree he did not know all about: when they budded, when they broke into leaf, and even when those leaves would fade and fall and die.

There was not a flower he did not know, nor a bird he could not recognise by name, by note or song, by its nest or by its eggs.

He was no wanton nest-robber, though; a boy who is so has no manliness or fairness or gentlemanly feeling about him. Harry never robbed a nest, but more than once he pitched into other boys for doing so, and fought sturdy battles in the forest in defence of his friends the birds.

Did you ever notice, dear reader, what a sweet sweet song that of the house-martin is? With its coat of dusky black, the little crimson blush on its breast, and its graceful form, the martin is a charming bird altogether. But its song is to my ears ineffably sweet.

It is not a loud song, and the bird always sits down to sing. It is not loud for this reason: away in the wilds of Africa, where this birdie frequently goes, there are so many enemies about that to sing very loudly would lead to the discovery of its whereabouts, and it would probably be killed and devoured.

For this very reason many of the birds in Africa sing not at all. Gay and lovely are they even as the flowers, the glorious flowers that adorn the hillside and forest and plain, but silently they flit from bough to bough.

One evening Harry was seated on his sofa, or rather he was half reclining thereon, reading a volume of his favourite poet—Campbell, I think. It was very still and quiet. His little window, round which the roses and the clematis clung, was open, and the sweet breath of flowers floated in with the gentle breeze.

It was so still and silent that Harry could hear the soft foot-fall of Eily the collie, as she came along the gravelled path towards the bungalow door.

“Come, in Eily,” he said, “and lie down, I’m reading.”

“Oh?” he added, as he looked up, “what have you in your mouth? A bone?”

Eily advanced, and put her chin ever so gently on, her young master’s knee.

No, it was not a bone, but a bird, a lovely martin.

Not a tooth had Eily put in it, not a feather had she ruffled, and hardly had she wetted its plumage.

Harry took it tenderly in his hand.

“Where did you get it, Eily? In the loft?”

Eily wagged her tail.

Swift as lightning though they may fly out of doors, no bird is more easily captured inside than the house-martin. If found in a loft they appear to lose presence of mind at once, and after flying about for a short time usually alight against the glass. When one is taken its little heart may be felt beating against the hand, as if it verily would break.

And no wonder.

Fancy, reader, how you should feel were you captured by some great ogre, taller than a steeple, and carried away, expecting death every minute.

“Give it to me, Eily. Give it quick. I hope you haven’t dragged its plumage very much. Now shut the door.”

Eily went and did as she was told. (It is very seldom a dog is taught this trick, but it is a very handy one.—G.S.)

Harry admired it for a little while. Then he gently kissed its brow. Its wee beak was half upturned, and its black beads of eyes appeared to look appealingly at him.

“What are you going to do with me?” it seemed to ask. “Are you going to kill me, or swallow me alive as we martins do the flies?”

“I’m not going to harm you a bit,” said Harry.

“I’m only going to hold you in my hand for a short time to admire you. How soft and warm you feel, and what a pretty dusky red patch you have on your breast! I’ve often listened to your song as you sat on the apple tree. But why do you sing so soft and low?”

“Because,” replied the bird, talking with its eyes—at least Harry thought he could read the answer there—“because in our country if we sang too loudly our enemies would hear us and come and kill us.”

“And who are your enemies?”

“Big birds with terrible claws and beaks, that want to fly at us and devour us. And terrible snakes that glide silently up the branches on which we are perched, and sometimes strike us dead, as quick as a lightning’s flash.”

“And I suppose you must sing?”

“Oh yes, we must sing, because we are so very happy, and we love each other so.”

“And why are your wings and back so dusky and dark?”

“That our enemies may not see us.”

“But I’ve read,” said Harry, “that many tropical birds were all bright and gay with colours of every hue.”

“Oh yes, so they are, but then these live all their lives among flowers as gorgeous in colour as they themselves are, and so their enemies mistake them for the flowers among which they dwell.”

“Do you come from a very far-off land?”

“Yes, a very very far-off land.”

“And is it very beautiful there?”

“Very very beautiful.”

“I would like to go to that far-off beautiful land. How do you get there?”

“We fly.”

“Yes, I know, but I can’t, though I once tried I made a pair of wings out of an old umbrella; they were so awkward, though, and would not work.

“But I meant,” continued Harry, “which way do you go?”

“Southward and southward and southward, and westward and westward and southward again.”

“What a funny road! I should get dead tired before I was halfway.”

“So do we: then we look about for a ship or a rock, if at sea, and alight to rest.”

“And aren’t you afraid the sailors may shoot you?”

“Oh no; for sailors do so love to see us on the yards. (How true! G.S.) They dearly love us. We remind them of England and their cottage homes and their wives and little ones, and of apple orchards and flowery meadows and crimson poppies in the fields of green waving corn, and all kinds of beautiful things.”

“No wonder they love you!”

“Yes; they do so love us; I’ve seen the tears start to the eyes of little sailor lads as they gazed at us. And I know the men tread more lightly on the deck for fear of scaring us away.”

“And when rested you just go on again?”

“Yes, on and on and on.”

“I should lose my head.”

“We don’t—something seems to guide us onward.”

“I suppose you see some terrible sights? Have you seen a shipwreck? I should like to.”

“Oh no, no, you would not. If you once saw a shipwreck, or a ship foundering at sea, you would never never forget it.”

“Tell me.”

“I cannot. No one could. But somehow it is usually at night we witness these awful scenes. I have seen a ship sailing silently over the moonlit water, the yellow light streaming from her ports, and I have heard the sounds of music and laughter, and the voices of glad children at play. And I have seen the same vessel, but a short hour after, drifting on in the darkness to the pitiless rocks before a white squall. Ah! white was the squall, white were the waves, but not more white than the scared, dazed faces of those poor shrinking, moaning beings who rushed on deck when she struck.”

“What did you do?”

“Flew away. Just flew away.”

“Tell me more.”

“What shall I tell you of?”

“About your own bright home in the far-off land.”

“Shall I speak to you of the coralline sea that laves the tree-fringed shores of Africa?”

“Yes, yes, tell me of that.”

“Rippling up through the snakey roots of the mangrove trees, bathing the green branches that stoop down to kiss them—oh! ’tis a lovely sea, when the great sun shines, and the cyclone and squall are far away, calm and soft and blue. Yet not all blue, for on the coral flats it is a tender green, and grey where the cloud shadows fall on it. But all placid, all warm and dreamy as if fairies dwelt in caves beneath. Then the little green islands seem to float above the sea as if only just let down from heaven.

“Sometimes great sharks float upwards from the dark depths beneath, and bask on the surface with their fins above the water, and white sea-gulls come and perch upon them just as starlings do on sheep at home.”

“How strange! Don’t the sharks try to kill the birds?”

“No, they like it, and I think the birds sing to them and lull them to sleep, or that they tell them tales of far-off lands as I am speaking now to you.

“But on the coral reefs, where the sea, at a distance, looks so sweetly green, if you were there in a boat and looked away down to the bottom, oh! what a sight would be spread out before you! A garden of shrubs and waving flowers more lovely than anything ever seen on land.”

“How I should like to go there! But the interior of Africa is very gorgeous too, is it not?”

“Yes, to us who can fly quickly from place to place, through flowery groves, where birds and blossoms vie with each other in the beauty of their colours, where the butterflies are like fans, of crimson and green where the very lizards and every creeping thing, are adorned with rainbow tints and ever-changing bright metallic sheen.”

“There are dark corners, though, in this strange land of yours, are there not?”

“Yes, dark, dark corners; but I must not tell you of these, of the deep gloomy forest, where the gorilla howls, and wretched dwarfs have their abode, or of the great swamp lands in which the dreadful crocodile and a thousand other slimy creatures dwell, and where, in patches of forest, the mighty anacondas sleep. Nor of the wondrous deserts of sand, nor of the storms that rise sometimes and bury caravans of camels and men alive. No, we swallows think only of the beauty of our African home, of its roaring cataracts, its wooded hills, its peaceful lakes and broad shining rivers, and of the glorious sunshine that gladdens all.

“But now I must go. Pray let me free. I have much to do before the summer is over, and that kind something beckons me back again—back to the land of the sun.”

“Go, birdie, go, and some day I too will take my flight to the Land of the Sun.”

Harry Milvaine by William Gordon Stables

Chapter Six.

Harry's School-Days—Lost in a Snowstorm.

Harry Milvaine had aunts and uncles in abundance, and about as many cousins as there are gooseberries on an ordinary-sized bush; for he had first cousins and second and third cousins, and on and on to, I verily believe, forty-second cousins. They count kinship a long way off in the Scottish Highlands.

And they used all to visit occasionally at Beaufort Hall. They did not all come at once, to be sure, else, if they had, there would have been no beds to hold them. They would have had to sleep in barns and byres, under the hayricks and out on the heather.

Oh, it was no uncommon thing now for Harry to sleep on the heather. On summer nights he would often steal out through the casement window of his bedroom, which opened on to the lawn, and go quietly away to a healthy hill not far off. Here he would pull a bundle of heather for a pillow, and lie down rolled in his plaid with Eily in his arms and a book in his hand. As long as there was light he would read. When it grew semi-dark he would sleep, and awake in the morning as fresh as a blackbird.

Once only he had what some boys would consider an ugly adventure. On awaking one morning he felt something damp and cold touch his knee—he wore the kilt. He quickly threw off the plaid, and there, close by him, was an immense green-yellow snake. The creature was coiled up somewhat in the form of the letter W. It was fully as thick as the neck part of an ordinary violin, and it glittered all over as if varnished. A wholesome, healthy snake, I assure you. He raised his head and hissed at Harry. That snake would have fain got away. Very likely he had said to himself the night before:

“I'll creep in here for warmth and get away again in the morning, before the human being is awake.”

But the snake had overslept himself and was caught napping.

Now there are two animals that do not like to turn tail when fairly faced—a cat and a snake. Both feel they are at a disadvantage when running away.

I have often proved this with snakes. Give them a fair offing, and they will glide quickly off; but catch them unawares, and get close up to them, and they will face you and fight.

Harry knew this and lay perfectly still. Granting that these great green-yellow Highland snakes are not poisonous, they bite, and it is not nice to be bitten by a snake of any kind.

Just at that moment, however, Eily returned from the woods where she had been hunting on her own account. She took in the situation at a glance. Next moment she had whirled the snake round her head and dashed it yards away, where it lay writhing with a broken back. Many dogs are clever at killing snakes. Then she came and licked her master's hand.

Every time any of Harry's aunts came they made this remark:

"How the boy does grow, to be sure!" Every time one of Harry's uncles came he made some such remark as this:

"He'll be as big a man as his father. He is a true Highlander and a true Milvaine."

Harry liked his uncles and aunts very well after a fashion, but he cared little or nothing for his cousins. Some of them called him the hermit. Harry did not mind. But he would coolly lock his garden gate and sit down to read or to write, or begin working at his lathe, while his cousins would be playing cricket in the paddock; then perhaps he would come out, look for a moment, with an air of indifference, at the game, then whistle on Eily and go off to the woods or the river. This was exceedingly inhospitable of Harry, I must confess, only I must paint my hero in his true colours.

"Why don't you play with your cousins, dear?" his mother would ask.

"Oh, mamma!" Harry would reply, "what are they to me? I have books, a gun, and a fishing-rod, and I have Eily; what more should I want?"

The name of Hermit followed him to the parish school. Our tale dates back to the days before School Boards were thought of.

Harry was eleven now, and therefore somewhat too old for a governess. So Miss Campbell had gone. I'm afraid that Harry had already forgotten his promise to marry her when he "grew a great big man." At all events he did not repeat it even when he kissed her good-bye.

What a long, long walk Harry had to that parish school! How would the average English boy like to trudge o'er hill and dale, through moor and moss and forest, four long miles every morning? But that is precisely what Harry had to do, carrying with him, too, a pile of books one foot high, including a large Latin dictionary.

Harry thought it delightful in summer; he used to start very early so as to be able to study nature by the way, study birds and their nests, study trees and shrubs and ferns and flowers.

Scottish schoolboy fashion, he took his dinner with him. A meagre meal enough, only some bread-and-butter in a little bag, and a tin of sweet milk which he carried in his hand.

Eily always went along with him, but she waited at a neighbouring farm until school came out in the forenoon, when she had part of Harry's dinner; then she was invariably at the gate at four o'clock, and wild with joy when the homeward journey commenced.

Several other boys went Harry's road for more than two miles, but it was the custom of the "Hermit" to start off at a race with his dog as soon as he got out, and never halt until he put a good half-mile betwixt himself and the lads, who would gladly have borne him company.

No wonder he was called "Harry the Hermit!"

Dominie Roberts, the parish schoolmaster, was a pedagogue of the old school. And there exist many such in Scotland still.

He would no more think of teaching a class without the tawse in his hand, than a huntsman would of entering the kennels without his whip. As my English readers may not know what a "tawse" is, I herewith give them a recipe for making one.

Take, then, a piece of leather two feet long, and one inch and a half wide. The leather ought to be the thickest a shoemaker can give you, of the same sort as he makes the uppers of a navvy's boots with. Now at one end make a slit or buttonhole to pass two fingers through, and cut up the other into three tags of equal breadth and about three inches long.

Then your tawse is complete, or will be so as soon as you have heated the ends for a short time in the fire to harden them.

It is a fearful instrument of torture, as my experience can testify. It is not quite so much used in schools now, however, as it was thirty years ago, when the writer was a boy. But it is still used. Such a thing as hoisting and flogging, I do not believe, was ever known in a Scottish school. It would result in mutiny.

You have to hold out your hand. The teacher says “Pande” (in Latin). Then he lets you have it again and again, sometimes till he is out of breath, and your hands and wrists are all blistered.

I remember receiving six-and-thirty “pandey,” because I had smashed a tyrant boy who had bullied me for months. It was a cruel injustice; for the bully got no punishment except that which I had given him.

Dominie Roberts was a pedagogue, then, of this class.

All the boys were afraid of him. Harry was not. Though only eleven years of age, Harry was nearly as tall as the dominie.

There was a consultation one day as to who should steal the tawse.

No boy would venture, but at length—

“I will,” said Harry.

“Hurrah! for the Hermit!” was the shout.

The dominie went out of the schoolroom every forenoon for half an hour to smoke. A pretty hubbub and din there was then, you may be sure.

The day after the theft of the tawse was determined on, as soon as the pedagogue had stumped out of the school—he wore a wooden leg from the knee—Harry went boldly up to the desk and seized the tawse.

“What shall I do with it?” he asked a schoolboy.

“Pitch it out of the window.”

“No,” cried another, “he would get it again. Put it in the fire.”

Harry did so, and covered it up with burning coals.

By and by back stumped the dominie. He held his nose in the air and sniffed. There was a shocking smell of burning leather.

The dominie went straight to the fire, and with the poker discovered the almost shapeless cinders of his pet tawse!

He grew red and white, time about, with rage.

“Who has done this thing?” he thundered.

No reply, and the dominie thumped on the floor with his wooden leg, and repeated the question.

Still no answer.

“I shall punish the entire school,” cried Dominie Roberts.

He stumped out again, and many of the boys grew pale with fear, and the smaller ones began to cry.

Presently the dominie returned. In his hand he bore a long piece of a bridle rein, and this he fashioned into a tawse in sight of the whole school. Then he called the biggest class, and once more demanded the name of the culprit.

No reply, but every lad in the class began to wet his hands and pull down his sleeves.

“All hands up,” was the terrible command.

The punishment was about to commence when forth stepped Harry the Hermit into the middle of the circle.

“Stay a moment, if you please, sir,” said Harry.

“You know, then, who committed the crime?” asked the dominie, sternly.

“I do; it was myself.”

“And why?”

“Because the other boys wanted to, but were afraid.”

“Which other boys? Name them.”

“I will not.”

“Pande, sir, Pande.”

Five minutes afterwards Harry staggered back to his seat, pale-faced and sick.

He sat down beside his class-mate, and was soon so far recovered as to be able to whisper—

“How many did I have?”

“Two-and-twenty,” was the reply. “I counted.”

“And that new tawse is a tickler, I can tell you,” said Harry.

He did not climb any trees that day going home. He could not have held on. Nor was he able to eat much supper, but he did not tell the reason why.

But, apart from his fondness for corporal or palmar punishment, Dominie Roberts was a clever teacher, and Harry made excellent progress.

Autumn came round, and stormy wet days, and many a cold drenching our hero got, both coming to and going from school. But he did not mind them. They only seemed to render him hardier and sturdier, and make his cheeks the ruddier.

Then winter arrived “on his snow-white car,” as poets say, and often such storms blew that even grown-up people feared to face them. But Harry would not give in. On evenings like these John would be dispatched to meet Harry, and many an anxious glance from the dining-room window would his mother cast, until she saw them coming up the long avenue, Eily always first, feathering through the snow, and barking for very joy as she neared the house.

Sometimes the roads would be so blocked with snow, that Harry found it far more convenient to walk along on the top of the stone fences, often missing his feet, and getting plunged nearly over his head in a snow-bank.

In the early part of January, 186-, I forget the exact day and date, one of the most fierce and terrible snowstorms that old men ever remembered, swept over the northern shires of Scotland.

When Harry left for school that morning there seemed little cause for alarm. There was no sunshine however, and the whole sky was covered by an unbroken wall of blue-grey cloud. Towards the forenoon snow began to fall—a kind of soft hail like millet seeds. The ground was hard and dry to receive it, so it did not melt.

The schoolboys tried to mould it into snowballs, but it would not “make,” it would not stick together—evidence in itself that the frost was intense.

Gradually this soft, fine hail changed to big, dry flakes. Then the wind began to rise, and moan around the chimneys, and go shrieking through the leafless boughs of the ash trees and elms. The snowfall increased in density every minute. Looking up through the falling flakes, you could not have seen three yards.

Dominie Roberts at two o’clock began to get uneasy, and gave many an anxious glance towards the windows, now getting quickly snowed up. So great, too, was the frost that, though a roaring fire of wood and peats burned on the hearth, the panes were flowered and frozen.

At half-past two it began to get rapidly dark, so the dominie dismissed his class with earnest injunctions to those boys who had far to go, not to delay on the road, but to hurry home at once.

It might have been thought that on an evening like this, Harry would have been glad of companionship on the road. Not he. He went off like a young colt, with Eily galloping round him, as soon as ever he got outside the gate.

The wind blew right in his face, however, and the drift was whirling like smoke right over every fence. The roads were also barricaded every few yards with high wreaths of snow, blown off the fields and hills.

The wind blew wilder, and every minute the cold seemed to grow more and more intense.

Harry’s face and hands were blue and benumbed before he had gone a mile and a half, Eily’s coat was white and frozen hard; but on went the pair of them, battling with the storm, Harry holding his head well down, and keeping his plaid up over his nostrils.

Often he had to turn round and walk backwards by way of resting himself.

The snow-wreaths were most difficult to get through, the smoking drift cutting his breath and nearly suffocating him.

So ere long his strength began to fail. Hardy though he was, Highlander though he was, bred and born among the wild, bleak mountains, and reared in the forests, his powers of endurance gave out.

He crouched down and took the half-frozen dog in his arms. He talked to her as if she had been a human being, and the probability is that she did know what he said.

“Oh, Eily,” he said, “I do feel tired.”

The kindly collie licked his face.

“But come on,” he cried, starting up again; “we must not give in. We have only about a mile and a half to go if we cross through the wood. We’ll soon get home. Come on, Eily, come on.”

In a short time he had reached the wood. It was mostly spruce and fir, and the branches were borne half to the ground with the weight of snow at one side, while the other was bare, and the wind tearing through them.

He leaped the “dyke,” (a stone fence) and was glad he had done so. There was far more shelter here, and the blasts were less fierce and cutting. He walked faster now. The wood was about half a mile wide. Arrived at the other side, a path by a stone fence led all the way down to his own home in the glen beneath.

He hurried on. How strange the wood looked under its mantle of snow! But he could not see any distance ahead owing to the drift. Sometimes the wind would catch a tree and roar through it, and for the moment he would be almost suffocated with the smother of falling snow.

He had gone on quite a long way, when he suddenly came to a clearing. He had never seen it before; never been here before. Then the awful truth flashed at once across the boy’s mind—he was lost!

How long he wandered in the wood before he sank exhausted beside a tree he never could tell.

Night and darkness came on, the storm roared through the wood with ever-increasing force, but Harry knew nothing of it. He slept—slept that sleep that seldom knows a waking in this world.

And the drift banked up—the cruel drift—up around him. It hid his legs, his arms, his shoulders, and at last his head itself.

Still the snow fell and the wind blew. It blew with a moaning, whistling sound through the tall pine-trees, as it does through rigging and cordage of a ship in a gale. It blew with a rushing noise through the closer-branched spruce trees, and ever in a momentary lull you might have heard the frozen tips of the branches knocking together as if glass rattled.

It was a terrible night.

As usual on stormy evenings, stalwart John had gone to meet young Harry; but he kept the road. It never struck him that the boy would have ventured through the wood in such a night.

Harry's parents were sitting in the parlour anxious beyond all expression, when suddenly the quick, sharp, impatient bark of the collie rang out high above the howling wind.

In she rushed whining when the door was opened. But out she flew again.

“Oh, come quickly,” she seemed to say, “and save poor young master!”

Mr Milvaine well knew what it meant. Five minutes after, with lanterns and poles, he and two trusty servants were following close at the honest dog's heels.

Up the hill by the fence side, up and up and into the wood, and never did the faithful animal halt until she led them to the tree where she had left the boy.

For a moment or two now she seemed lost. She went galloping round and round the tree; while with their lanterns Mr Milvaine and his servants looked in vain for poor Harry.

But back Eily came, and at once began to scrape in the snow. Then something dark appeared, and Eily barked for joy.

Her master was found.

Was he dead? They thought so at first. But the covering of snow had saved him.

They poured a little brandy over his throat, wrapped him tenderly in a Highland plaid, and bore him home. Yet it was days before he spoke.

Dear reader, did ever you consider what a blessing our loving Father has given us in a faithful dog? How kind we ought to be, and how considerate for the comfort of such a noble animal! And ever as they get older our thoughtfulness for their welfare and care of them ought to increase. Mind, too, that most good thinking men believe that dogs have a hereafter.

“I canna but believe,” says the Ettrick shepherd, in his broad Doric, “that dowgs hae souls.”

My friend, the Rev. J.G. Wood, in his book called “Man and Beast,” has proved beyond dispute that there is nothing in Scripture against the theory that the lower animals will have a hereafter.

And note how the goodly poet Tupper writes about his dear dog Sandy:

“Shall noble fidelity, courage and love,
Obedience and conscience—all rot in the ground?
No room be found for them beneath or above,
Nor anywhere in all the universe round?
Can Fatherhood cease? or the Judge be unjust?
Or changefulness mark any counsel of God?
Shall a butterfly’s beauty be lost in the dust?
Or the skill of a spider be crushed as a clod?

“I cannot believe it: Creation still lives;
The Maker of all things made nothing in vain:
The Spirit His gracious ubiquity gives,
Though seeming to die, ever lives on again.
We ‘rise with our bodies,’ and reason may hope
That truth, highest truth, may sink humbly to this,
That ‘Lo, the poor Indian’ was wiser than Pope
When he longed for his dog to be with him in bliss!”

Harry Milvaine by William Gordon Stables

Chapter Seven.

Leaving Home.

From what I have already told the reader about Harry Milvaine, it will readily be gathered that he was a lad of decided character and of some considerable determination. A boy, too, who was apt to take action at the first touch of the spur of a thought or an idea.

What I have now to relate will, I think, prove this still further.

He left his uncle—a younger brother of his mother—and his father one evening talking in the dining-room. He had bidden them good-night and glided away upstairs to bed. He was partially undressed before he noticed that he had left a favourite book down in the library.

So he stole silently down to fetch it.

He had to pass the dining-room door, and in doing so the mention of his own name caused him to pause and listen.

Listeners, they say, seldom hear any good about themselves. Perhaps not, but the following is what Harry heard:

“Ha!” laughed Uncle Robert, “I tell you, brother, I’d do it. That would take the fun out of him. That would knock all notions of a sailor’s life out of the lad. It has been done before, and most successfully too, I can tell you.”

“And,” replied Harry’s father, “you would really advise me to—”

“I would really advise you to do as I say,” said uncle, interrupting his brother-in-law. “I’d send him to sea for a voyage in a whaler. They sail in February, and they return in May—barely three months, you see.”

“Indeed, then I do think I’ll take your advice. But his mother loves the dear, brave boy so, that I’m sure she’ll feel the parting very much.”

“Well, well, my sister’ll soon get over that.”

Harry stayed to hear no more. He went back to his room without the book, and, instead of going to bed, lay down upon his sofa with the intention of what he called “doing a good think.”

For fully an hour he lies there with his round eyes fixed on the ceiling.

Then he starts up.

“Yes,” he cries, half aloud, “I’ll do it, I’ll do it. My father will see whether I have any courage or not.”

He goes straight to the little money-box kennel that stood on the mantelpiece.

The canary and pigeon business had been profitable with Harry for some time past.

He was very wealthy indeed. More so even than he imagined, for now when he counted his horde it ran up to 4 pounds, 15 shillings, 6 pence.

“Splendid!” said Harry to himself; “I couldn’t have believed I was so rich.”

Then he knelt down and said his prayers, far more fervently than he was wont to do. Especially did he pray for blessings to fall on his dear mother and father.

“I don’t think it is quite right,” he said to himself, “what I am going to do, but it will be all right again in a few months.”

He lay down in bed and slept soundly for hours. But the stars were still shining thickly when he awoke and looked out of the window.

There was snow on the ground, hard, crisp snow.

Harry lit his candle, then he got out his small writing-case, and, after some time and considerable pains, succeeded in writing a letter, which he carefully folded and addressed.

Young though he was—with his tiny fowling-piece—a gift from one of his uncles—the boy could tumble either rabbit or hare, or bring down a bird on the wing, but he was not particularly clever with the pen. I wish I could say that he was.

He now got a small bag out of the cupboard, and into this he put a change of clothes. Having washed and dressed, he was ready for the road.

He opened his door quietly, and walked silently along the passage, boots in hand. He had to pass his mother's room door. His heart beat high, it thumped against his ribs so that he could almost hear it. How he would have liked to have gone in, and kissed his dear mother good-bye! But he dared not.

Not until he was quite out of doors among the snow did he put on his boots. Eily, not knowing him, made a rush, barking and fiercely growling.

"Hush, Eily! hush!" he cried; "it's me, it's Harry, your master."

Eily changed her tune now, and also her attitude. The hair that had been standing up all along her back was smoothed down at once, and as the boy bent to tie his boots she licked his hands and cheek. The poor dog seemed really to know that something more than usual was in the wind.

There was a glimmer of light in the east, but the stars everywhere else were still very bright.

Harry stood up.

Eily sat motionless, looking eagerly up into his face, and her eyes sparkled in the starlight.

She was waiting for her master's invitation to go along with him. One word would have been enough to have sent her wild with joy.

"Where can he be going?" she was asking herself. "Not surely to the forest at this time of night! But wherever he goes, I'll go too."

"Eily," said the boy, seriously, even sadly, "I'm going away, far, far away."

The dog listened, never moving ear nor tail.

"And, Eily, you cannot come with me, dear, dear doggie."

Eily threw herself at his feet, or rather fell; she looked lost in grief.

He patted her kindly.

This only made matters worse. She thought he was relenting, that his words had been only spoken in fun. She jumped up, sprang on his shoulder, licked his ear, then went gambolling round and round him, and so made her way to the gate.

It was very apparent, however, that all these antics were assumed, there was no joy at the dog's heart. She was but trying to overcome her master's scruples to take her along with him.

Harry followed her to the gate.

"It must not be, Eily," he said again; "I'm going where you cannot come. But I will come back, remember that."

His hand was on her head, and he was gazing earnestly down at her.

"Yes, I'll come back in a few months, and you will meet me, oh! so joyfully. Then we'll roam and rove and run in the beautiful forest once more, and fish by the river, and shoot on the moorland and hill. Goodbye, Eily. Be good, and watch. Good-bye, goodbye."

A great tear fell on Eily's mane as he bent down and kissed her brow.

Eily stood there by the gate in the starlight, watching the dark retreating figure of her beloved young master, until a distant corner hid him from view, and she could see him no more.

Then she threw herself down on the snow; and, reader, if you could have heard the big, sobbing sigh she gave, you would believe with me, that the mind of a dog is sometimes almost human, and their griefs and sorrows very real.

Hastily brushing the tears from his eyes, Harry made the best of his way along the road, not daring to look behind him, lest his feelings should overcome him.

He kept repeating to himself the words he had heard his uncle make use of the evening before. This kept his courage up. When he had gone about a mile he left the main road and turned into a field. A little winding church-path soon brought him to a wooded hollow, where there was a very tiny cottage and garden.

He opened the gate and entered.

He went straight to the right-hand window, and, wetting his forefinger, rubbed it up and down on the pane.

The noise it made was enough to awaken some one inside, for presently there was a cough, and a voice said—

“Who’s there?”

“It is I, Andrew: rise, I want to speak to you.”

“Man! is it you, Harry? I’ll be out in a jiffy.”

And sure enough a light was struck and a candle lit. Harry could see poor faithful Andrew hurrying on his clothes, and in two minutes more he had opened the door and admitted his young friend.

“Man! Harry,” he said, “you scared me. You are early on the road. Have ye traps set in the forest? D’ye want me to go wi’ ye?”

“No such luck, Andrew,” replied the boy. “I’ve no traps set. I won’t see the forest for many a long day again.”

“Haud your tongue, man!” cried Andrew, looking very serious and pretending to be angry. “Haud your tongue. Are ye takin’ leave o’ your reason? What have ye in that bag? Why are ye no dressed in the kilt, but in your Sunday braws?”

Then Harry told him all—told him of the determination he had for many a day to go to sea, and of the conversation he had overheard on the previous evening.

Andrew used all the arguments he could think of or muster to dissuade him from his purpose, and enlarged upon the many dangers to be encountered on the stormy main, as he called it, but all to no purpose.

“Mind ye,” said Andrew, “I’ve been to sea myself, and know something about it.”

Honest, innocent Andrew, all the experience he had of the stormy main was what he had gained in a six hours’ voyage betwixt Granton and Aberdeen.

But when Andrew found that nothing which he could adduce made the slightest impression on his young friend, he pulled out his snuff-horn, took two enormously large pinches, and sat down in silence to look at Harry.

The boy pulled out a letter from his breast-pocket.

“This is for my dear mother,” he said. “Give it to her to-day. Tell her how sorry I was to go away. Tell her—tell her—.”

Here the boy fairly broke down, and sobbed as if his heart would break.

My hero crying? Yes, I do not feel shame for him either. The soldier or sailor, ere journeying far away to foreign lands, is none the less brave if he does pause on the brow of the hill, and, looking back to his little cottage in the glen, drop a tear.

Do you remember the words of the beautiful song—

“Mid pleasures and palaces tho’ we may roam,
Be it ever so humble, there’s no place like home;
A charm from the skies seems to hallow us there,
Which, seek thro’ the world, is ne’er met elsewhere.

“An exile from home, splendour dazzles in vain,
Oh! give me my lowly thatched cottage again!
The birds singing gaily that came at my call,
And give me the peace of mind dearer than all?”

Andrew, when he saw Harry crying, felt very much inclined to join him. There was a big lump in his throat that he could hardly gulp down. But then Andrew was a bit simple.

Harry jumped up presently and took two or three strides up and down the floor of the little room, and so mastered his grief.

“It won’t be for such a very long time, you know, Andrew,” he said.

“No,” said Andrew, brightening up. “And I’ll look after your garden, Harry.”

“Thank you, Andrew, and the turning lathe and the tools?”

“I’ll see to them. You’ll find them all as bright as new pins on your return.”

“And my pets, Andrew?”

“Yes.”

“Well, look after those too. Sell them all as soon as you can—rats, mice, guinea-pigs, and pigeons, and all.”

“Yes.”

“And, Andrew, keep the money you get for them to buy snuff.”

“Good-bye, Andrew.”

“Good-bye. Mind you take care of yourself.”

“I’ll do that for my mother’s sake.”

Andrew pressed Harry’s soft hand between his two horny palms for just a moment.

“God bless you, Harry!” he muttered.

He could not trust himself to say more, his heart was too full.

Then away went Harry, grasping his stick in his hand and trudging on manfully over the hills, with his face to the east.

By and by the sun rose, and with it rose Harry’s spirits. He thought no more of the past. That was gone. He felt a man now; he felt he had a future before him, and on this alone he permitted his thoughts to rest.

Now I do not mean to vindicate that which my hero has done—quite the reverse. Obedience to the wishes of his parents is a boy’s first duty.

Still, I cannot help thinking that my young hero had a bold heart in his breast.

See him now, with the sun glinting down on his ruddy face, on which is a smile, and on his stalwart figure; he is more like a boy of fifteen than a child under twelve. How firm his tread on the crisp and dazzling snow, how square his shoulders, how springy and lithe his gait and movement! No, I’m not ashamed of my hero. Hear him. He is singing—

“There is many a man of the Cameron clan
That has followed his chief to the field,

And sworn to support him or die by his side,
For a Cameron never can yield.

“The moon has arisen, it shines on that path,
Now trod by the gallant and true—
High, high are their hopes, for their chieftain has said,
That whatever men dare they can do.
I hear the pibroch, sounding, sounding,
Deep o’er the mountains and glens,
While light-springing footsteps are trampling the heath—
’Tis the march of the Cameron men.”

Poor brave, but rather wayward, boy! the gallant ship is even now lying in Lerwick Bay
that soon shall bear him far o’er Arctic seas.

Freeeditorial 