

Stables Gordon

**Born to Wander: A Boy's Book of
Nomadic Adventures**



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Содержание

Book One – Chapter One	4
Book One – Chapter Two.	15
Book One – Chapter Three	24
Book One – Chapter Four	34
Book One – Chapter Five	46
Book One – Chapter Six	55
Book One – Chapter Seven	65
Book One – Chapter Eight	77
Book Two – Chapter One	88
Book Two – Chapter Two	95
Book Two – Chapter Three	105
Book Two – Chapter Four	116
Book Two – Chapter Five	127
Book Two – Chapter Six	134
Book Two – Chapter Seven	147
Book Two – Chapter Eight	159
Book Two – Chapter Nine	171
Book Two – Chapter Ten	184
Book Three – Chapter One	191
Book Three – Chapter Two	202
Book Three – Chapter Three	210
Book Three – Chapter Four	222
Book Three – Chapter Five	237

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Book One – Chapter One

Grayling House, and the Wildery around it

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

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

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

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

beauty, hand in hand, are inexpressibly charming.

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

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

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

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

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

Effie glanced down at the chrysanthemums with love and admiration, at the pure white ones, and the pink-and-white, and the crimson, and the bright, bright yellow; she gently smoothed

their gorgeous petals that looked so like nodding plumes.

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

But these grew on such long, long stalks – for they had to creep high to meet the sun – that Effie had to stand on tiptoe, and bend down their mauve clusters to her face.

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

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

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

The gardens around Grayling House were indeed a wildery, yet not a wilderness. It was the pleasure of their owner to let all growing things have a good deal of their own way. For he loved nature even more than art. So in summer time the big lawn that stretched down as far as the quiet river’s bank – where the trailing willows kissed the water, and the splendidly bedecked kingfishers darted in and out from sunshine and shade – was carpeted with flowers, buttercups and daisies and nodding plumes of grasses, and clover white and red. Yet the sun had such access to this lawn, despite the bordering trees, that those wild

things never grew high, but spread and spread, and intertwined, as if they really loved each other, and would not be parted for the world. A favourite lawn this for bees of every size and colour, and for a thousand strangely-shaped and gaudily-coloured beetles, which on cloudy days were content to climb up and down the grass stems and take exercise as acrobats do, but who, when the sun burst out, opened the little cupboards on their shoulders, where their wings had been carefully stowed away from the wet, unfolded these gauzy appendages, and flew away in search of wild adventures.

There were paths through this wildery that seemed to lead nowhere, and as often as not made pretence of taking you straight back towards the house again, but landed you at last perhaps in a greenwood glade, with broad-leaved sycamores, and elms around, in which blackbirds fluted in spring, thrushes piped, and the chaffinch tried to drown the notes of every other bird with his mad merry melody. And here perhaps was a rockery, with a fountain playing and a streamlet trickling away riverwards, through the greenest of grass. On this rockery dwelt ferns that loved moisture, and creeping saxifrages, with pretty flowerets of deepest crimson, but not a bit bigger than a bee's head.

Had you wished to return from this delightful lonesome glade – and sooner or later you would be sure to wish to go back, notwithstanding its beauty – you would probably have taken a wrong turning, and after a while found yourself in a rose-covered, heather-roofed, rustic summer-house, with a little

window opening over the river itself, and seats and lounges inside.

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

story yourself, and nodding like the trees till the book would drop out of your grasp, and *you* would be at the back of the north wind.

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

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

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

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

“Effie, Effie, Effie!”

“Coming, Leonard – coming – coming – coming!” was Effie's reply, as she ran round through the shrubbery to the terraced lawn

behind.

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

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

“*You* couldn’t do it, Effie,” said Leonard, nodding his head.

“Oh, I could! You see now.”

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

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

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

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

As I have said the lad was a Scot, there is little need to add

that Grayling House and the beautiful river that went wimpling by it were on the *northern* side of the Tweed.

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

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

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

“Listen,” he continued, “was that a mole?”

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

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

He soon tired, however.

“I say, Effet, I don’t call this keeping a holiday. Let’s have some real fun.”

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

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

Old Joe was a monster pike, who lived in a monster pond or pool, big enough almost to be called a lake, for it covered three acres of ground, and one part of it, right in the centre, was said to be deep enough to bury the village church and steeple. It was down at the bottom of this deep dark hole that Joe lived.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Book One – Chapter Two.

Glen Lyle

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

Tupper.

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

Captain Lyle reading —

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

“In our isle’s enchanted hall,

Hands unseen thy couch are strewing,
Fairy strains of music fall,
Every sense in slumber dewing.

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

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

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

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

“Ethel, I am a soldier.”

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

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

Man and wife – but lovers yet.

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

“It would be less sad, Arnold, if I could share your

wanderings.”

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

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

“Why not I as well as others?”

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

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

Arnold mused for a little.

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

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

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

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

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

She laughed a half-hysterical laugh of joy.

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

He took up the book and commenced at random —

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

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

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

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

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

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

Effie ran to her father’s arms.

Leonard ran to his mother.

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

“I hooked him,” cried Effie.

“I hauled him up,” cried Leonard.

“And we both hauled him out.”

“Dool¹ on the day for the hoose o’ Glen Lyle,” exclaimed Peter, rolling his eyes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹ Dool, *Scottice*— Grief or sorrow.

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

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

"We mustn't touch papa's pike any more."

"No," replied Leonard, thoughtfully, "Joe *is* papa's pike, and he mustn't be touched."

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

enjoyment, and one of the best of these was what Leonard called *The Miniature Menagerie*.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“I have it!” cried papa.

And down he sat.

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

Yes, Captain Lyle’s ideas were flowing now, so quickly that

he had to jot them down, or sketch them down here and there all over a great sheet of paper, and in about an hour's time the rush of thought had, in a measure, expended itself. He leant back in his chair, and gave a sigh of relief.

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

“Oh, what a scrawl!” she cried.

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

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

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

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

Book One – Chapter Three

Castle Beautiful

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

Mortimer Collins.

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

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

But listen! – if indeed it be possible to listen to anything –

there is evidently a merry party coming towards the mound here, from the direction of Grayling House.

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

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

What are they all doing here? Why, they are going to complete the building of the Miniature Menagerie. And if you now look behind you, and to the top of the little green hill, you will notice rising therefrom a structure of such fairy-like dimensions, but of such grace and beauty withal, that no one could have been blamed for mistaking it for the palace of some elfin king.

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

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

I do not know that Effie did much to assist – assist the work, I mean, for she *did* add to the din most considerably – but Leonard

proved an able lieutenant in running here and there, conveying his father's commands, and seeing that they were executed promptly.

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

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

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

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

On a shelf in one of the rooms lay a note-book, and in this book Captain Lyle had written – so plainly that even Peter could see to read it without those immense spectacles he used to wear when droning over the Good Book of an evening to the servants – all that it was necessary to know about the feeding and comfort of the poor wee animals who lived in Castle Beautiful. And Leonard and Effie, being Scotch, had learned to read very early, and soon could tell by heart everything in the book.

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

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

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

Once through this gate – and mind you, old Peter takes good care to lock it behind him – we find ourselves in quite a little shrubbery, though laid down with exquisite taste and without any overcrowding. And upwards, through the grass and miniature trees, the path goes winding and zig-zig-zagging till it lands us

on the flat roof of the hill, in front of the little palace.

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

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

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

But behold, Peter, who does look tall amid such surroundings,

opens the hall door of the Castle, and out step Don Caesar de Bazan and the Hon. Lady Purr-a-meow.

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

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

Of course Don Caesar has a couch in one corner, in which he is graciously permitted to sleep at night, or enjoy a siesta during the day. Lady Purr-a-meow does not object to that, and she even allows him to have his meals here so long as he behaves himself. She does not object either to have a game at romps with Don Caesar when *she* has a mind to; I emphasise the *she* because it makes all the difference in the world if Don Caesar himself proposes the game. She whacks him at once, and sends him to bed, and she knows exactly all his tender points, and where a claw hurts most, on his nose, for example, or on his closely-shaven

loins. She whacks him if he goes too near her dish, she whacks him if he barks, and sometimes whacks him because he doesn't. She whacks him if he comes too near to the window, and whacks him if he stops too far away from it. She whacks him sometimes for looking at her. If he doesn't look at her she says he is sulky, and whacks him for that; she whacks him for fun and for exercise, and to show her authority, so that, upon the whole, Don Caesar de Bazan gets a good deal more whacking than he deserves.

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

This window opens right on the lawn, that is, on the back lawn, and here a strange sight may be seen – namely, half a score of snow-white, smutty-nosed, garnet-eyed Himalayan rabbits, brought home first by a sailor uncle, and the same number of daft-looking little piebald guinea pigs. These have houses outside, and a monstrous owl called Tom is watching them half asleep from his cage near a window, and thinking how nice one or two of them would be to eat.

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

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

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

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

eyes, in which dwells a kind of pity, and seem to say, "We really wouldn't be you for all the world."

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

As soon as Leonard and she appear they are surrounded, and the din is for a time indescribable. The dwarf or pigmy pigeons hover round them and alight on their shoulders and hands; the kittens chase the rats, who squeak, and pretend to be terribly afraid; the sea-gull struts about crying, "Oh! you pretty, pretty, pretties;" the jackdaw whistles "Duncan Grey;" all the starlings start singing at once; and the idiotic duck can't think of anything better to do than stand flapping his wings in a corner and crying, "What, what, what, what!"

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

When the sun is shining upon the foreign aviary, what a sight it is to see those birds, in all their brilliancy of colour and beauty,

flitting from bough to bough in their bonnie home; but if you want music you must enter the adjoining room, where the birds of Britain dwell. Gaudy their plumage may not be but, oh! their voices are very sweet.

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

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

Book One – Chapter Four

Gipsy Life

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

Anon.

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

Scott: “The Dying Gipsy’s Dirge.”

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

Man never *is* but always to be blest. The delightful and happy life our Leonard and Effie had lived all the long sweet summer through could surely – one would think – have left nothing to be desired.

Both were little naturalists in their way, though they did not

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

Curious children both were, for they cared but little for company in their rambles; they were indeed all in all to each other. And even though they knew well that a welcome-home awaited them every day, they made no great hurry, and hardly ever went back from school without a bagful of delicacies for their pets in the fairy palace – green food and seeds for the birds, worms and dead mice or dead birds for the owl, and nuts for all who cared for them.

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

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

strange stories of romance.

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

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

“Oh! I could never guess. Perhaps a balloon.”

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

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

“No, you’re not right yet. Guess again.”

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

“No,” said Leonard. “I see you can’t get at it.”

“Well, tell me.”

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

“And tell fortunes, Leonie?”

“Well, we might do that, you know.”

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

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

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

Don was the donkey.

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

Effie laughed at this idea.

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

Leonard burst into the room where Captain Lyle was writing.

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

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

“Well, I’ll do it.”

“Leave me alone.”

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

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

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

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

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

“Indeed, sir, why?”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

have been fully half a yard long. Need I say he was well-kept and cared for, or that he dearly loved his little master and mistress, and was, upon the whole, as quiet and docile as a great sheep?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

for the time being.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“And I’m mistress,” said Effie.

So poor Peter had to give in.

They spent a very busy afternoon, but next morning the caravan was brought to the door, the brass work on Don’s new harness being polished till it looked like gold. Effie sprang lightly

in, Ossian, the big deerhound, who stood nearly as high as Don, went capering about, for he was to be one of the party.

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

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

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

“It’s delightful.”

“Aren’t you glad you’ve come?”

“Yes, aren’t you?”

“Yes. Which way shall we go?”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the Deep Dark Forest

The sun sank, and set at last, and they hurried on more quickly now, for though they intended to sleep in the caravan, still they wanted to be near a house. But gloaming fell, and the wood grew deeper and darker, so at last Leonard, telling his sister not to be frightened, drew in off the road, so that the caravan was closely hidden among spruce trees.

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

sunrise.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Walk gently,” she whispered, or rather hissed. “Hush, hush!

do not speak. Granny is dying.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

Book One – Chapter Five

Strange Adventures in Wood and Wild

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

Wordsworth.

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

“Fear not,” the gipsy gasps, “I knew – your – father. And his father. Kind, kind to me and mine were both.”

She took Leonard’s little white hand in her dark claws, and opened its palm towards the firelight. “Never – never – will old Nell Bayne read another fortune. But look; that line will lead you far ayont the seas. You are *born to wander*, born to roam over the ocean, by mountain, stream, and plain. Yet list! the water is not made to drown you, nor hemp nor lead to take your life, yet list! again, —

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

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

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

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

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

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

The country soon grew more open, and they were not at all sorry to leave the darksome pine woods. They had nothing

whereby to tell the time, except the sun, and this was, in some measure, their guide also as to the direction they were taking, but of course they left a deal to Don.

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

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

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

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

“But it doesn’t matter, Eff, you know,” Leonard would say, “one road is as good as another.”

Next evening found them bivouacked near a pretty wee country cottage. The good-wife of this humble home made them come in and sit by the fire, and she regaled them on barley scones and butter with delicious milk to wash it down, and made them tell their story over and over again.

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

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

A Dismal Night

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

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

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

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

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

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

The country through which they were now passing was very grand and wildly picturesque. Hills on hills successively rose on every side around them; they crossed romantic single-arched bridges, over deep ravines, far down at the bottom of which streams went foaming on through a chaos of great dark boulders, which had fallen from the beetling cliffs below, and to which wild flowers clung in patches, with here and there a dwarf pine or silver-stemmed birch.

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

What a lesson this reads one of the virtues of perseverance! For listen to this: the thickness of the rootlets that do the work is no greater than that of a stocking wire, the rate of their growth in length is not a hundredth part of that of the motion of a watch's hour-hand, the strength they expend in a given second would not

be enough to lift or move the tiniest midge or fly that alights upon the page you are reading. But these rootlets have faith, and faith moves mountains. They keep on growing and creeping into every crevice, and in time, lo and behold! tons of solid rock are detached, a thunder shower perhaps being the last straw to break the camel's back, and down it thunders to the bottom of the ravine, smashing trees and crunching other rocks, till it all reaches the bottom with the force and speed of a little avalanche.

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

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

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

Effie, in her saucy little straw hat, and her long cloak of crimson, did not look at all unlike a real Romany. She always told good fortunes. The boys were to grow up into bold, brave,

good men, and go and fight for their king and country, and come back with hats and plumes on their heads, stars on their manly breasts, spurs on their heels, and great swords jangling at their sides. The girls were to grow up good and kind and truthful, and some were to marry princes, who would come riding for them on white palfreys with scarlet trappings and manes and tails that touched the ground. Some were to marry great warriors, and others would have to be content to wed with honest John Ploughman, or perhaps to marry the miller.

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

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

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

“Just like a wee witchie.”

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

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

Effie had made all the outside front of the caravan quite gay

with wild flowers, and a great garland of primroses, ivy, and wild hyacinths, and was tying it round Don's neck, when the ladies alighted from their horses, and came to speak to her.

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

But Leonard lifted his hat, and replied boldly, —

"*We* are wanderers, lady."

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

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

"Quite right, dear," said the other lady, laughing.

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

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

"That is Ossian, my father's deerhound."

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

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

The young ladies pouted, and looked half-inclined to be cross, but finally laughed such a pleasant, merry, ringing laugh, that

Don pricked up his ears, and joined in with such a terrible lion-like roar, that the very hills rang for a mile around. It was not often that Don did give way to a fit of merriment, but when he did nobody else was able to get in a word until the strength of his lungs was quite exhausted.

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

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

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

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

Book One – Chapter Six

In a Smuggler's Cave

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

Dibdin.

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

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

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

“Well,” said the first speaker, “it is long past midnight, and as dark as pitch. No bothering moon to-night to interfere with the

work. We should turn a pretty penny by this cargo. Ha! ha!” he laughed, “you Scotchmen didn’t know how to work the oracle on this hillside till we Saxons crossed the border and showed you. Scotchmen are –”

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

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

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

The Scotchmen sheathed their dirks, but sulkily.

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

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

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

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

Bland pitched down his cap – long black ringlets floating over his shoulder as he did so – and sank into a seat, as if weary.

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

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

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

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

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

their expense. Their future spouses would be celebrated rather for negative than positive virtues.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The smuggler smiled.

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

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

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

“And Ossian?” said Effie, anxiously.

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

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

“Don’t be afraid, little Red Riding-Hood. I’m not going to eat you, and you won’t be hurt, and in good time I trust you will be

landed once again at your father's house. Now keep your minds easy. There is a room in there with plenty of skins and plaids, and a lamp burning, where you can sleep soundly and safely till morning."

"Pray, sir, what about Don and our caravan?"

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

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

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

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

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

meat, a game pasty, and cruets of wine.

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

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

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

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

Effie’s face fell, and he noticed it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Well, why did you come?”

“To help you, if possible.”

“What can you do?”

“I can take your donkey and cart, and drive away to your home – I know where it is – and get assistance.”

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

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

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

“Yes, and I’ll be so good to him.”

“Good-night.”

“Good-night.”

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

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

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

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

It was Captain Bland’s voice.

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

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

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

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

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

“Not much,” said Captain Bland, laughing. “You’re going to

kidnap us, aren't you?"

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

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

Book One – Chapter Seven

Life in the Lighthouse

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

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

Longfellow.

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

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

Leonard. “Oh! I am quite sure he will, unless – ”

Effie. “Yes, unless his ship is wrecked, and he is drowned, and

poor papa never, never knows where we are.”

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

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

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

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

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

Old Grindlay was there, and had already lit up, and by-and-bye, when darkness fell, the gleam from the great lamps would shine far over the sea, and be seen perhaps by many a ship homeward bound from distant lands. It was very still and quiet up here, only the wind sighing round the roof, the occasional shriek and mournful scream of some sea-bird, and the boom of the dark waters breaking lazily on the rocks beneath. Old Grindlay sat on a little stool waiting for his son to come and keep watch, the

two men, with old Grindlay's "old woman," as he called his wife, being all that dwelt on the island, and no boats ever visited it except about once a month.

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

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

"Keep the lights bright, Harry lad; I think it's going to blow."

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

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

"Amen," said the gnome.

"Amen," said Leonard and Effie in one breath.

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

The old woman began knitting as she spoke, the gnome

replenished the fire with a few more pieces of wreck to drive the cold sea air out of the chimney. Then he lit his pipe, and sat down in his favourite corner.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Old Grindlay’s Dream

“It was far away in the Greenland seas I was, sailing

northwards towards Spitzbergen. I was second mate of the bonnie barque *Scotia's Queen*. Well, one dark night we were ploughing away on a bit of a beam wind, doing maybe about an eight knots, maybe not so much. There was very little ice about, and as I had eight hours *in* that night, I went early to my bunk, and was soon fast asleep. It must have been well on to two bells in the middle watch – the spectioneer's – when I awoke all of a sudden like. I don't know, no more than Adam, what I could have been thinking about, but I crept out of my bunk in the state-room, where also the doctor and steward slept, and up on deck I went. I wondered to myself more than once if I really was in a dream. But there were sails and rigging, and the stars all shining, and the ship bobbing and curtseying to the dark waters, that went swishing and lapping alongside of her, and all awfully real for a dream. I could hear the men talking round the fo'c's'le, and smell their tobacco, too.

“Well, Leonard, I went to the weatherside, and leant over to calculate, sailor fashion, our rate of speed, when I noticed something like a square dark shadow on the water at the gangway. There was nothing above to cause so strange a shadow, but while I was yet wondering a face appeared in the middle of it, the face of a lovely woman. I saw it as plain as I see dear wee Effie's at this present moment. The long yellow hair was floating on the top of the water, and a fair hand beckoned me, and a sweet voice said, ‘Come.’ I thought of nothing but how to save the life of what I took to be a drowning woman. I sprang over at once, though I

never could swim a stroke, and down I sank like lead. There was a surging roar of water in my ears, and I remembered nothing more till I found myself at the bottom of the sea, with a strange green light from a window in a rock a kind of dazzling my eyes. The woman's face and long yellow hair were close beside me, and the fair arms were round me.

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

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

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

“Suddenly our ship’s bell rang out clear enough, ting-ting, ting-ting, ting-ting, *ting*. It was seven bells, and all the mermaids and fairies melted away before me, the music died away as if drowned, the surging of water returned to my ears, and next moment my head was above the sea, and I could see the stars shining down, and looking so large and near and clear, as they always do in those northern seas. In a minute I had caught the chains, and swung myself on board. I went to bed. In the morning I awoke, and laughed to myself as I thought of my dream, but my laughing was changed to wonder when I found every stitch of my clothing wringing with salt water, and when the spectioneer told me that he had seen me with his own eyes come on deck at two bells and go below at seven. Then I told him and the rest the story, and we all agreed that it was something far more than a dream.”

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

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

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

“Why not?”

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

gibbered in an African forest.”

“How terrible!” said Effie.

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

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

“Did I ever tell you the story of *But – but – but?*”

“No, never. Do tell us about ‘*But – But – But,*’ and begin, ‘Once upon a time.’”

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

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

“So away she went, leaning on her stick and carrying a basket. She looked very feeble, her old cloak was ragged and worn, and,

as she crept along, she kept saying to herself, ‘*but – but – but.*’

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

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

“I want some nice ham, and some nice eggs, and some fresh butter. I have no money – but – but – but – ’

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

“So he chased her away.

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

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

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

“And he chased her down the street.

“Then she entered the butcher’s.

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

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

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

“Then she went into the baker’s.

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

“Don’t say another word,’ said the baker. ‘Here are two nice

new ones, and some new-laid eggs. Don't thank me. I respect old age, and I pity rags.'

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

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

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

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

"What! you?" said John.

"Yes, me,' said Mary.

"But – but – but – ' said John.

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

“So John was indeed a happy man.

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

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

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

“Really, gentlemen, you do me too much honour, but – but – but – ’

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

“‘*You!*’ they all shouted in disdain.

“Yes, I. I’m very sorry for you, but – but – but – ’

“But what?’ they all cried.

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Oh yes!” said Mrs Grindlay, “but – but – but – ”

“But what, Mrs Grindlay?”

“But it’s time for bed.”

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

“The drowning cry

Of some strong swimmer in his agony.”

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

“God save all at sea to-night.”

Book One – Chapter Eight

“The Wreck! The Wreck!”

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

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

Longfellow.

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

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

“And she is breaking up,” said his wife. “Goodness grant she

may disappear entirely before the young ones see her.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

could do.

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

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

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

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

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

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

A strange sight it was, that awful coming squall. Right away in the wind’s eye was a long dark cloud, fringed beneath with a line of white. Forked lightning played incessantly across it, or fell through it like streams of blood or fire. It grew higher and higher as it came nearer and nearer; then with a rush and a roar it swept upon the island, and the very lighthouse seemed to rock in the awful embrace.

It was the last effort of one of the most terrible gales of wind that ever strewed our coast with wreckage, and with the bodies of unfortunate men. When it disappeared at length, and went

howling away over the mountains, the sun shone out. It shone down upon the place where the lugger had lain, but not a timber of her was now to be seen.

How the Rescue was Effected

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

across her he would no doubt give an excellent account of her.

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

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

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

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

Lyle gave his word of honour.

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

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

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

Could the half be raised?

Captain Lyle considered, and allowed it could.

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

And Captain Lyle was fain to assent.

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

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

Little recked he of a coming event.

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

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

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

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

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

instructions.

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

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

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

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

And so it was agreed.

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

Away went the *Firefly*, but long before she had ever left harbour the smuggler had left his prizes – viz, Leonard and Effie, on Lighthouse Island, and gone on a cruise on his own account, his object being to complete his cargo from among the western islands, where smuggling was rife in those days, and at once make

sail for France, going round by Cape Wrath for safety's sake, as was his wont.

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

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

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

“Ready about!” was the order.

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

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

Several times during the long chase, which lasted for days, the *Firefly* got near enough to try her guns, but not near enough for

deadly aim. The shots fell short, or passed harmlessly over the smuggler.

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

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

Night and storm!

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

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

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

The old lighthouse-keeper and his wife detailed the circumstances of the wreck of the lugger, but singularly enough

they forgot to mention the saving of the life of Bland himself. He was therefore supposed by Captain Pim to be drowned.

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

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

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

Book Two – Chapter One

In Distant Lands

On Moorland and Mountain

“Yon wild mossy mountains sae lofty and wide,
That nurse in their bosom the youth of the Clyde,
Where the grouse lead their coveys thro’ the heather to feed,
And the shepherd tends his flocks as he pipes on his reed.
Not Gowrie’s rich valley, nor Forth’s sunny shores,
To me hae the charm o’ yon wild mossy moors.”

Burns.

Scene: The parlour of an old-fashioned hotel in the Scottish Highlands. It is the afternoon of an autumn day; a great round-topped mountain, though some distance off, quite overshadows the window. This window is open, and the cool evening breeze is stealing in, laden with the perfume of the honeysuckle which almost covers a solitary pine tree close by. There is the drowsy hum of bees in the air, and now and then the melancholy lilt of the yellow-hammer – last songster of the season. Two gentlemen seated at dessert. For a time both are silent. They are thinking.

“Say, Lyle,” says one at last, “you have been staring unremittingly at the purple heather on yon hill-top for the last ten minutes, during which time, my friend, you haven’t spoken

one word.”

Lyle laughed quietly, and cracked a walnut.

“Do you see,” he said, “two figures going on and on upwards through the heather yonder?”

“I see what I take to be a couple of blue-bottle flies creeping up a patch of crimson.”

“Those blue-bottles are our boys.”

“How small they seem!”

“Yet how plucky! That hill, Fitzroy, is precious nearly a mile in height above the sea-level, and it is a good ten miles’ climb to the top of it. They have the worst of it before them, and they haven’t eaten a morsel since morning, but I’ll wager the leg of the gauger they won’t give in.”

“Well, Lyle, our boys are chips of the old blocks, so I won’t take your bet. Besides, you know, I am an Englishman, and though I know the gauger is a kind of Scottish divinity, I was unaware you could take such liberties with his anatomy as to wager one of his legs.”

“Seriously talking now, Fitzroy, we are here all alone by our two selves, though our sons are in sight; has the question ever occurred to you what we are to do with our boys?”

“No,” said Fitzroy, “I haven’t given it a thought. Have you?”

“Well, I have, one or two; for my lad, you know, is big enough to make his father look old. He is fifteen, and yours is a year or two more.”

“They’ve had a good education,” said Fitzroy, reflectively.

“True, true; but how to turn it to account?”

“Send them into the army or navy. Honour and glory, you know!”

Lyle laughed.

“Honour and glory! Eh? Why, you and I, Fitzroy, have had a lot of that. Much good it has done us. I have a hook for a hand.”

“And I have a wooden leg,” said Fitzroy, “and that is about all I have to leave my lad, for I don’t suppose they bury a fellow with his wooden leg on. Well, anyhow, that is my boy’s legacy; he can hang it behind the door in the library, and when he has company he can point to it sadly, and say, ‘Heigho, that’s all that is left of poor father!’”

“Yes,” said Lyle; “and he can also tell the story of the forlorn hope you led when you won that wooden toe. No, Fitzroy, honour and glory won’t do, now that the war is over. It was all very well when you and I were boys.”

“Well, there is medicine, the law, and the church, and business, and farming, and what-not.”

“Now, my dear friend, which of those on your list do you think your boy would adopt?”

“Well,” replied Fitzroy, with a smile, “I fear it would be the ‘what-not.’”

“And mine, too. Our lads have too much spirit for anything very tame. There is the blood of the old fighting Fitzroys in your boy’s veins, and the blood of the restless, busy Lyles in Leonard’s. If you hadn’t lost nearly all your estates, and if I were rich, it

would be different, wouldn't it, my friend?"

"Yes, Lyle, yes."

Fitzroy jumped up immediately afterwards, and stumped round the room several times, a way he had when thinking.

Then he stopped in front of his friend.

"Bother it all, Lyle," he said; "I think I have it."

"Well," quoth Lyle, "let us hear it."

Then Fitzroy sat down and drew his chair close to Lyle's.

"We love our boys, don't we?"

"Rather!"

"And we have only one each?"

"No more."

"Well, your estate is encumbered?"

"It's all in a heap."

"So is mine, but in a few years both may be clear."

"Yes, please God, unless, you know, my old pike turns his sides up – ha! ha!"

"Well, what I propose is this. Let our lads have their fling for a bit."

"What! appoint a tutor to each of them, and let them make the grand tour, see a bit of Europe, and then settle down?"

"Bother tutors and your grand tour! How would we have liked at their age to have had tutors hung on to us?"

"Well, Lyle, we might have had tutors, but I'll be bound we would have been masters."

"Yes. Well, boys will be boys, and I know nothing would

please our lads better than seeing the world; so suppose we say to them, We can afford you a hundred or two a year if you care to go and see a bit of life, and don't lose yourselves, what do you think they would reply?"

"I don't know exactly what they would reply, but I know they would jump at the offer, and put us down as model parents. But then, we have their mothers to consult."

"Well, consult them, but put the matter very straight and clear before their eyes. Explain to our worthy wives that boys cannot always be in leading strings, that the only kind of education a gentleman can have to fit him for the battle of life, is that which he gains from his experience in roughing it and in rubbing shoulders with the wide world."

"Good; that ought to fetch them."

"Yes; and we may add that after a young man has seen the world, he is more likely to settle down, and lead a quiet respectable life at home."

"As a country squire!"

"Oh yes; country squire will do, and we might throw Parliament in, eh? Member for the county – how does that sound?"

Major Lyle laughed.

And Captain Fitzroy laughed.

Then they both rubbed their hands and looked pleased.

"I think," said Fitzroy, "we have it all cut and dry."

"There isn't a doubt of it."

“Well, then, we’ll order the lads’ dinner in – say in three hours’ time, and you and I will meanwhile have a stroll.”

In about three hours both Leonard and his friend Douglas Fitzroy returned to the inn, as hungry as Highland hunters, and were glad to see the table groaning with good things.

“We’ve had such a day of it, dad,” said Leonard; “though we had no idea of the distance when we started, but I’ve found some of the rarest ferns and mountain flora, and some of the rarest coleoptera in all creation. Haven’t we, Doug?”

“Yes, Leon. Your sister will be delighted.”

“Dear Eff!” said Leonard; “I wish she’d been with us.”

It was a grand walking expedition the two young gentleman and their fathers were on, and it is wonderful how Captain Fitzroy did swing along with that wooden leg of his. He was always in front, whether it was going up hill or down dell. There really seems some advantage, after all, in having a wooden leg, for once an angry adder struck the gallant captain on the “timber toe,” as he called it; and once a bulldog flew at him, and though it rent some portion of his clothing, it could make no impression to signify on that wooden leg, and finally received a kick on the jaw that made it retire to its kennel in astonishment.

After they had dined Captain Fitzroy explained the travelling scheme to the lads, and recommended them to think seriously about it after they had retired to their bedroom, and give their answer in the morning.

I do not think there is any occasion to say what that answer

was when the morning came.

Book Two – Chapter Two

At Sea in the “Fairy Queen.”

“Oh! who can tell save he whose heart hath tried,
And danced in triumph o’er the waters wide,
The exalting sense – the pulse’s maddening play,
That thrills the wanderer of that trackless way?”

Byron.

“The moon is up; it is a lovely eve;
Long streams of light o’er dancing waves expand.”

Idem.

Scene: The deck of the *Fairy Queen*. Douglas and Leonard walking slowly up and down the quarter-deck arm-in-arm. Hardly a cloud in the sky, stars very bright, and a round moon rising in the east and gilding the waters.

Three years have elapsed since the conversation related in the last chapter took place – years that have not been thrown away, for our heroes – by that title we ought now to know them – have been sensible and apt pupils in the world’s great school.

It must be admitted that it was both a strange and an unusual thing for two fathers, to each make his only son an allowance, and

tell him to go and enjoy himself in any way he pleased. After all, it was only treating boys as men, and this, in my opinion, ought to be done more often than it is.

They drew their first half-year's income in London, then went quietly away to their hotel to consider what they should do.

"A couple of hundred a year, Doug," said Leonard, "isn't a vast fortune."

"No," replied Douglas, "it isn't unspendable."

"That is what I was thinking. But you see, by making us this grant – and it is all they can afford, and very handsome of them – we are positively on parole, aren't we?"

"Yes, we are bound not to exceed. To do so would be most unkind and ungentlemanly."

"Well, if we go on the continent it won't last long, will it?"

"No; besides, I don't hanker after the continent. My French is shocking bad, Leon, and I should be sure to quarrel with somebody, and get run through the body. No; the continent is out of the question."

"Yes; although a fellow could pick up some nice specimens there. But let us go farther afield. We can't go abroad far as passengers – suppose we go as sailors? We both have been to Norway in a ship, and we went together to Archangel, so there isn't much about a ship we don't know. Let us, I say, offer our services as –"

"As what?"

"Why, as apprentices. We're not much too old."

“No.”

“Well, is it agreed?”

“Yes, I’m ready for anything, Leon. I want to see the world at any price.”

So the very next day off they had gone to see an old friend of Captain Fitzroy’s who lived down Greenwich way, and who was a city merchant in a big way of business.

They explained their wishes and ambitions to him.

“Well,” he replied, “come and dine with me to-morrow, and I’ll introduce you to one of the jolliest old salts that ever crossed the ocean. I’ll do no more than introduce you, mind that.”

Nor did he.

But after dinner Captain Blunt, a thorough seaman every inch of him, with a face as rosy and round as the rising moon, began spinning yarns, or telling his experiences. He had ready listeners in Leonard and Douglas, and when the former opened out, as he phrased it, and introduced and expatiated on the subject next his heart and the heart of his friend, it was Captain Blunt’s turn to listen.

“Bother me, boys!” he exclaimed at last, pitching away the end of a big cigar, “but I think you are good-hearted ones, through and through, and if I thought it was something more than a passing fancy I’d take you along with me.”

“Take us and try us. We want no wages till we can earn them, nor will we live aft till we are fit to keep a watch. Our station on deck must be before the mast, our place below a seat before the

galley fire, and a bunk or hammock amidships. We want to learn to set a sail, to splice a rope, to heave the lead, box the compass, turn the capstan, reef and steer – in fact, all a sailor’s duties.”

“Bravo!” cried Captain Blunt, “I’m but a plain man, and a plain outspoken sailor, but I’ll have you; and if there isn’t some life and go in you, blame me, but I’m no reader of character.”

That is the way – an unusual one, I grant – in which our heroes joined the merchant service, and here – after three years all spent in Captain Blunt’s ship – here, I say, on this lovely night, we find them both on deck, one keeping his watch, the other keeping him company, for they are having a talk about bygone times.

They have seen a bit of life even in that time, for the good ship *Fairy Queen* was seldom long out of active service.

They kept strictly to the terms of their engagement, and have been till now before the mast, refusing even to mess in the cabin, although invited to do so by kindly old Captain Blunt.

Both Douglas Fitzroy and Leonard Lyle were, as mere children, fond of the sea. What British boy is not? A ship had always had a strange fascination for each of them. When much younger they had often been taken by their parents to Glasgow, and they preferred a stroll among the shipping at the Broomielaw to even a saunter in the park itself. Beautiful in summer though the park might have been in those days – and there was but one – it was in Leonard’s eyes too artificial. The lad loved Nature, but he liked to meet her and to woo her in the woods and wilds.

At school in Edinburgh both boys were what are called

inseparables. They just suited each other. It was not a case of extremes meet, however, for the tastes of both were identical. Although their books and lessons had by no means been neglected, still, task duty over, and off their minds for the day, they were free to follow the bent of their own wills. More beautiful or more romantic scenery than that close around Scotland's capital there is hardly to be found anywhere. Our heroes knew every nook and corner of it, every hill and dell, every dingle, rock, and glen, and all the creatures that dwelt therein, whether clad in fur or feather. But for all that, they were as well known on the pier of Leith as "Mutchkin Jock," the gigantic shore-porter, himself was. Never a ship worth the name of ship had entered, while they were at school, that they did not visit, scan, and criticise. They coolly invited themselves on board, too. Now this might have been resented at times had they not been gentlemanly lads. Gentlemanly in address, I mean. So, though they might often and often have been found "yarning" with sailors forward, whose hearts they well knew how to win, they were just as often invited down below to the cabin, and hobnobbed with the captain himself.

It would have pleased the surliest old ship captain who ever peeped over a binnacle edge, to have two such listeners as young Leon and Doug. How their bright eyes had sparkled, to be sure, as some skipper newly or lately arrived from foreign lands sat telling them of all the wonders he had seen! And how they had longed to sail away to summer seas, and behold for themselves

wonders on a larger scale than any they could meet with among the mountains of their own country!

It was thus perhaps that a taste for wandering and a fondness for the sea had been engendered early in the breast of each of the boys.

It was this, I'm sure, that caused them once to write home to their respective parents, informing them that the 250-ton brig, *Highland Donald*, was to sail in a fortnight for Norway and the Baltic, and that the skipper had offered to take them if they could obtain permission.

Permission had been granted, and having been provided with suits of rough warm clothing, they had embarked one fine spring morning, and sailed away for the cold north.

Now, if any young reader thinks he would like to be a sailor, and has been led to believe, from books or otherwise, that a seaman's life is one of unmitigated pleasure and general jollity, let him induce his father or guardian to place him on a grain, tar, or timber ship bound for Norway or the Baltic. If, after a month or two of such a life, he still believes in the joys of a seaman's existence, let him join the merchant service forthwith, but I fear there are few lads who would come up smiling after so severe a test.

Our heroes, however, had stood this test, though they had roughed it in no ordinary way. True, they had been all but shipwrecked on an iron-bound coast, where no boat could have lived a minute; they had been in gale of wind after gale of wind;

their provisions and fare had been of the coarsest; their beds were always wet or damp, and sometimes the cold had been intense, depressing, benumbing to both mind and body.

But their long voyage north had made sailors of them for all that, and that is saying a very great deal. It had proved of what mettle they were made, and given them confidence in themselves.

This is the first voyage, then, in which Leonard and Douglas have trod the deck as officers, and I do not deny that both are just a trifle proud of their position, although they feel fully the weight of responsibility the buttons have brought. They certainly took but little pride in the uniform which they wore, as some weak-minded lads would have done, albeit handsome they both had looked, as they sat at table on that last night at Grayling House. So, at all events, Leonard's mother and poor Effie thought. The latter had done little else but cry all the day, that is, whenever she could get a chance of doing so unseen. This was the second time only that her brother and brother's friend had been home since they went to sea for good. They had stayed at home for a whole month, and now were bound on a perilous cruise indeed, sailing far away to Arctic seas, Captain Blunt's ship having been chosen to take stores and provisions out to Greenland for vessels employed in finding out the North-West Passage.

Something had seemed to whisper to Effie that she would never see her darling brother again. So no wonder her heart had been sad, and her eyes red with weeping, as our heroes left; or that a gloom, like the gloom of the grave, had fallen on Grayling

House, as soon as they were gone.

Great old Ossian had come and put his head on her lap, and gazing up into her face with those brown speaking eyes of his, and his loving looks of pity, almost broke her heart. The tears had come fast enough then.

The *Fairy Queen* had sailed from Leith. Both parents had accompanied their sons thus far, and blessed them and given them Bibles each (it is a way they have in Scotland on such occasions), and bade them a hearty good-bye.

Yes, it was a hearty good-bye to all outward appearance, but there was a lump in Leonard's throat all the same that he had a good deal of difficulty in swallowing; and as soon as the *Fairy Queen* was out of sight, the two fathers had left the pier – not side by side, remark we, but one in front of the other, Indian-file fashion. Why not side by side? Well, for this reason. There was a moisture in Major Fitzroy's eyes, that, being a man, he was somewhat ashamed of, so he stumped on ahead, that Captain Lyle might not notice his weakness; and between you and me, reader, Captain Lyle, for some similar reason, was not sorry. I hope you quite understand it.

However, here on this beautiful summer's night, with a gentle beam wind blowing from the westward, we find our friends on deck. There is a crowd of sail on her, and the ship lies away to the west of the Shetland Islands. They do not mean to touch there, so give the rocks a good offing.

Save for the occasional flapping of the sails or a footstep on

deck, there is not a sound to break the solemn stillness.

They did encounter a gale of wind, however, shortly after leaving Leith, but the good ship stood it well, and it had not lasted long.

“I say, old fellow,” said Leonard, “hadn’t you better turn in? I think I would if I had a chance.”

“No, I don’t feel sleepy; I’m more inclined to continue our pleasant chat. Pleasant chat on a pleasant night, with every prospect of a pleasant voyage, eh?”

“I think so. Of course good weather cannot last for ever.”

“No, and then there is the ice.”

“Well, now, I’m not afraid of that. Remember, I superintended the fortifying of the ship, and you could hardly believe how solid we are. But of course ice will go through anything.”

“So I’ve heard, and we saw some bergs while coming round the Horn – didn’t we? – that I wouldn’t care to be embraced between.”

“Not unless the ship were made of indiarubber, and everybody in it.”

“I wonder how all are at Grayling House to-night. Poor sister Effie! Didn’t she cry! I’m afraid old Peter was croaking a bit. He is quite one of the family, you know, but very old-wifeish and crotchety, and thinks himself quite an old relation of father’s. Then there is that ridiculous superstition about the pike.”

“Yes, do you know the story?”

“Yes, and I may relate it some evening, perhaps, what little

story there is; though it is only ridiculous nonsense. But look! what is that?"

"Why, a shoal of porpoises, but they are just like fishes of fire."

"Phosphorescence. These seas on some summer nights are all alive with it. What a lovely sight! Strange life the creatures lead! I wonder do they ever sleep? Heigho! talking of sleep makes me think of my hammock. I believe I will turn in now, though it is really a pity to go below on so lovely a night. Ta, ta. Take care of us all.

"*A Dios*, Leonard."

Yes, it was indeed a lovely night; but, ah! quickly indeed do scene and weather change at sea.

Book Two – Chapter Three

On the Wings of a Westerly Gale

“And now the storm-blast came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong;
He struck with his o’ertaking wings
And chased us north along.
And the ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
And northward ay we flew.”

Coleridge.

Scene: A ship on her beam ends, not far off the coast of Norway, the seas all around her houses high; their tops cut short off by the force of the wind, and the spray driven over the seemingly doomed ship, like the drift in a moorland snowstorm. The sky is clear, there is a yellow glare in the west where the sun went down. A full moon riding high in a yellow haze.

A gale of wind got out of its cave – for according to the ancients the winds do live in a cave. It was a gale from the west, with something southerly in it, and I feel nearly sure, from the rampancy with which it roared, from the vigour with which it blew, and the capers it cut, that this gale of wind must have taken French leave of its cave.

It seemed to rejoice in its freedom, nevertheless. No

schoolboy just escaped from his tasks was ever more full of freaks and mischief.

It came hallooming over the Atlantic Ocean, and every ship it met had to do honour to it on the spot, by furling sails, or even laying to under bare poles.

If these sails were quickly taken in by men who moved in a pretty and sprightly fashion, all right – the gale went on. But if lubbers went to work aloft, or the wheel was badly handled – then “Pah!” the wind would cry, “*I’ll shorten sail for you,*” and away would go the sails in ribbons, cracking like half a million cart-whips, and perhaps a stick at the same time, a topmast or yard, and if a man or two were lost, the wind took neither blame nor further notice.

The gale came tearing up Channel, and roaring across the Irish Sea, and lucky indeed were those ships that managed to put back and get safely into harbour, where the storm could only scream vindictively through the empty rigging.

The gale went raging over towns and cities, doing rare damage among stalks and spires, ripping and rolling lead off roofs, and tossing the tiles about as one deals cards at whist. It swept along the thoroughfares, too, having fine fun with the unfortunate passengers who happened to be abroad, rending top coats and skirts, running off with the hats of old fogies, and turning umbrellas inside out.

The gale came shrieking over the country, changing a point or two more to the south’ard, so as to shake the British Islands from

aft to fore. It picked up great clouds as it went northwards ho! and mixed them all together, so that when it descended on the vale of the Tweed, it came with thunderclap and lightning's flash, and a darkness that could almost be felt. It tore through the woods and forests, overturning vast rocks, and uprooting mighty trees, that had grown green summer after summer for a hundred years.

In the avenue of Grayling House it spent an extra dose of its fury, it bedded the ground with dead wood, and wrenched off many a lordly limb from elm and chestnut.

Effie heard the voice of the roaring wind, and saw the destruction it was doing, and prayed for her brother and brother's friend, who were far away at sea.

She stood by the parlour window beside her father, who was gazing outwards across the lawn, and her hands were clasped, as if in fear, around his left arm. Mrs Lyle herself had retired to her room.

Suddenly a flash shot athwart the trees, so dazzling and blinding that Effie was almost deprived of sight. The peal of thunder that followed was terrific.

About ten minutes after this, while the wind still roared, while the rain and hail beat the leaves ground-wards, and the grass was covered as deep almost in white as if it were mid-winter, old Peter – he is looking very old and grey now – staggered into the room. He had not waited even to knock. “Sir, sir, sir!” he cried.

“Well, Peter, what is it? Speak, man! You frighten the child.”

“Oh, sir, sir! Joe, sir, Joe!”

“Is dead?”

“Ay, as dead as a mawk.² The great rock that o’erhung the water is rent in pieces, tons upon tons have fallen into the loch, the palin’ is washed away, Joe is dead, and there is an end to Glen Lyle. You mind the gipsy’s rhyme —

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

“Hush, hush, hush, man!” cried Captain Lyle; “everything that lives must die; all things on earth must have an end. Why bother yourself about the death of a poor pike, man? Come, Peter; I fear that you are positively getting old.”

“By the way, Effie,” he added, turning to his daughter, “run and see how your mother is.”

Effie went away. She was used to obey. Dearly loved though she was by both her parents, she had many lonely sad hours now that her brother had become a wanderer, only to appear now and then at Glen Lyle to stay for a short time, he and Douglas, then disappear, and leave such a gloom behind that she hardly cared to live.

But she had never felt so sad as she did now. What was going to happen to her father or to her brother? She did not go to her

² Mawk, *Scottice*— a hare.

mother's room. She did not wish to show her tears. But she went to her own, threw herself on her bed, and cried and prayed till she fell asleep.

“Effie, child, are you here?”

It was her mother's voice, and she started up. The moon was throwing a flood of light into the room.

Next moment she was in her mother's arms, who was soothing her, and laughingly trying to banish her fears.

We leave them there and follow the gale.

It had gone careering on, over mountain, moorland, and lake, seeming to gather force as it went. It must have been at its height when it swept over the bleak, bare islands of Shetland, and made madly off for the Norwegian coast. Old, old, white-haired men, who had lived their lives in this *ultima Thule*, never remembered a fiercer storm. On one of the most barren and bleakest islands, next morning, the beach was found bestrewn with wreckage from some gallant ship, and the merciless waves had thrown up more than one dead body, and there they lay as if asleep, with dishevelled hair, in which were sand and weeds, hands half clenched, as if, in the agony of death, they had tried to grasp at something, and cold, hard, wet faces upturned to the morning sun.

The *Fairy Queen* was trying to round a rocky cape when the white horses of that gale of wind first appeared on the horizon, heading straight for them. Once round the point they would be comparatively safe.

“Look!” cried Leonard to Douglas, whose watch it was. The sun was going down behind the western waves. Wild and red he looked, and shorn of his beams, and tinging all the water ’twixt the barque and the horizon a bright blood-red.

On came the white horses. It was a race between the barque and the gale of wind. Before her loomed the rocky promontory. The cliffs rose straight up out of the sea, and their heads were buried in haze. Close to the wind sailed the barque, as close as ever could be.

On and on she speeds, but the white horses are almost close aboard of her.

“Hands, shorten sail!”

The wind is on her. To shorten sail now were madness. The wind is on her, the brave ship leans over to it, till the water rushes in through the lee scuppers.

The wind increases in force every moment.

The great black rocks are close above her lee bow. Looking upwards, the wild flowers can be seen hanging to the banks and cliffs – saxifrages, heath, broom, and golden gorse. So close is the barque that the sea-birds that have alighted on the cliffs as the sun kissed the waves, startled by the flapping canvas, soar off again and go screaming skywards.

The sun is down now altogether, and the gale has rushed at the vessel like a wild beast seeking its lawful prey; the seas are dashing over her, the spray flying high over the bending masts.

The gale has leapt upon them, too, from a pillar of cloud, and

with forked and flashing lightning.

Are they round the point? No one on that deck can tell as yet. The roar and the surge is deafening. The gloom is appalling, men can hardly breathe, the words the captain tries to shout to those at the wheel are carried away on the wind. The crew clutch at the rigging, and feel choking, drowning.

“Keep her away now!” It was Leonard’s voice in a wheelman’s ear. They were round the point!

The barque is flying. The topsails are rent in ribbons. What matters it? The open sea is before them. Yes, but like a tiger balked of its prey, the squall suddenly increases to the force of a hurricane, and next moment the good ship is helpless on her beam ends.

Had the force of the gale been kept up many minutes the ship would have foundered, none would have been left alive to tell the tale. In some sandy bay in through those rocks and cliffs other dead swollen bodies would have been cast up like those on the Shetland shores, to lie with lustreless eyes in the morning’s sunshine.

The squall abated, the sky cleared, the gale itself has spent its fury, and goes growling away to leeward.

With hatchet and knife in hardy hands the wreck is cleared away at last, and the *Fairy Queen* rides in the moonlight on an even keel.

The captain shakes hands with Leonard and Douglas. “You saved her,” he said. “My boys, you saved her! It was excellent

seamanship. Had you shortened sail when the wind got stiff we never would have rounded that point, and the sharks would have had what was left of us.”

“Captain Blunt,” said Douglas, “take credit to yourself as well, for you superintended the ballasting of the barque. Had that shifted, then – ”

“Davy Jones, eh?” said the skipper, laughing.

He could afford to laugh now.

There was much still to be done, so no more was said. All hands were called to make the barque as snug as could be for the night.

When morning broke in a grey uncertain haze over the sea, and the rocky shore began to loom out to leeward and astern, the extent of the damage was more apparent, but after all the ship had come out of it fairly well. The fore topmast was gone, the mizzen damaged, the bulwarks broken, and more like sheep hurdles than anything else, but there was little other damage worth entering in the log-book.

The sky cleared when the sun rose, and after breakfast the men were set to work repairing damages.

The *Fairy Queen* had little business on the Norwegian coast at all, but she had been driven far out of her course by adverse winds.

In a few more days the breeze was fair, and the ship was making good way westwards, albeit she was jury-rigged. It was sincerely hoped by all on board that the terrible gale they had just

encountered was the worst they would meet. The ship had borne it wonderfully well, and leaked not in the least; for many a day, therefore, everything went as merry as marriage bells on board.

Captain Blunt was happy, so were our heroes, and so, for the matter of that, was every one fore and aft. The crew of the *Fairy Queen* were all picked men. They were not feather-bed sailors; most of them had been in the Arctic regions before, and knew them well. But albeit a good seaman is not afraid to face danger in every shape and form, he is nevertheless happiest when things are going well.

So now, every night, around the galley fire, songs were sung and stories told, and by day many a jocund laugh around the fo'c's'le mingling with the scream of the circling sea-birds told of light hearts and minds that were free from care.

Everything in these seas was new to young Douglas and Leonard. They passed the strange-looking Faroe group of islands to the north, and in good time Iceland to the south, and bore up, straight as a bird could fly, for Cape Farewell, the southernmost point of Greenland.

Those Faroe Isles, as seen from the sea, are indescribably fantastic and picturesque. Let me see if I cannot find a simile. Yes, here it is: take a number of pebbles and stones, with a few good-sized smithy cinders. Let these be of all sizes. Next take a broad, shallow basin, which partly fill with water stained dark blue with indigo; now place your stones, etc, in this water, with one end of each sticking up. Paint these ends and tip them and

streak them with green, with white, and with crimson, and lo and behold! you have a model of the Faroe Islands.

The *Fairy Queen* called at Reykjavik, and the good people of that quaint wee “city” came trooping on board. Even the Danish parson came, carrying in his own hands – for he was not proud – a string of firm, delicious-looking rock cod as a present for the captain.

Almost every boat brought a gift of some kind. Well, I daresay they did expect some presents in return, and it is needless to say they got them. This was, after all, only a very pleasant and very justifiable way of doing a barter; much better, in my opinion, than if they had lain on their oars and said, —

“We have fresh fish, and mountain mutton, and eggs and game for sale; how much tobacco, biscuits, knives, hatches, and cooking utensils have you to spare?”

The good little clergyman innocently inquired whether the war betwixt England and France was still going on, and was astonished to be told it was over years ago.

But nothing could exceed the kindness and hospitality of these people to our young heroes when they went on shore. Had they eaten and drunk a hundredth part of what they were pressed to partake of, they would have been cleverer far than the Welsh giant I used to read of in my boyhood in “The Wonderful Adventures of Jack the Giant-killer.”

The *Fairy Queen* lay at Reykjavik – having to take in water – for three days, and then sailed away. But would it be believed

that in this short time Leonard and Douglas won so many hearts among old and young, that there was hardly a dry eye in the village the morning they left, so primitive and simple were those people then?

Book Two – Chapter Four

On Silent Seas

“And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold,
And ice, mast high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.

“And through the drifts the snowy clifts
Did send a dismal sheen,
Nor shapes of men nor beast we ken —
The ice was all between.”

Coleridge.

Scene: The Arctic Ocean. One solitary ship in sight. Ice all about, against which, in contrast, the water looks black as ink.

Yes, everything they saw in this voyage and in these seas was indeed very new to Leonard and Douglas. They certainly were pleased they had come. It was like being in a new world.

They saw so many icebergs before they reached Cape Farewell that they ceased to fear them. Nothing very tremendous, though, but of all sizes, mostly covered with snow, and of shapes the most fantastic. Everything on earth seemed to be mimicked in shape by these bergs. Churches and houses, or halls with domes

and minarets, were common objects. Furniture of all kinds came next in order of frequency; then came animals of all sorts, pigs, sheep, lions, bears, giraffes, geese, swans, horses, cattle, cocks, and hens. And the most amusing part of the business was this: as the ship sailed past them, or through the midst of them, they kept altering their shapes or forms with the greatest coolness, so to speak.

A giraffe, for instance, developed into a ginger-beer bottle, a cow turned into a cab, a church into a chair, a pig became a pigeon, and a hen a horse, while, perhaps, a monster lion or couchant bear became a daft-looking old wife with a flap-cap on. It was funny.

Some of the smaller of these icebergs were tenanted by seals. What a delightfully easy life those lovely creatures seemed to lead! There goes one, for instance, basking on a bit of ice just like a sofa, pillow and all complete; and his snowy couch is floating quietly away through that blue and sunny summer sea, rising and falling gently on the waves in a way that must be quite delightful. He just raises his head as the ship sails past, and gazes after the *Fairy Queen* with a kind of dreamy interest, then lets it drop again, and recommences his study of the birds that go wheeling and screaming round in the sky.

Yonder a walrus pops a monster tusked head and goggle eyes out of the water, looking at the ship as fiercely as an angry bull. "What are you?" he seems to ask, "or why are you disturbing the placid waters of my ocean home?"

Then he disappears, and presently is seen far away to the north.

Yonder, ploughing his lonely way through the silence of the dark sea, is a monster narwhal. He makes no remark. If a boat were to attack him, he might lose his temper, and try to stave her with his mighty ivory horn; but the *Fairy Queen* is nothing to him, so he looks not to right or to left, but goes on and on and away.

Here comes a shoal of dancing porpoises, all going south. How they dance, and how they plunge, and how they caper, to be sure! They take little heed of the ship, do not even go out of their way to avoid her. Perhaps they are going on a summer holiday, and are so full of their own happiness and joy that they have little time to think of anything else. Bless the innocent creatures! I've often and often felt pleasure in beholding their gambols; and thanked God from the bottom of my heart, because He has made them, made the earth and its fulness, the sea and all it contains, so full of life and love and beauty.

But look away down yonder, and you will perceive – for the ship is now becalmed – a triangular, fan-like thing above the water, and a dark line close by it. It is the back of the huge and awful Greenland shark. And look! there is a sea-bird perched on it, just as a starling might be on the back of a sheep. I do not like to think about sharks nor see them, and I could tell you many an ugly story about them – awful enough to make your blood run cold, but that would be a digression; besides, I feel sure the reader does not want his blood to run cold. But there is a more

terrible-looking monster far than the Greenland shark in these seas. I allude to the gigantic hammer-head, who is more ugly than any nightmare.

But lo! here comes an honest whale. I do like these great monsters; I have seen quite a deal of their ways and manners. I am sure they have far more sagacity than they get credit for. I should like to own a little private sea of my own, and have it enclosed, with a notice board up, "Trespassers will be prosecuted," and keep a full-sized whale or two. I feel sure I could teach them quite a host of little tricks. Stay, though – they would not be *little* tricks. Never mind, I and my whales would get on very well together. But if one *did* get angry with me, and *did* open his mouth, why – but it will not bear thinking about.

The whales our heroes saw in the Greenland ocean were leviathans. Leonard could not have believed such monsters existed anywhere in the world, and they had a thorough business air about them, too. Some came near enough the ship to show their eyes. Good-natured, twinkling little eyes, that seemed to say, —

"We know you are not a whaler, so pass on, and molest us not, else with one stroke of our tails we will send you all to Davy Jones."

Then they would blow, and great fountains of steam would rise into the air, with a roar like that which an engine emits, only louder far. This is not *water*, as is generally supposed, but the breath of the vast leviathan of the ocean.

A Whale's Garden Party

This is no joke of mine, because I have been at one, and Leonard and Douglas on this memorable voyage had also the good luck to witness an entertainment of the sort.

It only takes place at certain seasons of the year, always pretty far south of the main ice pack, and always in a spot unfrequented by ships. There is another *sine quâ non* connected with this garden party – namely, plenty to eat, and whales do not require anything to drink, you know. So the sea where the party is held is so full of a tiny shrimplet that it is tinged in colour. But why do I call it a *garden* party you may ask; are there any flowers? Does not the sun shimmering on the small icebergs already described, and on the clear ice itself, bring forth a hundred various tints and colours, more gorgeously, more radiantly beautiful than any flowers that ever bloomed and grew? Are there not, too, at the sea bottom flowers of the deep —

“Many a flower that's born to blush unseen — ”

Lovelier far than those that bloom on land? Yes, I am right in calling it a garden party. But what do the whales do at this garden party of theirs? Sail quietly round and look at each other? Discuss the possibility of uniting in a body, and driving all the whaling fleet to the bottom of the sea? Consider the prospects of the shrimp harvest, or debate upon the best methods of extracting

a harpoon from fin or tail, and the easiest method of capsizing a boat? No; nothing of the sort. They have met together to enjoy themselves, and in their own exceedingly cumbersome way they do enjoy themselves. They enjoy themselves with a force and a vengeance that is terrible to witness. The noise and explosions of their wonderful gambols can be heard ten miles away on a still night. To see a porpoise leap high out of the water like a salmon is a fine sight, but to see two or three whales at one and the same time thus disporting themselves, while some lie in the water beating time with their terrible tails, others playing at leap frog, and the sea for acres round them churned into froth and *meerschaum*, is a sight that once seen can never be forgotten. The boldest harpooner that ever drew breath would not venture near those gambolling whales, and I verily believe that the biggest line-of-battle ships that ever floated would be staved and sunk in the midst of that funny but fearful *maelstrom*.

This gives you, reader, but the very faintest notion of a whale's garden party. It is one of the wonders of the world, and one which few have ever seen and lived to tell of, for there is no surety of the huge monsters not shifting ground at any moment, and sweeping down like a whirlwind on some devoted ship.

The *Fairy Queen* sailed on, and in due time sighted and passed Cape Farewell, then northward ho! through Davis Straits to Baffin's Sea, and here they had the great good luck to fall in with the vessels they had come to succour.

Some delay was caused in unloading, and as the summer was

now far advanced, and Captain Blunt had no desire to winter in these dismal regions, he was naturally anxious to get away south as soon as possible.

They were cleared at last, however, and bidding the research vessels farewell, with three-times-three ringing cheers, all sail was set that the ship could stagger under, and on she rushed through an open sea, although there were plenty of icebergs about.

For a whole week everything went favourably and well. Then, alas! the tide turned with a vengeance. One of those dense fogs so common in these regions came down upon them like a wall, and so enveloped the ship that it was impossible, standing at the windlass, to see the jibboom end; and at the same time.

“Down dropt the wind, the sails dropt down,
’Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea.”

But worse was to come.

For now, up-looming through the dismal fog, came great green-ribbed icebergs, the waves lapping at their feet and the spray washing their dripping sides.

In the midst of so great a danger Captain Blunt felt powerless. There was absolutely nothing to be done but wait and wait, and pray the good Father to send a breeze.

When we pray earnestly for anything we should never forget

to add the words of Him Who spake as never man spake, and say, “Thy will be done.” No prayer is complete without that beautiful line; and yet, though easy to *say* it, it is – oh! so hard sometimes to *pray* it. But then we poor mortals do not know what is best for us.

In the present instance our heroes’ prayers were not heard, and days and weeks flew by; then the sky cleared, and they saw the sun once more, but only to find themselves so surrounded by ice on all quarters that escape was impossible. Besides, the season was now far gone, autumn was wearing through, the sun was far south, and the nights getting long and cold and dreary.

Frost now set in, and snow began to fall.

They were safe from all dangers for six months to come, at the least.

“Never mind,” said Blunt cheerily to Leonard, “we have provisions enough to last us for a year at the very least. So we must do the best to make ourselves comfortable.”

“That we will,” replied Leonard, “though I fear our friends at home will think we are lost.”

“That is the only drawback – my dear wife and child, and your parents, boys. Well, we are in the hands of Providence. God is here in these solitudes, and just as easily found as if we were in the cathedral of old St. Giles’.”

It was indeed a dreary winter they passed in the midst of that frozen sea. No sun, no light save moon or stars and the lovely aurora. Silence deep as the grave, except – which was rare – when a storm came howling over the pack, raising the snow in

whirlwinds, and often hurling off the peaked and jagged tops of the weird-looking icebergs.

But the sun appeared at last, and in due time. With a noise and confusion that is indescribable the ice broke up, and the *Fairy Queen* began to move slowly – oh, so slowly! – through the ice on her way southwards, with danger on every quarter, danger ahead, and danger astern. She sailed for many, many miles without a rudder; for lest it should get smashed it had been unshipped, the men steering ahead by means of boat and hawser, and the ship often being so close to an iceberg that the tips of the yard arms touched, and when the berg moved over with a wave it threw the vessel upwards from the bottom. On these occasions poles were used to edge her off.

It was tedious work all this, but it came to an end at last, and the water being now more open, the rudder was re-shipped, and more sail clapped on, so that much better way was made.

Another week passed by. They were well south now in Davis Straits, albeit the wind had been somewhat fickle.

They had high hopes of soon seeing the last of the ice, and both Douglas and Leonard began to think of home, and talk of it also.

It was spring time once more. The larches, at all events, would be green and tasselled with crimson in the woods around Glen Lyle, primroses would be peeping out in cosy corners in moss-bedded copses, and birds would be busy building, and the trees alive with the voice of song.

“In three weeks more,” said Douglas, “we ought to be stretching away across the blue Atlantic, and within a measurable distance of dear old Scotland.”

“Ay, lad!” replied Leonard, “my heart jumps to my mouth with very joy to think of it.”

In this great chart that lies before me, a chart of the Polar regions, I can point out the very place, or near it, where the *Fairy Queen* was crushed in the ice as a strong man might crush a walnut, and sank like a stone in the water, dragging down with her, so quickly did she go at last, more than one of her brave crew, whose bones may lie in the black depths of that inhospitable ocean, —

“Till the sea gives up its dead.”

Midway ’twixt Nipzet Sound and Cape Mercy, just a little to the nor’ard of Cumberland Gulf, I mark the point with a plus.

It was in a gale of wind, and at the dead of night, when she was surrounded by an immense shoal of flat bergs, of giant proportions, and staved irremediably. The water came roaring in below. Pumping was of no avail. She must founder, and that very soon. So every effort consonant with safety was made to embark upon the very icebergs that had caused the grief. Stores and water were speedily got out, therefore, and long ere the break of day the end came, the ship was engulfed. There was no longer any *Fairy Queen* to glide over the seas like a thing of life — only two wave-washed bergs, each with a huddled crew of hopeless shipwrecked mariners.

And these were already separating. They had bade each other adieu.

They were gliding away, or south or north or east or west, they knew not whither.

Book Two – Chapter Five

Afloat on an Iceberg

“Midnight soft and fair above,
Midnight fierce and dark beneath,
All on high the smile of love,
All below the frown of death:

“Waves that whirl in angry spite
With a phosphorescent light,
Gleaming ghastly in the night,
Like the pallid sneer of Doom.”

Tupper.

Scene: In Baffin’s Sea. Shipwrecked mariners afloat on an iceberg, which rises and falls on the smooth-rolling waves.

Morning broke grey and hazily; the wind, as if it had done its worst and spent its fury, went down, but the sea still ran very high, dashing in cold spray over the bergs on which the shipwrecked mariners were huddled together for warmth, and leaving a thick coating of ice on top of the sail that covered them.

Captain Blunt had gone on board one berg with half the crew, about ten all told, and Leonard, with Douglas, on board the other, along with the remainder, the two friends determining to be

together to the bitter end, if indeed the end were to come.

The sea itself went down at last, as far as broken water was concerned; only a big round heaving swell continued, on which the icebergs rose and fell with a strange kind of motion that made all on board them drowsy.

When Leonard looked about him in the morning sunlight never a sign could be seen of the other berg. Nor all that day was it seen or on any other. It was gone. Other icebergs there were in dozens, but none with men on them.

Leonard heaved a sigh, and wished that he only had the wings of one of those happy sea-birds, that went wheeling and screaming round in the air, sometimes coming nearer and nearer, tack and half-tack, so close, out of mere curiosity, that they could have been knocked down with a boat-hook. All that day and all the next and next the berg floated silently on, —

“As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.”

Almost every day strange, wondering creatures came up out of the water to gaze at them. The tusked walrus, the gazelle-eyed seal — yes, even the narwhal must have spied them, and felt curiosity, for he shifted his course, and ploughed down towards the berg to have a look; then, as if satisfied that his mind could not fathom so great a mystery, went on his silent, solitary way once more.

Happily for the poor sailors, they had provisions. Had the ship gone down at once when struck, as vessels do sometimes go, they would now have been in a pitiful plight indeed.

But the cold was intense. There was no keeping it out by day hardly; only by constant exercise, which, thanks to the magnitude of the iceberg, they were able to maintain.

But at night it was intense, chilling every one to the bone and spinal marrow.

They lay there pressed together; not a corner of the sail was left open to admit a breath of the frost-laden air, but even then they were not warm. It was impossible to sleep for hours and hours after lying down, and when at last they did drop off, the cold, the bitter, bitter cold, was with them still – with them in their dreams, with them in their hearts, and on their very brains.

When morning light came they would stagger up, looking wonderingly at each other's pale, pinched faces. To stand for a time was an impossibility. They managed to light a little fire of wood on an iron slab, morning, noon, and evening, to make a little coffee; this, with biscuit and raw pork, was their only diet, and right thankful they were to have such fare.

It was on a Tuesday the *Fairy Queen* went down, and five long weary days rolled slowly on their course. For five weary nights they suffered and shivered, and when the Sabbath morning came round they were, to all appearance, as far from help as ever.

Hope itself began to fade in their hearts, especially when two of their number sank and died before their eyes.

They committed their bodies to the deep, and, horrible to relate, saw them devoured; for till now they had no idea that the sea around them was swarming with sharks. Some they had seen, it is true, but nothing like the number that now came up to the ghastly feast.

It was the Sabbath, and although every morning and evening they had prayed and sung hymns, after the fashion common in Scotland on this day – His day – many chapters of the Book of books were read, and first Douglas and then Leonard gave the men some earnest exhortations. Leonard never knew his friend Douglas could speak so feelingly before, or that his heart was such a well – now bubbling over – of religious feeling and fervour.

“Ah, my dear fellows!” he ended with these words, “we never really feel our need of a Saviour until the prospect of death stares us in the face. Then we feel the need of a friend, and, looking around, as it were, we find Him by our side, and right willing are we to take Him then, to grasp His hand, and trust our all in all to Him.”

“Amen!” said the sailors fervently.

Then some verses of that bonnie hymn-psalm were sung, commencing: —

“The Lord’s my Shepherd, I’ll not want,
He makes me down to lie
By pastures green; He leadeth me
The quiet waters by.”

A strange sight on that clear, still, dark ocean, the white iceberg with its living freight drifting aimlessly about. Strange sound, this song of praise, rising from their cold, blue lips, and from hearts that hardly dared to hope.

Another day and another went by, and on the Wednesday an accident happened that had well-nigh proved fatal to nearly all on board the berg. More than one-third part of their ice-ship parted and fell away. Luckily it first gave voice, and showed the rent before finally dropping off.

There was no denying it, the danger was now extreme. They had been drifting slowly southwards, and the iceberg was being influenced by warmer currents, and slowly wearing away.

It might, moreover, topple over at any moment. Things came to their very worst that same evening when another piece of the berg plunged into the sea, and when morning broke, there was barely room for the men to huddle together, looking fearfully around them, and down into the still black water, and at those hungry sharks, who now seemed to gambol about as if in momentary expectation of their prey.

“Look!” cried Douglas about noon that day, “what is that dark object yonder on that immense iceberg that we have been skirting these last two hours?”

“Seals, I think,” said Leonard, in a feeble, hopeless voice.

“I think not, Leon. Oh, lad! I think they are men.”

“Let us signal, anyhow.”

A jacket was waved and – answered.

Next moment half-a-dozen swift kayaks or Eskimo boats were dashing from the shore to their rescue.

“Thank God!” said every man, and the tears rolled down the cheeks of many now, and half-choked them as they tried to speak.

But they clasped each other’s thin, cold hands, and *looked* the joy they could not utter.

They were Eskimos who had come to the rescue, and it was from the mainland they had come, and not from any iceberg, or even island.

Their joy was redoubled when they drew near and found Captain Blunt and their old shipmates waving their hands and hats to them from the snow-clad shore.

So happy a reunion no one can fully understand or appreciate except those who have been in the same sad plight, and saved as if by a miracle.

Longfellow, in his beautiful poem “The Secret of the Sea,” tells us how Count Arnaldos —

“Saw a fair and stately galley
Steering onward to the land.

“How he heard the ancient helmsman
Chant a song so wild and clear,
That the sailing sea-bird slowly
Poised upon the mast to hear, —

“Till his soul was filled with longing,
And he cried with impulse strong,
‘Helmsman! for the love of Heaven,
Teach me, too, that wondrous song.’

“‘Would’st thou so,’ the helmsman answered,
‘Learn the secrets of the sea?
Only those who brave its dangers
Comprehend its mystery.’”

Yes, reader, the sea hath many, many secrets. We may never know them all. Not even those who have been down to the sea in ships may fathom half the mysteries that everywhere surround them, or can ever hope to explain to those who dwell on land a tithe of what they know and feel.

What says the poet?

“Ah! what pleasant visions haunt me
As I gaze upon the sea!
All the old romantic visions,
All my dreams come back to me, —

“Till my soul is filled with longing
For the secret of the sea,
And the heart of the great ocean
Sends a thrilling pulse through me.”

Book Two – Chapter Six

The Far North Land

“O! the auld hoose, the auld hoose,
Deserted though you be,
There ne’er can be a new hoose
Seem half sae dear to me.”

Lady Nairne.

“Beside a weird-like Arctic bay,
Where wild and angry billows play,
And seldom meet the night and day.”

Symington.

Scene One: A cottage not far from St. Abb’s Head, a garden before the door, and a porch, around which summer roses and honeysuckle are entwined. The occupants are three. They are out of doors now, seated on the lawn which stretches down to the shingly beach on which the waves are lispings and rippling.

Captain Lyle (*speaks*). “Well, Ethel dear, and you, Effie, you are both very silent. Are you breaking your hearts because we have had to give up Grayling House for a time, and come to live in this tiny cottage by the sea?”

Mrs Lyle, looking up from her sewing, and smiling kindly but somewhat sadly: “No, Arnold, I was thinking about our dear boy.”

Effie, dropping her book in her lap. “So was I, mother. I was thinking of Leonard and – and poor Douglas. It is now the second summer since they went away. It is wearing through, too. See how the roses fall and scatter their petals when you touch them. Oh! do you think, papa, they will ever, ever come again?”

Captain Lyle, smiling. “Yes, love, I do. Here, come and sit by me. That is right. Now you know the country they went away to is a very, very strange one.”

Effie. “A very, very terrible one.”

Captain Lyle. “No, I think not, dear, else those who have been there would not always wish to return to it. It is wild and lonely, and silent and cold, Effie, and there are no letter-carriers about, you know, not even a pigeon-post, so Leonard can’t very well write. The fact is, they’ve got frozen in, and it may be even another summer yet before we see them.”

Effie. “Another summer? Oh, papa!”

Captain Lyle. “Yes, dear, because he and honest Douglas are in the regions of thick-ribbed ice, you know; and once it embraces a ship, it is difficult to get clear. But cheer up, lass; I *won’t* have you fretting, there! Now, promise me you – ha! here comes dear old Fitzroy, swinging away on his wooden leg. Good-afternoon, my friend; there is need of you here. My wife and daughter are doing nothing but fretting.”

Captain Fitzroy. “Oh! come, Effie, come, Mrs Lyle. Look at me; I don’t fret. The boys will return as sure as the sun will rise to-morrow.”

Effie, smiling through her tears. “Thank you, Captain; you always give us hope.”

Captain Fitzroy. “And I suppose you mourn because you’ve had to leave bonnie Glen Lyle – eh!”

Mrs Lyle. “Oh yes. We dearly love the old house.”

Captain Fitzroy. “Well, then, let me prophesy. First, the boys will return safe and sound, red and rosy; secondly, you’ll get over your difficulties, and return to Glen Lyle; thirdly, we’ll live together happy ever afterwards.”

Effie laughs now in spite of herself, for the old Captain always looks so cheery and so comical.

Captain Lyle. “Hear that, darling! Now, bustle about, Effie, and get us some nice brown tea and brown toast, while we sit here and chat.”

Captain Fitzroy, looking seaward. The ocean is a sheet of blue, with patches of green here and there, where cloud shadows fall, and sails like sea-birds far away towards the horizon.

“What a heavenly day, to be sure! Why, there is health in every breath one inhales on this delightful coast. Don’t you feel cosy now and happy in this sweet little cottage? Nothing to do. Nothing to think about except the absent ones. No care, no worry except that of making war upon the weeds in your little garden. I declare to you, Lyle, my lad, I consider such a life as you now

lead in a manner quite idyllic.”

Lyle, looking thoughtfully for a moment or two on the ground, then up at his friend’s cheerful face.

“One of the chief pleasures of my present existence, dear Fitzroy, lies in the fact that I have you for a neighbour. But to tell you the truth, I do feel happier since I let the lauds of Glen Lyle and got rid of an incubus. I feel, and know now, I am retrenching, and that in a few years I shall recover myself.”

Fitzroy. “And don’t you think you ought to have let the house as well?”

Lyle. “No, no, no; I could not bear to think of a footstep crossing my father’s hall. Old Peter will see to the gardens with the help of a lad, and the ancient cook, who is indeed one of the family, and whom I could not have dismissed, will keep on peat fires enough to defy the damp.”

Fitzroy. “And how does your little gipsy lass Zella suit as a housekeeper?”

Lyle. “Excellently well. There she comes with the tea; judge for yourself.”

Zella, tall, handsome, and neatly attired, comes upon the scene to place a little table near the two friends and lay the tea. What a change from the wild waif! We last saw her springing up at the end of the Gothic bridge, and startling the horse of Bland’s emissary. She is still a gipsy, but a very civilised one.

Captain Lyle. “I am expecting old Peter every minute.”

Fitzroy. “Talk of angels, and they appear. Lo! yonder comes

your Peter, or your Peter's ghost."

Old Peter opens the gate at the sea-beach as he speaks, and comes slowly up the walk.

Lyle. "Come away, Peter. Why, you pant. Sit down and have a cup of tea. How goes all at the dear old house?"

Peter, smoothing the head of Ossian the old deerhound, who has arisen from his corner to bid him welcome. "Bravely, sir, bravely and well. But would you believe it, though it's no a month since you left, they will have it that the hoose is haunted? Heard you ever the like?"

Lyle. "No, Peter, it is strange."

Peter. "And they will have it, sir, that the pike wasna canny, and they say that, dead though he be, his ghost still haunts the auld loch."

Fitzroy, laughing. "The ghost of a pike, Peter? Well, well, well; we live to learn."

Peter. "And what for no, sir?"

Fitzroy. "Did you bury him, Peter?"

Peter. "No, sir, no, on land. I put him cannily back into the loch again. He lay on his side for a whole day, then sank to the bottom afore ma ain een. Dead as a door nail."

Fitzroy. "I doubt it, Peter."

Peter. "Sir?"

Fitzroy. "Nothing, Peter, nothing. By the way, Lyle, how came this uncanny fish, that seems so strangely connected with the fortunes of Glen Lyle, into your possession."

Lyle. "Peter can tell you better than I. He is old, and remembers."

Peter. "When the auld laird lived, nane kenned o' the whereabouts o' that bonnie fish except himsel' and me and the gipsy Faas. They gipsies, sir, were part and parcel o' the estate, they would have died for the auld laird, or for ony o' his folk or kin. Goodness only kens how auld the fish was himsel'. He was, they say, as big as a grilse when first ta'en in the Tweed and brought up to the river that runs through bonnie Glen Lyle. And woe is me, they tell me that was an awfu' day, for bonnie Prince Charlie was in full retreat from England. He stayed and slept a night at Glen Lyle, and next week but one the foremost o' Cumberland's rieviers were there. The old Lyles were out. They were wi' Charlie, but not a thing living, my father told me, did they leave about the place, and they would have fired the hoose itself had they not been obleeged to hurry on, for Charlie's men were ahead. But things settled down after that; Cumberland's rieviers were quieter coming back. The beasts they were killed or gone, so they left the auld hoose of Glen Lyle alone. The laird was pardoned, and peace and plenty reigned ance mair in the land.

"Time flew on, sirs. The auld laird was fond o' fishing. There were poachers in plenty in those days, and the laird was kind to them. Let them only leave his '45 pike alane, and they might take a' the trouts in the stream. But in later times, when the auld laird got aulder still, cockneys came, and they were no sae particular, and one day an English body hooked and brought the

pike on shore. He had the gaff raised to hit him on the head, when all of a sudden the gaff was knocked out of his hand, and he found himsel' just where the pike had come frae, wallowin' in the middle o' the pot. (A large pool in a river is so called in Scotland.)

“That same nicht, lang past, the shortest hour o't, when everybody was fast asleep but mysel', two o' the Faas came to the auld hoose. They had the half-dead fish, with the bonnie gowden band around his tail, in a pot. And together we went to the loch and ploupit him in. The owlets were cryin' and the branches o' the pine trees creakin' in the wind, and if I live to be as auld as Methuselah, I'm no likely to forget that eerie-some nicht. But, heigho! Joe is dead and awa', and the hoose o' Glen Lyle is tottering near its fall. Wae's me that I should hae lived to see the like!”

Captain Fitzroy. “Drink that China tea, Peter, and things will look far more cheerful.”

Long before the major's departure things do look more cheerful.

Ethel, hope in her heart now, has brought out her harp, and is bending over it while she sings a plaintive old Scotch ballad, while the rest sit listening round. The setting sun is throwing tall rock shadows over the blue sea. The waves seem to form a drowsy accompaniment to the harp's wild notes, and the sea-birds are shrieking their good-night song. Let us leave them, and hie us away to the far north and west.

Scene Two: Summer in the Arctic seas. A little Indian village to the north of Cumberland Gulf. Yet not all Indian, for then; are houses here now as well as Eskimo huts, and white men are moving about busy at work, in company with the little brown-skinned, skin-clad natives.

Had the shipwrecked crew of the *Fairy Queen* landed on the south side of the Cumberland Gulf or Sound, it is probable they would have made an attempt to find their way through Labrador to some English or other foreign settlement. But this gulf is a sea in itself, and they had no boats, while the kayaks of the natives were far too frail, even if they had been numerous enough, to be of much use.

They had to be content, therefore, to remain prisoners where they were until the long night of winter set in.

They were not idle. Indeed, the life they now led was far from unpleasant while summer lasted. It was a very wild one. There were deer and game on the hills, and every stream teemed with fish, to say nothing of the strange creations that inhabited the sea-shore.

Among other things saved from the wreck of the *Fairy Queen*, and safely landed by Captain Blunt's party, were guns and a goodly store of ammunition, which they had managed to keep dry.

What with fishing and hunting, manufacturing sledges and training the dogs, the time fled very quickly indeed.

The days flew quickly by, and autumn came; then they got

shorter and shorter, till at length the sun showed his face for the last time, and after this all was night.

In a month more everything was ready for the journey south.

So memorable a march, too, has seldom been made. Some of my readers may ask why they chose the winter season for their departure. For this reason: they could go straight along the coast, winding only round the mountains. In summer the gulfs and streams would have formed an insurmountable barrier, but now these were hard as adamant.

All being ready, and the friendly Indians accompanying them to the number of twenty or more, to act as guides and see to the care of the dogs, they left the Esquimo village about the end of October, and were soon far away on the silent, lonely midst of the Cumberland Gulf.

Luckily Captain Blunt had saved his compass, else even the almost unerring instinct of the natives would have failed to steer them across the ice. Had it been clear weather all the time the stars would have been sufficient to keep them right, but storms came on long before they had got over the gulf. And such storms! Nothing in this country could ever equal them in fury and confusion. Not the wildest winter's day that ever raged among the lone Grampian Hills could be compared to them. The winds seem to meet and unite in and from all directions. The snow filled the air. It did not only fall; it rose, and the darkness was intense. To proceed in the face of such terrible weather was of course impossible. Dogs and men huddled together in the lee of

an iceberg; it was found at times almost impossible to breathe.

They encountered more than one of these fearful storms; but at last the sky cleared, the stars and the radiant aurora-bow danced and flickered in the air above them, and after a week of toil they had crossed the gulf, and stood on *terra firma* on the shores of Labrador.

But their trials were only beginning. They found they could not make so straight a way as they had at first imagined, owing to the mountains and rough state of the country.

These men, however, were British – their hearts were hearts of oak – so they struggled on and on, happy, when each day was over, to think they were a step nearer their native land. The dogs were staunch and true, and the natives simple, honest, and kind.

To recount all the hardships of this journey, which occupied in all four long months, would take a volume in itself. Let me give a brief sketch of just *One Day's March*.

They are well down in the middle of Labrador. Hardened as Leonard and Douglas now are, and almost as much inured to the cold as the Indian guides themselves, the bitterness of the night just gone has almost killed them.

All the camp, however, is astir hours before the stars have given place to the glaring light of a short, crisp winter's day. Dogs are barking and howling for their breakfast, and the men are busy preparing their own and that of their officers. It is indeed a meagre one – sun-dried fish and meat, with snow to eat instead of tea or coffee, that is all. But they have appetites; it is enough,

and they are thankful.

Then sledges are got ready, and the dogs having been fed and harnessed, Captain Blunt and his young friends put on their snowshoes, and all in camp follow his example.

Then the start is made. The pace is slow, though the dogs would go more quickly if allowed. Their path winds through a rough and broken glen at first, and at sunrise scouts are sent on ahead to spy out the land from a mountain top. They can see but little, however; only hill piled o'er hill and crag o'er crag.

They cross a wild frozen stream, and at sunrise rejoice to find themselves on the borders of a broad lake. It will be all plain sailing now for some hours to come.

But, alas! the wind gets up, and there is no shelter of any kind here. On a calm day one can walk and keep warm with the thermometer far below zero. But with a cutting wind the cold and the suffering are a terrible punishment.

The wind blows higher and higher. It tears across the frozen lake – a bitter, biting, cutting blast; there is hardly any facing it. Even dogs and Indians bend their heads downwards, and present their shoulders to the wind.

The skin garments of the Esquimos, the coats of the dogs, and beards and hair of the sailors are massed and lumped with frozen snow, and cheeks and ears are coated with ice as if they had been glazed.

Struggling on thus for hours, they cross the lake at last, and gain the shelter of a pine wood. Here wood is gathered, and after

much ado a fire is lighted. They dare only look at it at first, for well they know the danger that would accrue from going too near it. But this in itself is something, so they begin to talk, and even to laugh, though the laugh hangs fire on their frozen lips, and sounds half idiotic.

On again, keeping more into shelter; and so on and on all the day, till, despite all dangers and difficulties, they have put fifteen miles betwixt them and the camp-fire of the previous evening.

They find themselves in the shelter of some ice-clad rocks at last, with ice-clad pine trees nodding over them, and here determine to bivouac for the night.

The wind has gone down. The sun is setting – a glorious sunset it is – amidst clouds of crimson, gold, and copper.

How delightful is this supper of dried fish and broiled deer now! They almost feel as if they had dined off roast beef and plum pudding. So beds are prepared with boughs and blankets and skins, a prayer is said, a hymn is sung, and soon our heroes forget the weary day's journey, their aching, blistered feet, and stiff and painful joints.

Ah! but the cold – the cold! No, they cannot forget that. They are conscious of it all the night, and awake in the morning stiffer almost than when they lay down.

During all their long and toilsome march our heroes never saw a single bear nor met a hostile Indian. But the country now, I am told, is peopled by nomadic tribes.

Civilisation at long, long last. Only a little fisher village, but

men dwell there who speak the English tongue, and a right hearty welcome do they accord to the wanderers.

Book Two – Chapter Seven

A Saturday Night at Sea

“Meanwhile some rude Arion’s restless hand
Wakes the brisk harmony that sailors love;
A circle there of merry listeners stand,
Or to some well-known measure fealty move,
Thoughtless as if on shore they still were free to rove.”

Scene: The upper deck of a barque in mid-Atlantic, homeward bound. Sailors dancing amidships to the music of flute and fiddle. Aft, under an awning, a table is spread, at which sit Leonard, Douglas, Captain Blunt, with the skipper of the vessel, and one of his officers.

Skipper James, of the timber barque *Black-eyed Susan*, was a sailor of the good old school. He was homeward bound, and happening to call at a village on the west shore of Newfoundland, he heard that a shipwrecked crew of his countrymen were residing at a small fishing station on the Labrador coast. He did not hesitate a moment. He put about, and sailed back right away to the nor’ard and west and took every soul on board. Men like Skipper James, I fear, are, nowadays, like angels’ visits, few and far between. Ah! and they are angels, too, when you find them; rough enough to all outward appearance, perhaps, but good in

the main, and men, too, who carry their hearts upon their sleeves.

Skipper James and our heroes got friendly at once. And before they were three days on board they felt as if they had known this kindly skipper all their lives.

“My ship’s only a rough one,” he had told them frankly; “and your fare may not be first-class; but by my song, gentlemen, you are right welcome to the best I have.”

It was a Saturday night. They had been three weeks at sea, with fine weather nearly all the time, so no wonder all hands were happy, fore and aft.

Now I have said that this skipper was an old-fashioned sailor, and so he was; and this being Saturday night, he determined, as he always did, that his men should enjoy themselves forward as much as the officers aft. There was singing, therefore, and dancing, and sea-pie. A glorious sea-pie steamed on the table of the quarter-deck, and a dozen of the same sort aft.

Rory O’Reilly was the mate’s name; the life and soul of the mess he was. He could sing a song or tell a story with any one.

“Dear Captain James,” he said to-night, “do tell us a story. Do you believe in the sarpint, sorr?”

Captain James quietly finished his second plate of sea-pie, and put the plate in a corner so stayed up that the ship’s motion could not displace it. For this skipper was a most methodical man. Then he took his old brown clay with its tin lid, and proceeded to fill it. He shook out the “dottle,” as the unburned portion of tobacco in the bottom was called, and put it carefully on Rory O’Reilly’s

open palm, held out in a friendly and obliging way for James's benefit. Then he loaded up to near the top with fresh cut, broke up the dottle and put that above, then pinched up the dust and put that over all, then slowly and solemnly lit up. When he had blown a few blasts of such density of volume that further proofs of the pipe's being well lit up were needless, the skipper cleared his throat and commenced —

A Strange, Strange Story

“Rory asked me,” he said, “if I believed in the great sea-serpent. He asked me with a kind of incredulous smile on his face, which spoke volumes as to his own disbelief. Well, I am not sitting here to-night to lay proof before you as to the actual existence of sea-serpents of a monstrous size, but I beg to remind my friend here, that not only one or two officers of the mercantile and fighting navies of the world, but dozens have come forward, and given their oath, that such monsters were seen by them, or by their whole crew, at certain times and in certain latitudes and longitudes. And these men, both at the times of the awful visitations, and at the times of their swearing to what they considered facts, were neither intoxicated nor otherwise out of their minds.

“But my story is not about sea-serpents altogether, though it may throw a new light on those submarine monsters.

“It is a strange, strange story — one told me years and years

ago by my gallant old grandfather. I remember, as though it were but yester evening, the first time I heard him tell it.

“Grandfather, mates, had at this time retired from the army. He was of an old Scottish family, that had been crushed at Culloden, so that with the exception of the half-pay a stingy government granted him, he had little else to live upon. He resided in a pretty little cottage about a quarter of a mile from our house, and it used to be my delight to visit him in the gloaming. I would go quietly in, and seat myself on a stool in a corner, and wait to be recognised. By-and-bye I would lead him to speak of the olden times, and of the battles and sieges by sea and land he had taken part in.

“But this story I am going to tell you he has repeated to me again and again, in different words maybe, but the facts were always the same.

“It was in the days of the American war, the war of freedom and independence, which, to my way of thinking, are the birthrights of every man born, and of every nation as well. England, mates, did not fight in an over-gentlemanly fashion in those days, and I think it is a stain on our country’s escutcheon that the Indians of the Far West were armed and employed at all.

“But this is not what I am sitting here to discuss, only my grandfather and Tom Turner, a junior of his, both belonged in those days to Pontius Pilate’s guards (the 1st, or Royal Scots Regiment), and were stationed at the same place.

“Though Tom was a few years younger than grand-dad,

they were inseparables, so to speak, and always in the same 'ploy, whatever that 'ploy might be. To say that they were both Highlanders is equivalent to telling you they were both fond of field sports; and when one day Wild Eye, Chief of the Cheebuk Indians, promised them some first-rate hunting if they could get leave for a few days, you may be sure they were not long in applying for it – ay, and obtaining it, too; for young Tom Turner had a wonderful tongue for getting round his colonel, and, as the troops were in garrison, the services of these officers wouldn't be much missed.

“It was a lovely morning when they set out on their journey west, mounted on three half-bred horses, as fleet as the wind, and just as independent.

“Now it would seem that hiring Indians was a game that in those days two could play at; and though the honour of the idea should be awarded to the British, as having been the inventors, as it were, still tit-for-tat, you know, and everything is fair in war, so the Yankees were not far behind.

“There were, in reality, two different sets of Indians on the warpath, both bent upon getting as many scalps as possible for the decoration of their wigwams, for the Christmas season, as one might say.

“This fact made travelling a very risky kind of a business.

“The first day passed over without almost any kind of adventure, only it was summer on the prairie they were passing over, and there was no shade of bush nor tree, and the insects

were almost as much of a torture as the sun's rays.

“Old Wild Eye, the chief, must have been a clever fellow, indeed, for on this rolling plain there was neither road nor track, except the trails of wild animals; to have followed those would have led my grand-dad a queer dance.

“When the sun went down at last, glaring red through the haze of blue, it got almost cold, but they dared not think of lighting a fire, because of the hostile Indians, so they hobbled their nags, ate their supper, and sat huddled up in their blankets beneath the stars till long past twelve. They were listening to Wild Eye's adventures on the warpath.

“Wild Eye was a border chief, and friendly with the British; in fact, he had been once to Quebec, and so considered himself about half a Christian. Wild Eye was as bald as the back of my watch, and had no more teeth than a tin whistle. He had scars innumerable, only one ear, and about half a nose, for he had been twice put to the torture, and saved as if by a miracle.

“His scalp, he told my grand-dad, hung in many wigwams. The fact is, Wild Eye wore a wig, and when he lost one in warfare, he wore a morsel of buffalo hide until he was able to negotiate with his barber in Ontario. Each wig was paid for not in coin but in land. Each wig cost Wild Eye twenty acres of territory, and they say that the descendants of his barber are millionaires to-day.

“But my grand-dad and his friend fell sound asleep at last, and not even the presence of a grizzly bear, who came round to snuff after the remains of the supper, awoke them until the sun was so

high that it nearly hardened the whites of their eyes, as heat does the white of an egg.

“‘I say, John,’ said Tom Turner to my grand-dad, ‘we’ve got five days’ leave. I feel so happy, that I think we ought to make it a fortnight.’

“‘But grand-dad laughed. ‘No,’ he said, ‘that wouldn’t be fair, Tom. Let us stick to our furlough, and be back in five days if we can.’

“‘About evening on the second day they bade farewell to the rolling prairie, and plunged into a deep ravine, and bivouacked in a pine-clad gorge near the banks of a stream. This river was teeming with fish of the most delicate flavour. They caught enough for supper, and once more settled themselves to listen to the tales of the Indian chief.

“‘There were strange, unearthly noises in the forest that night which my grand-dad could not understand – shrieks and yells and awful howlings, but he dozed off at last and dreamt he was head keeper in a kind of pandemonium.

“‘Next morning sport began in earnest, for they found they were near the head-quarters of the grizzly and wilder cinnamon bear.

“‘Next to our friend the Arctic Bruin, there is no creature in the world with which a man has less chance in a fair stand-up fight than with the cinnamon. I don’t say, mates, but that any bear will prefer shuffling off to coming to close quarters, but don’t you catch a grizzly or cinnamon unawares behind a rock or a bush. I

tell you that the only comfort you can have at that awful moment is the memory that you've made your will, and don't owe your tailor anything to signify.

"Tom Turner was following up a grizzly, who was well on ahead, so he had eyes for nothing else; but on rounding a point on the hill-top, he was startled with a roar that went through him like a rip-saw, and found himself face to jowl with a cinnamon bear. Tom sprang back so suddenly that he burst his waistcoat buttons. His musket went off at the same moment, and Bruin made a spring to hug Tom Turner. The bullet found a billet in the beast's neck, but didn't stop his way, and next moment the bear and Tom both were tumbling down, down, down over a precipice. The bear fell on the top of a rock, and was killed. Tom alighted on the top of a juniper tree, and wasn't a bit the worse, for Tom was a tough lad.

"There were three or four bears altogether killed that forenoon, and I daresay a good many more frightened. However, about one o'clock the three friends were seated on the top of a breezy eminence overlooking the bonnie glen, and in sight of their horses, while they enjoyed their lunch or tiffin.

"What a lovely day!" said Tom, as he lay at full length on the greensward. 'How wildly sublime those hills are! Wooded almost to the summits everyone of them; and look, John, at that river far beneath yonder, like a silver thread winding away through the greenery of the forest. You're not looking, John.'

"I'm looking at something else,' said my grand-dad.

“Ugh!” cried the Indian chief, springing to his feet, seizing his gun, and pointing with it to a hill-top beyond the ravine.

“There were figures there – dark, creeping figures, no bigger apparently than coyotes.

“They were Indians.”

A Gallop for Life and Freedom

“They were Indians sure enough, and doubtless only scouts of a bigger party.

“There was no time to lose. Sport and all was forgotten; they must mount their horses, and be off back to the prairie land. There they would be clear, at least, of an ambush, and could trust to the fleetness of their horses.

“They hurried madly down hill, reaching and mounting their mustangs just as a volley was fired from both sides of the stream, the bullets peppering the trees about, and splashing on the rocks and stones. They were off like the wind next minute. Rough though the path was, round rocks, over fallen trees, and slippery, mossy banks, the good nags kept their feet, and soon the prairie was gained.

“Once fairly in it, they ventured to look behind. To their surprise they found themselves followed by several mounted Indians – a dozen in all, at the very least.

“Out on the open prairie, the half-bred mustangs seemed to fly over the ground, but they were not so fresh as the horses of

the pursuers, and the pace soon began to tell, and three out of the four savages came rattling on abreast.

“A bullet or two flew over them. It was evident they must fight. At a given signal, then, they wheeled their horses, and took deadly aim, and next moment there were two empty saddles; again they fired, and the bewildered third Indian came tumbling down over a dead horse.

“But the others came thundering on behind with yells for revenge, yells for blood and scalps.

Away went our gallant trio once again, but now, alas! Tom’s horse tripped and fell, and at the same moment the chief’s steed was shot.

“They must fight on foot now, and with terrible odds. But they were all determined to sell their lives dearly.

“Now, whatever old chroniclers may say to the contrary, American Indians never did fight fairly if they could do the reverse. So in this case, instead of coming on with a wild rush or a warlike shout, they paused, and quietly waited till their companions swarmed up. Meanwhile, Wild Eye had killed his horse, and also Tom’s fallen one. Why leave the poor brutes to fall into the hands of the enemy? Then the three entrenched themselves as well as they could behind them, and waited events.

“They had not very long to wait, either. A volley was fired by the savages who had guns. It was returned with interest, and as they were crowded together it must have had terrible effect.

“The yelling and buzzing was now frightful. It was as

threatening as that which proceeds from a hollow tree with a hornet's nest in it when you kick the trunk.

“And just as hornets rush out from their hive, so rushed those Indians now on, spreading out, and entirely surrounding the three brave men, shrieking and brandishing their tomahawks.

“My grand-dad said he never understood what put it into Wild Eye's head to sing out ‘Surrender!’ but he did, and at once there was peace and a parley. The two Britishers would have preferred fighting to the bitter end, and having it over; but as most of the attacking savages had laid down their weapons, they felt in duty bound to cease firing, and submit to the fortune of war – to the inevitable.

“Tom and my grand-dad were bound with withes and tied together. Wild Eye was tied to an Indian, then without further palaver the march westward was commenced.

“My grandfather forgot how long they were on that terrible journey into the fastnesses of the far west. It must have been, he thought, fully a fortnight.

“They were fatigued beyond measure, footsore, heartsick, and weary. If they had entertained any hopes at first of being treated as prisoners of war, and in due time exchanged, every day's journey served to dispel the illusion.

“Poor Wild Eye fell sick, and was slain. His wig was hung at the girdle of one of his captors, his body left to swelter in the sun, till birds and beasts should eat his flesh and ants pick his bones.

“Grand-dad was sufficiently conversant with the language of

this tribe to know what the doom was that he and Tom had to look forward to. They were being hurried away to the wigwam village of their captors, to be tortured at the hands of squaws. The chief of the party even condescended to enliven the last few miles of the journey, by telling his prisoners such tales of the torture, that, brave though they were, made the blood run cold along their spines.

“At last they reached the Indian village, which they entered just as the sun was setting among clouds all fringed with gold and crimson above the western hills.

“What a smiling, peaceful valley it seemed. The purple mist of distance hung like a gauzy veil over the mountain tops, a blue haze half hid the greenery of the woods, there were parks of verdure dotted over with flowering trees and bushes, in which bright-winged birds flitted or sang. Deer roamed quietly about, or stood drowsily chewing the cud, and up through the trees on the banks of a broad, placid river, rose the smoke from the village fires.

“The whole scene was almost home-like in its gentle beauty. Who could have believed that it had been and would be the scene of a torture so refined and terrible that one shudders even to think of it?”

Book Two – Chapter Eight

Captain James Continues his Story – On the Subterranean River

“Forth from the dark recesses of the cave
The serpent came
With searching eye, and lifted jaw and tongue,
Quivering and hissing as a heavy shower
Upon the summer woods.”

Scene: The quarter-deck of the barque. Officers at the table. Men crowded with eager faces, respectfully listening to their captain's story.

The preparations for the torture were finished ere the village sunk to slumber that night. Tied hand and foot, my grandfather and Tom lay beneath a tree. They could not sleep, and they cared not to talk; all hope had fled, and the gloom and terror of death were in their hearts.

“The night was clear and beautiful, and the stars never looked brighter or more impressive, but cold and heartless, as indeed seemed everything. Sometimes a dog would come round and snuff at them, then start back in alarm, and sit for long minutes and howl. When the dogs were silent there were wild, unearthly

shrieks heard in the distant woods, doubtless the voices of birds and beasts of prey.

“Towards morning both prisoners fell into an uneasy doze, and were awakened at last by the joyful shouts of a band of Indians from a neighbouring village, who had come to share in the festival in which Tom and my grandfather were to play so prominent a part.” Skipper James paused a minute here to relight his pipe.

“Ah, mates!” he continued, “I’ve often wondered what my grandfather’s feelings and poor Tom Turner’s must have been when they were dragged out, and tied to trees on the torture ground, with the female executioners all ready, and pining to see the white men’s blood, the knives sharpened, the torture irons heated to redness, and that awful circle of upturned faces, in which they must have looked in vain for one pitying glance.

“Good-bye, John,” cried Tom.

“Good-bye, Tom,” cried my grandfather, as two vicious-looking squaws approached him, one carrying a knife, the other a white-hot iron rod.

“Hold!” cried an old white-haired chief, stalking into the circle.

“Every one looked impatiently towards him.

“Why, they asked, should even a chief of chiefs attempt to spoil the sport?

“But this was none other than Red Bull himself, one whose word had been law for years.

“He quickly gathered around him a dozen of the head warriors

of the tribe.

“‘Your father would speak,’ said Red Bull, when they had seated themselves around him, and close to the stakes or trees to which the prisoners were tied. ‘Your father would speak. To torture a white man is no pleasure. The white man screams like a squaw. Then he faints, soon he dies. Then gone for ever is the sport, for he feels no more. Send them rather beneath the earth to the silent spirit. The great river rolls through our valley. Soon it disappears. Every year our young men are drawn beneath. Send the white men to seek them in the caves of darkness. If they come not back the great serpent has devoured them.’

“The awful truth was soon revealed more plainly to the prisoners. They were to be placed in separate canoes, and sent adrift upon the river that flowed through this romantic valley, and which a few miles nearer the mountains entered a yawning cave, and was never seen again.

“Such a fate would have been enough to make the bravest hearts that ever beat stand still with fear. The torture itself seemed pleasure in comparison to it.

“But the old chief’s speech was hailed with shouts of acclamation, while those fiendish squaws brandishing their knives danced in a yelling circle around the prisoners.

“A certain amount of liberty was now granted them, but they were so well guarded that thoughts of escape never entered their minds. They were even fed on milk and fruit, though they couldn’t have had much heart to eat.

“Next morning all preparations for this terrible voyage were completed. There were three canoes in all – one for grand-dad, one for Tom, and one loaded with meat and grain as provisions. The three canoes were lashed together, and both prisoners were supplied with paddles.

“They had been told the story of the great serpent the evening before, in order to add, if possible, to the torture of their terror.

“The tradition about this frightful snake was, my grandfather said, common among a great many tribes, so you know there must have been some little truth in it. Whether it ever left its subterranean abode in summer or not no one was able to say; but when frost was hard and winter’s snow lay thick on the ground, it used to emerge at night from the black waters and caves of such rivers as that which flowed through this lovely fertile valley, and which suddenly disappeared. It used to emerge, I say, and travel far inward in search of prey, killing and swallowing whole buffaloes and even grizzly bears, which latter it would follow to their dens, and devour them there. The trail it always left behind it told the beholder its size. It was as if a wide-beamed boat had been dragged along, with here and there at each side the imprint of gigantic claws.

“One white man is said to have seen the monster on a bright moonlight night, and its appearance was dreadful to behold. It was hurrying back towards the river at its point of disappearance, with something in its jaws; it was snorting, and the breath from its nostrils rose like steam-clouds on the clear night air, its eyes

glanced like green stars in a frosty sky. Arrived at the river, it sprang in, going out of sight at once with a booming splash.

“Amidst the yells and shouts of the savages the canoes were started, the Indians following down the banks on both sides, brandishing knives and tomahawks. Just before its disappearance, the river narrows considerably, and goes swirling through a gorge with great rapidity.

“My grandfather says that at this point Tom Turner started singing ‘Rule Britannia!’ and that his manly young voice could be heard high over the shouts of the savages. But grand-dad’s heart was too full to join him.

“He cast one wild, despairing glance around him at the rocks with their wild flowers, at the greenery of the hanging trees, the blue sky, the fleecy cloudlets, at the great sun itself; then everything was blotted out of sight in a moment, the canoes were swallowed up in the inky darkness.

“There were a few minutes of silence deep as death itself, for my grand-dad and Tom both were praying.

“‘Tom,’ cried grandfather at last.

“‘John,’ said Tom.

“And their voices sounded ringing-hollow, awful.

“‘Speak low, Tom.’

“‘Yes,’ whispered Tom, ‘but the suspense is terrible.’

“‘Where are we hurrying to? How I wish it were all over! I think I’m going mad, John. I believe I shall leap out of the canoe and meet my fate.’

“No, Tom, no; be brave, man, for my sake. A minute or two ago you were singing.’

“‘It was but to keep up my sinking heart.’

“‘Well, sing again.’

“‘Nay, nay; I dare not.’

“‘Well, Tom, stretch your hand out here, and let me grasp it. Thanks. This seems a little comfort, anyhow.’

“‘Shall we talk, Tom?’

“‘No, I feel more inclined to sleep. I feel a strange, unaccountable drowsiness steal – steal – ’

“‘Tom said no more. He was fast asleep.

“‘So was grand-dad.

“‘How long they slept or how far the canoes had drifted on through the subterranean darkness they never could tell, but they awoke at last, and found that the boats had grounded at the side.

“‘Tom struck a light, and lit a torch.

“‘Nothing around them but black wet rocks, and the black water rippling past.

“‘Tom,’ said my grand-dad, ‘it is possible enough, you know, that this river may run but a few more miles, then emerge into the light.’

“‘Oh, wouldn’t that be glorious!’ cried Tom.

“‘Well, let us push off again, and try to keep awake.’

“‘Tom extinguished the torch, and the boats were once more shoved into the stream.

“‘John,’ said Tom after a time.

“Yes, Tom.’

“Don’t you remember when we were at school reading in heathen books of the awful river Styx, that flows nine times round the abode of the dead.’

“Ay, Tom, and we seem on it now. It would hardly surprise me to see a door open in the rock, and the three-headed dog Cerberus appear, or the fearful ferryman.’

“The boats rushed on now for hours, without ever grounding, though at times they touched at either side; and all this time those poor despairing souls sat hand in hand, for the silence was as saddening as even the darkness.

“Gradually, however, a sound began to grow upon their ears, and increase and increase momentarily. It was the roar of a cataract far ahead.

“Tom speedily lit his torch, and they paddled in towards the side, and grounding, leapt on shore, and drew up the boats.

“If they could have been surprised at anything the warmth of the shore would have caused them to wonder, but they felt, in a measure, already dead, and their senses were benumbed. One sense, however, was left – that of hunger. They extracted provisions, and, strange to say, both ate heartily, then almost immediately sank to sleep.

“Tom,’ said grand-dad, awaking at last.

“John,’ said Tom.

“I think, Tom, we had better end this at once. Down yonder is the cataract. We have but to push off into the stream, and in

a minute more all will be over.’

“‘Nonsense,’ replied Tom. ‘Come, John, old man, I’m getting hopeful; and I do think, if we can drag the boats along this gloomy shore, we may avoid that waterfall, and launch again below it. Let us try.’ So Tom lit the torch again, and away they went, dragging the light canoes behind them.

“It was rough work, but they succeeded at last.

“Once more the boats were launched, once more the same irrepressible drowsiness stole over them, and they slept for what seemed to them, when they awoke, a wondrously long time.

“Again they grounded, ate, and slept.

“And so they kept on and on and on, rushing down the mysterious subterranean river, but they came to no more cataracts.

“On and on, for days perhaps; for aught they knew for weeks.

“The regions in which they now found themselves were oppressively hot, but they only slept the sounder. Awakening one night, if one may so speak of a time that was all night, they were surprised in the extreme to find themselves in the midst of a strange glimmering light. It was a light by which they could see each other’s faces, and blue and ghastly they looked, but a light that cast no shadow, at which they marvelled much, till they found out that the river here had broadened out into a kind of lake, that the rocks all round them were covered with fungi or toadstools, all emitting a phosphorescent glimmer, and that the water itself contained thousands of strange fishes, and that these

all gave light.

“There was but little current here, so paddles were got out, and the boats helped onwards, though, to tell the truth, both my grand-dad and Tom Turner were more frightened at the strange spectral light that now glared round them, than they had been of the darkness.

“The fishes, too, looked like things uncanny, and indeed they were wholly uncouth and quite dissimilar in shape and actions from anything they had ever seen in the world above.

“They had reached a part of the river when it began once more to narrow and the current to become stronger, while at the same time it began to get darker, and the spectral-like fishes fewer. But suddenly Tom clutched my grand-dad by the wrist with his disengaged hand, and with a visage distorted by terror he drew his attention to something that lay half curled up at the bottom of a deep slimy pool.

“However dark it had been they would have seen that awful creature, for its body from stem to stern was lit up with a phosphorescent gleam. It was in the shape of a gigantic snake, full twenty fathoms long, with two terrible alligator-like arms and claws in front. It had green glaring eyes, that never closed or winked. Its whole appearance was fearsome enough, my grand-dad said, to almost turn a beholder into stone.

“Whether it was asleep or awake they could not tell, but it seemed to glide astern as the boat swept over it, and gradually to lose shape and disappear. In a few minutes more they were

plunged once more in Cimmerian darkness.

“For many days the boats plunged on and on over the subterranean river, till their very life became a burden and a weariness to them, that they would gladly have laid down for ever.

“But one time, on awaking from a deep sleep, they found that something very strange and unusual had occurred. They were still in darkness, but not altogether in silence; the water made a lapping sound on the rocky river bank, and the boat was no longer in motion.

“Moreover, it was less warm around them than usual.

“Tom lit a torch, and they landed. Yes, there was the water lapping up and receding again.

“Can you give us more light?” said my grand-dad.

“We may burn the centre canoe,’ replied Tom, undoing it as he spoke, while his companion held the torch on high. There are no more provisions except enough for once and a few pounds of tallow.

“The canoe was broken up and set fire to. The flames leapt up, and lo! in front of them was the end of the mysterious river, a black and solid rock, beneath which no man or boat could penetrate.

“Tom looked at my grand-dad, and grand-dad looked at him.

“Lost! Imprisoned! The end has come!”

“These were the words they uttered.

“Let us eat our last meal, then,’ said Tom.

“Yes,’ said my grand-dad.

“When it was finished, they lay down with their feet towards the grateful blaze, and in a moment or two were once more sound asleep.

“When they awoke what a change! All was light and beauty. They were in a cave with a river rolling silently at their feet away out and joining the blue sea. Yonder it was, and the sky, too, and white fleecy clouds, and screaming sea-birds, and the glorious sun itself.

“They understood all now. They had come to the end of the river while the tide was up; it was now ebb, and they were free.

“They rushed out wild with delight, and wandered away along the sea-beach. It was weeks and weeks before they managed to attract the notice of a passing vessel, and their adventures on shore were many and strange, but I must not tell them now, for it is time to turn in.

“But I believe you know, and so did my grand-dad, that they had been actually in the home of the great sea-serpent, that he dwells in mysterious subterranean rivers like these, venturing out to sea but seldom, and hardly ever appearing on the surface.”

“Are you done?” said one sailor.

“I’m done.”

“Well,” said Rory O’Reilly, “it’s a quare story, a very quare story, deed and indeed. But I can’t be after swallowing the big sarpint.”

“I can believe the first half of the yarn,” quoth Captain Blunt.

“You can, can you?” quoth Rory. “Well, sure, it’s all roight

after all; you believe the *first* half, and he believes the second half himself; what more can you wish? Faith, it's as roight as the rainbow."

"Well, Rory," said the skipper, laughing, "can't you tell us a story yourself every word of which we can all believe?"

Rory scratched his head, with a comical look twinkling in his eyes and puckering his face.

"Deed and indeed," he said, "if it be my turn, I won't be after spoiling the fun."

Book Two – Chapter Nine

Rory O'Reilly's Queer Story

“Till now we quietly sailed on,
Yet never a breeze did blow;
Slowly and smoothly went the ship,
Moved onward from beneath.

“The upper air burst into life,
And a hundred fire-flags sheen,
To and fro they were hurried about,
And to and fro and in and out
The war stars danced between.”

Coleridge.

“Deed and indeed,” said Rory, “if it be my turn I won't be after spoiling the fun; and sure, boys, thim is the very words my great-grandfather said when he and a dozen more were going to be hanged at Ballyporeen in the troublesome times.

“And is it a story you said?”

“Yes, Rory, a story.”

Now Rory's religious feelings and his sense of humour used oftentimes to be strangely at loggerheads. The fact is, he would not tell a wilful falsehood for all he was worth.

“But, sure,” he would say, “there can’t be a taste of harm in telling a story or two just to amuse the boys.” Yet, to make assurance doubly sure, and his conscience as easy as possible, he always prefaced his yarns with a bit of advice such as follows – “Now, boys, believe me, it’s lies I’m going to be after telling you entirely. Believe me, there isn’t a morsel av truth in any av me stories, from beginning to ind, and there’s sorra a lie in that.”

On this particular occasion, instead of commencing at once, Rory took his pipe from his mouth, and sat gazing for about a minute into dreamland, as one might say, with smiles playing at hide-and-seek all over his face.

“Thim was the glorious toimes, boys,” he said.

“What times, Rory?”

“Did I never tell you, then?” replied Rory, trying to look innocent.

“What! not about the beautiful island, and the mighty mountains, and the goold, and the jewels, and the big turtle and all?”

“No, Rory, never a word.”

“Well, then, to begin with, it’s ten years ago, and maybe a bit more, so I wasn’t so old as I am now. I hadn’t been more’n a year or two at sea, and mostly coasting that same would be, though sure enough my great ambition was to sail away beyond the sunrise, or away to the back av the north wind and seek me fortune. It was living at home in ould Oirland I was then, with mother and Molly – the saints be around them this noight! – and

a swater, claner, tidier bit av a lass than me sister Molly there doesn't live 'tween here and Tralee, and sure that is the only bit av real truth in the whole av me story."

"We perfectly believe that, Rory."

"Well thin, boys, it was crossing the bog I was one beautiful moonlight night about five o'clock in the morning, and a big wild bog it was, too, with never a house nor a cot in it, and nobody at all barrin' the moor-snipes and the kelpies, when all at once, what or who should I see standing right foreinst me, beside a rick av peats, but a gentleman in sailor's clothes, with gold all round his hat, and a bunch av seals dangling in front av him as big as turkey's eggs. And sure it wasn't shy he was at spaking either, boys.

"The top av the mornin' to ye,' says he.

"The same to you,' says I, quite bold-like, though my heart felt as big as peat; 'the same to you and a thousand av them.'

"Is it poor or rich ye are?' says he.

"As poor as a peat creel,' says I.

"Then sure,' says he, 'I daresay it isn't sorry to make your fortune you'd be.'

"I'll do anything short of shootin' a fellow-bein',' says I, 'for that same.'

"Well,' says he, 'it's lookin' out for nate young fellows like yourself I do be, and if you'll sail with me to a foreign shore, thir you'll see what you'll see.'

"I'm your man then,' I says.

“You’ll have lashin’s o’ atin’ and drinkin’,” says he, “and lashin’s o’ gold for the gatherin’, but there is one thing, and that isn’t two, which I must tell you; you’ll have to fight, Rory lad.”

“I’m your man again,” says I. “Sure there isn’t a boy in all the parish I can’t bate black and blue before ye could sneeze. And I spat in my fist as I spoke.”

“Ah! but,” says he, “the cave where all the gold is is guarded by the ugliest old goblin that ever was created. It is him you’ll have to help fight, Rory; it’s him you’ll have to help fight.”

“Och!” I cries, “no matter at all, at all; the uglier the better, so long as he’s got the goold behind him. Rory will walk through him like daylight through a dishcloth. Hurrah!”

“And I began to jump about, and spar at all the ugly old imaginary goblins I could think of.

“The gintleman laughed.

“You’ll do fust-rate,” he says, says he; “shake hands on the subject.”

“And he gave me his hand, and truth, boys, it felt as cold and damp as the tail av a fish. And more betoken, I couldn’t help noticing that all the time he was speakin’ to me, he kept changing his size. At one moment he didn’t look a morsel bigger than a pint bottle, and next – troth, he was tall enough to spit on me hat.

“But two heads are better than one,” says I to myself; “next mornin’ I’ll go and see the priest.”

“It was a mere optical allusion,” said the priest, when I told him how the gintleman was sometimes big and sometimes small,

a ‘mere optical allusion, Rory,’ he says; ‘had you been tasting the crayture?’

“‘Troth, maybe I had,’ says I.

“‘Well,’ says he, ‘that was it. To my thinking this sailor gentleman is an honest man enough. Meet him, Rory, in Dublin as he axed you, and sail with him, Tim; sure it’ll make a man o’ ye, and your mother and Molly as well, Rory.’

“‘Well,’ says I, ‘give me your blessin’, your riverance, and I’ll be after going.’

“‘I’ll not be denying ye that same,’ says his riverance.

“‘But it was mother and Molly that wept when I told them where I was going. Och! they did weep, to be sure; but when I told them of all the foine countries I’d see, and all the goold I’d bring home, troth it’s brighten up they did wonderful, and for all the fortnight before I sailed we did nothing but talk, and talk, and talk, bar that all the time they were talking it is mending me shirts and darning me stockings the dear craytures were.

“‘Well wi’ this and wi’ that the time passed away quickly enough, and at long last I bade them good-bye, and with a big lump in me throat, away I started for Dublin Bay.

“‘I mind it well, boys; it was the dark hour av midnight when we got up anchor and sailed away, and there was such a thunderstorm rattling over the big hill o’ Howth as I’d never seen the likes of in my born days. There wasn’t a breath av wind either, but somehow that didn’t make a morsel av difference to the ship one way or another. She was a quare ship.

“We were far out of sight av land next morning, and with niver another ship to be seen. It didn’t seem sailing we were, boys, but flying; it didn’t seem through the water we went, but over it, boys. It’s a foine ship she was, and a purty one as well.

“Talk av white decks, boys! ours were alabaster, and the copper nails in her weren’t copper at all, but the purest av gold, and the brass work the same. Sure didn’t I get me ould knife out just to try it.

“Don’t you be scraping at that,’ says the captain, right behind me, ‘and spoiling the looks av the ship. It’s plenty of that we’ll get where we’re going to.’

“Then I looks up, and there stood the captain right a-top av the binnacle, and sorra more than one eye had he. ‘By the powers!’ says I, ‘what have ye done with your other eye, captain?’

“Whisht, Rory!’ says he; ‘it’s in the locker down below I keep the other. One eye is enough to use at a time.’

“If it’s a good one,’ says I, talking friendly loike.

“It’s me weather eye, Rory,’ says he; ‘but go and do your duty, Rory, and keep silence when ye talk to your supairior officer.’

“The crew av this strange ship, boys, were forty av the foineest fellows that ever walked on two legs, barrin’ that niver a one o’ them had more than one leg apiece, and it was hop they did instead av walking like dacint Christians. ‘Only one leg apiece,’ says I to the bo’swain’s mate.

“One leg is enough to go to sea with,’ says he; ‘but go and do your duty, Rory, and keep silence when ye spake to your supairior

officer.’

“It was a quare ship, boys, with a one-eyed captain and a one-legged crew.

“It was, maybe, a fortnight after we sailed, and maybe more, when one day the sky grew all dark, the wind blew, and the thunders rolled and rattled, and the seas rose mountains high, and sure I thought the end of the world had come, and what would poor mother and Molly do without me. But short was the time given me to think, boys.

“‘It’s all your fault,’ cried my messmates, swarming round me.

“‘Out with one eye,’ cries the captain.

“‘Off with one leg,’ cries the crew.

“‘Never a one av me eyes will ye have, ye spalpeens!’ I roars; ‘and as for me legs, I manes to stick to the whole lot av the two av them. Come on,’ I cries; ‘stand up foreninst Rory if there is a bit av courage among ye.’

“But what could one man do among so many av them, boys? And it’s down they’d have had me, and me one leg would have been off in a jiffey, if I hadn’t made the best use av the pair av them. ‘Bad success to ye all,’ I cries, jumping on to the bowsprit, ‘ye bog-trotting crew; I’ll trust to the tinder mercies av the sharks afore I’ll stop longer among ye.’ And over I leapt into the boiling sea. The water went surging into my ears as I sank, but even at that moment it was me poor mother and Molly I was thinking most about, and whatever they’d do athout me at all, at all.

“Boys, when I came to the top av the wather agin, sorra a ship

was to be seen anywhere; the sky was clear and blue, and the wind had all gone down. ‘Rory O’Reilly!’ says a voice near me.

“And with that I looks round, and what should I see, but the ugliest craythure av an ould man that ever was born.

“‘You’re well rid o’ the lot,’ says the craythure.

“‘Thru for you,’ says I; ‘and as ye spake so frindly loike, maybe you’d be after tellin’ me how far it is to the nearest house av entertainment.’

“‘Take a howld av me tail,’ says the craythure, ‘and sure I’ll tow ye there in a twinklin’.’

“‘Is it a merman ye are, then,’ says I, ‘or the little ould man av the sea?’

“‘It’s a merman, sure enough,’ he replied; and wi’ that I catches howld av his tail, and away we goes as cheerful as ye plaze, boys, and all the toime the ould craythure kept tellin’ me about the beautiful home av the mermaids beneath the blue says, and their couches av pearl and coralline halls, and the lovely gardens, with the flowers all growing and moving with the wash av the warm waves, and av the strange-shaped fishes with diamonds and sparkling gems in their heads, that swim round and round av a noight to give the purty damsels light, to ate and to drink and to dance in.

“‘And do you dwell among all this beauty?’ says I to the ugly old craythure.

“‘What!’ says he, ‘the loikes o’ me dwell in sich places? No,’ says he, ‘Rory O’Reilly, it’s only a slave I am, for there is a

moighty difference twixt a *mermaid* and a *merman*. But here you are at the island.’

“And with that he gave his tail a shake, and I found myself lying in the sunshine on the coral sands, with no little ould man near me at all, at all.

“Now, boys, what should happen next, but I should fall as sound asleep as a babe in its cradle. Maybe it was the pangs of hunger that wakened me, and maybe it wasn’t, for before I opened me eyes, I had opened me ears, and such a confusion av swate sounds I’d never heard before, and sartainly never since.

“I kept me eyes firmly closed, wondering where I was, and trying to think back; and think back I did to the goblin ship and its goblin crew, and the little ould man av the sea that towed me on shore with his tail. The sounds were at first like the murmur av bees, then bird songs were added to them, sweeter than all delicious strains av music, that stirred every pulse in me body. And with that I opened me eyes.

“I’ll give ye me word av honour, boys, and me hand on it as well, I was so astonished at all I saw around me, that never a thing could I do at all, at all, but lie still and stare.

“It was in fairyland I was, sure enough. What were those beautiful beings, I kept asking myself, that glided over the golden ground, or, with trailing, gauzy garments and flowing hair, went floating through the sky itself, keeping time every one of them to the dreamy rhythm of the music that filled the air, and didn’t seem to come from any direction in particular? Were they peris,

sylphs, fays, or fairies, or a choice selection of mermaids come on shore for a dance?

“I’d fallen asleep on the snow-white sand. There was no sand here now, sure; all was green and gold, and shrubs and flowers and coloured fountains were all around me. But it was night all the same. And the strange thing was this, every leaf and flower gave out light of its own colour. But, glimmering down through the beautiful haze, I could see the twinkling stars, and I offered up a prayer and felt safe.

“The music grew quicker, merrier, madder, and at last sure I couldn’t stand it a moment longer, and up I starts.

“‘Och! if you plaze,’ I says, ‘I’ll mingle in the mazy dance meself, and there isn’t a boy in Ballyporeen can bate me at the rale ould Oirish jig.’

“But sure, boys, as Burns says —

“‘In a moment all was dark.’

“Away went shrubs and flowers and fountains and sylphs and fairies and fays and all, and there stood poor Rory O’Reilly on the sands once more, with the wee waves frothing up at his feet, and scratching his head, and feeling more like a fool than ever he did in his born days.

“‘Well, sure,’ says I to myself, ‘there is no knowing what to make av it. But,’ I says, ‘a little more sleep won’t hurt me, anyhow.’

“So down I lies again on the sand.

“It was daylight when I awoke again once more. But where was

I now? No fairies this time. But sure I was among the strangest race of beings imagination could conceive av. The country all around me was honest and purty enough; trees, fields, hills, and houses, and all might have been a part of ould Oirland itself. But the people, boys – why, it was indiarubber they must have been made av, and nothing else. At one moment a man would be as tall and thin as a flagstaff, next moment about the shape and fashion of a bull frog. They could stretch their arms out till twenty yards long, and make their mouths big enough to swallow a sheep. It wasn't in at the door either they'd be going when entering their dwellings, but straight through the keyhole.

“It was, maybe, a handy arrangement one way or the other, but troth it frightened poor Rory O'Reilly, and as none av the ugly craytures seemed to take any notice av me, I made my feet my friends, and got quietly away.

Well, after wandering in this enchanted island for more than a week, and never tasting a bit or a sup all the time, right glad I was to find meself by the sea once more.

“Escape I must, at all hazards. But how was I to get a boat I was thinking and wondering, when all at once me eyes fell on a great turtle-shell.

“The very thing, boys; nothing could be easier than to make a boat and sail away in this.

“It didn't take me long either to step a mast, and to load up with fruit and with shell-fish; then I got my boat afloat, and with my jacket for a sail away I went, and before long the enchanted

island went down below the horizon, and I niver felt happier in my life before, than when I saw the last of it.”

Rory O’Reilly stopped to fill his pipe, and having done so, smoked quietly on for a few minutes, while all waited patiently for the completion of his yarn.

“Well, Rory,” said Skipper James at last. “Go on; that isn’t all, surely? How did your adventurous voyage end?”

“Is it how did it end?” said Rory. “Well, boys, there arose a terrible storm, and the waves dashed over me, and the cowld hail and snow and rain – ”

“And thunder and lightning, Rory?”

“Yes, Captain James, and thunder and lightning; but sure in the midst av it all came an angel’s voice from the clouds, singing – oh! iver so sweetly —

“There is not in the wide world a valley so sweet
As the dear little vale where the waters do meet.
Ah! the last link of freedom and life shall depart,
Ere the bloom of that valley shall fade from my heart.”

“And by this and by that, boys, I opened me eyes again.”

“Opened your eyes again, Rory?” cried the skipper.

“Yes, sure, and there I was in me own mother’s cabin, and there was my sister Biddy, the darlint, standing foreninst me and singing like a sylph, and sprinkling me face wid wather. And troth, boys, it was all a drame, ivery word I’ve been telling ye.”

“Well done, Rory,” cried Skipper James, “and now for a song

and dance, boys, for Saturday night only comes once a week.”

The fiddler struck up a hornpipe, and once more the deck was filled; and so with music, with dancing, and song the night sped merrily on.

Book Two – Chapter Ten

The Wanderers' Return

“I remember, I remember
The fir-trees dark and high,
I used to think their slender tops
Were close against the sky.

“It was a childish ignorance,
But now 'tis little joy
To know I'm farther off from heaven
Than when I was a boy.”

Hood.

Scene: Glen Lyle in spring time. The larch trees already green and tasselled with crimson buds. The woods alive with the song of birds. The rooks busy at work on the tall, swaying elm trees. Two young men approaching Grayling House, arm in arm.

It was early on this spring morning, not long past eight of the clock. Douglas and Leonard had stayed at a little inn some eight miles distant on the night before, and started with the larks to march homewards, for even Douglas looked upon Glen Lyle as his home.

As they neared the well-known gate, Leonard became silent.

Thoughts of his happy boyhood's days crowded fresh and fast into his memory. Every bush and every tree brought up some sad yet pleasant reminiscence of days gone by – sad, because those old, old days were gone never to return.

“Come, old boy,” said Douglas cheerfully. “Aren't you glad to be so near home?”

They were at the gate now.

“Glad,” said Leonard, yet strangely moved. “Douglas, what means all this? See, the walks are green, the blinds are mostly down. Only from one chimney does smoke issue. Oh, my friend! I fear something is wrong. I never thought my heart could beat so! But see, yonder comes old Peter himself.”

And down the path indeed the ancient servitor came shuffling. His very first words reassured poor Leonard.

“The Lord be praised for a' His mercy! Hoo pleased your father and mother and Effie will be!”

The joy-blood came bounding back to Leonard's heart. He returned the ardent pressure of Peter's hands.

“Oh!” cried Peter, “I want to do naething else noo but just lie doon and dee.”

“Don't talk of dying, my dear Peter. Where are they?”

The old man wiped his streaming eyes as he answered, —

“At Grayling Cottage, St. Abbs. And you have na heard? Come in, come in, and I'll tell you all.”

About three hours after this the two young men had once more left Glen Lyle, and were journeying straight, almost as the crow

flies, for the cottage by the sea.

On the evening of the second day, having been directed to the house, they were walking slowly along the beach.

It was the gloaming hour.

Yonder in the horizon just over the sea shone the gloaming star.

“Just above yon sandy bar,
As the day grows fainter and dimmer,
Lonely and lovely, a single star
Lights the air with a dusky glimmer.

“Into the ocean faint and far
Falls the trail of its golden splendour,
And the gleam of that single star
Is ever refulgent, soft, and tender.”

Both young men stopped short at once. There was one figure on the beach, one solitary female figure.

“It is she,” half-whispered Douglas, pressing Leonard’s arm. Then they advanced.

“Effie!”

“Oh, Leonard!”

Next moment she was sobbing on her brother’s shoulder. They were tears of reaction, but they washed away in their flood-gates the sorrow and the hope deferred of long, dreary years.

“How silly to cry!” she said at last, giving her hand to her

brother's friend with a bonnie blush.

"Right welcome you are, Douglas," she added. "Oh, how glad I am to see you both!"

"There now, Eff," said her brother, in his old cheery way, "no more tears; it must be all joy now, joy and jollity."

Douglas ran off home now to see his father, and I pass over the scene of reunion betwixt Leonard and his parents.

"Dear boy," said his father more than once that evening, "I don't care for anything now I've got you back, and I don't mind confessing that I really never expected to see you more."

But in an hour or two in came Captain Fitzroy and Douglas.

Then somehow or other the household horizon took a cheerier tone; there was such an amount of indwelling happiness and pleasantry about the honest Captain's face, that no one could have been in his company for five minutes without feeling the better of it.

About nine o'clock Captain Lyle got up and took down from its shelf a large volume covered with calfskin. It was, —

"The big ha' Bible, ance his father's pride."

Solemn words were read, solemn words were spoken, and heartfelt was the prayer and full of gratitude that was said when all knelt down.

Family worship was conducted thus early, lest, as Lyle said, everybody should get sleepy. But this did not close the evening. For all sat around the fire long, long after that, and if the whole truth must be told, the cocks in the farmer's yard hard by had

wakened up and begun to crow when Douglas and his father bade good-night to the cottagers, and went slowly homewards along the beach.

You see there had been such a deal to talk about.

A day or two afterwards who should arrive at the cottage but Captain Blunt himself, and with him honest, kindly, rough old Skipper James. It is needless to say that the latter received a royal welcome.

“We can never, never thank you enough,” said Mrs Lyle, “for bringing back our boys.”

“Pooh!” said Skipper James, “my dear lady, that is nothing; don’t bother thanking me, mention me and my old ship in your prayers, when we’re on the sea.”

“That I’m sure we will never forget to do.”

Lyle and Fitzroy were walking together on the beach about a week after the wanderers’ return.

“I’ve been trying to get my boy to stay at home now altogether,” said Lyle.

“Well, and I’ve been trying mine.”

“But *mine* won’t; he says he was born to wander, and wander he will.”

“Just the same with mine.”

“And Leonard has given up his allowance, dear boy! He says he will work now for his living, and that the seamanship he has learned must stand as his profession. He is full of hope though, and I fear we’ll soon lose our lads again.”

“For a time – yes, for a time. Be cheerful, remember what I prophesied; all will yet be well, and if they really are born to wander nothing can prevent them.”

“What’s that about being born to wander?” said Captain Blunt, coming quietly up behind them. “Because,” he added, “here’s another.”

“What!” said Captain Lyle. “Are you going to sea again?”

“I’ve just left your lads,” replied Blunt, “and I’ve made them an offer that they both jump at. You see, I’ve made a bit of money, and though I have been in the merchant service all my life, I can’t say that ever I have seen the world in a quiet way. Had always, in port, to look after my men and cargo, and hardly ever could get a week to myself. So now, in a barque of my own, I’m going round the world for a bit of an outing, and your boys are going with me. I’ve offered them fair wage, and, depend upon it, I’ll do my best to make them happy, and I won’t come back without them. What say you two fathers?”

“What can we say,” said Lyle, grasping Captain Blunt’s rough horny hand, “but thank you?”

“And boys will be boys,” added Fitzroy, with a ringing laugh that startled the very sea-birds.

Two months after this our heroes had bidden their relations once more adieu, and were afloat on the wide Atlantic.

But before this the whole party had gone to the Clyde, where Captain Blunt’s barque was building, and in due form, with all due ceremony, Effie, with a blush of modesty and beauty on her

sweet young face, had christened the ship.

And her name was the *Gloaming Star*.

Book Three – Chapter One

Adventures in the Rocky Mountains

“Far in the west there lies a desert land, where the mountains
Lift through perpetual snows their lofty and luminous
summits;

Billowy bays of grass, ever rolling in shadow and sunshine;
Over them wander the buffalo herds and the elk and the
roebuck;

Over them wander the wolves, and herds of riderless horses;
Over them wander the scattered tribes of Ishmael’s children,
Staining the desert with blood: and above their terrible war
trails,

Circles and sails aloft, on pinions majestic, the vulture,
Like the implacable soul of a chieftain slaughtered in battle.”

Longfellow.

Scene: A green sea tempest-tossed, the waves houses high.
White clouds massed along the windward horizon, giving the
appearance not only of ice-clad rocks and towers, but of a great
mountainous snow-land. And above this a broad lift of deepest
blue, and higher still – like the top scene on a stage – a curtain-
cloud of driving hail. One ship visible, staggering along with but
little sail on her.

It was near sunset when Captain Blunt came below to the cabin

of the *Gloaming Star*. "It is a bitter night, Leonard," he said, rubbing his hand and chafing his ears. "The wind is as cold as ever we felt it in Greenland."

"Blowing right off the ice, isn't it?"

"Yes, with a bit of west in it, and I do think somehow that the wind of the Antarctic is keener, rawer, and colder than any that ever blows across the pack at the other Pole."

Soon after this Leonard himself went on deck. Here was his friend Douglas, muffled up in a monkey-jacket with a sou'-wester on his head, and great woollen gloves on his hands, tramping up and down the deck as if for a wager.

"How do you like it, Doug?"

"Ha!" said Douglas, "you're laughing, are you? Well, your watch comes on at four in the morning. There won't be much laughing then, lad. How delightful the warm bed will seem when —"

"There, there, Douglas, pray don't bring your imagination to bear on it. It will be bad enough without that."

The two now walked up and down together, only stopping occasionally to gaze at the sky.

There was little pleasure in looking weatherward, however, only a clear sky there now, with the jagged waves for an uneven shifting horizon, but where the sun had gone down the view was inexpressibly lovely. The background beneath was saturnine red, shading into a yellow-green, and higher up into a dark blue, and yonder shone a solitary star, one glance at which never failed to

carry our sailors' thoughts homeward.

Now something over three years had elapsed since the *Gloaming Star* sailed away from the Clyde, since the wild Arran hills were last seen in the sunset's rays, and the rocky coast of this romantic island had grown hazy and faint, and faded at last from view.

Years of wandering and adventure they had been, too – years during which many a gale had been weathered, here and there in many lands, and many a difficulty boldly faced and overcome.

As our two heroes, Leonard and Douglas, walk up and down the deck, and the wind blows loud and keen from off the Antarctic ice, I will try to recount a few of those adventures, though to tell them all would be impossible. I will but dip into their logs, and read you off the entries on a few of the leaves thereof.

Opening the Log at Random

I open the log at random, as it were, and first and foremost I find the wanderers – where? Why, among the Rocky Mountains. The *Gloaming Star* is safe and sound in New York harbour, under the charge of no less a personage than Rory O'Reilly himself, who is second mate of her.

To cross the vast stretch of country that lies between the Atlantic Ocean and this wild mountain range was in those days a daring deed in itself. As long as they were in the midst of

comparative civilisation they were safe, but this once left behind, with only the rolling prairie in front of them, hills, glens, woods, and forests, and a network of streams, the danger was such that many a brave man would have shrunk therefrom.

There were friendly tribes of Indians, it is true, but there were others who hated the white man with an implacable hatred. And this hatred, it is only right to add, was returned with interest. It is terrible to think that the red man was looked upon in those days as if the brand of Cain were carved on his brow, so that whoever should meet him should kill him; that he was hunted down even as the wild beasts were hunted, and that the war declared against him was one of extermination, one to the bitter end.

On the other hand, the cruelties practised by the Indians on their white brethren of the outlying districts, when they succeeded in capturing a station or fort, were such as one cannot read of without a shudder of horror and a feeling of anger as well.

But our heroes and their party, including Captain Blunt, five friendly Indians, and a trapper – a Yankee of the real old school and a thorough backwoodsman – had made the long journey in safety. The mules that had carried their packs were even now quietly feeding in a rude enclosure, near the log hut which had been a home to the party for months.

But although these wanderers did not fear danger, they knew it existed, and no sooner had they arrived in the woodland glen close by a beautiful river, than they proceeded to make their encampment as like a fort as they could. Strong were their

arms to work, and willing were their hearts. To Leonard and Douglas there was something quite delightful in this new free, wild life of independence; fishing by lonely streams, wandering through the still, quiet forests, or bearding the wild beasts in their favourite haunts. The very knowledge that hostile Indians might be encountered at any time only added a zest to their adventures.

But before they, entered into their sports with earnestness, they fortified the site they had chosen as a camp. The trees were cut down all round, and a complete rampart, with ditch and drawbridge, was erected.

When all was complete the sport began in earnest; but it was not sport for the simple sake of killing. No, for they slew and fished but to fill their larder, and lay up a wealth of skins, which would help to pay for this pleasant outing when they returned to the great city of New York. Thereupon bears and beavers became their especial prey, to say nothing of innumerable furry denizens of forest, hill, and river bank.

Life in the Rockies

They had arrived at the Rockies in early summer, and long before the hot season was at its hottest, long before the time came when at midday hardly would you have heard a sound in the woods, except the singing of the river that went rippling over its pebbly bed, or tumbling in miniature cataracts over rocks, and falling into deep dark pools beneath, where dwelt the largest

trout, and near which, mayhap, the beaver had his haunt – long before midsummer, they were so perfectly at home that they felt no wish to leave the lovely glen. Both Leonard and Douglas were of those who dearly love —

” – The haunts of Nature;
Love the sunshine of the meadow,
Love the shadow of the forest,
Love the wind among the branches.

“And the rain-shower and the snowstorm,
And the rushing of great rivers,
Through their palisades of pine trees,
And the thunder in the mountains.”

They loved Nature, and Nature seemed to love them, for even the wild birds appeared to sing to them, —

“In the moorlands and the fenlands,
In the melancholy marshes, —”

While the wild flowers told their tales in a language that only poets understand, whispered to them of their loves and sorrows,
—

“In green and silent valleys,
By pleasant water-courses.”

Among the deep, dark forest glens, in the canons, and in caves among the bush that clad the mountain sides, lived in those days bears – chiefly the grizzly and cinnamon bear – far more fierce than any that are now found in the same quarter. It has been said, and with a good deal of truth, that bears seldom attack a man. There are exceptions to all rules, as the following adventure will prove. It was a lovely day in August. Our wanderers had gone out in two parties, Captain Blunt, Douglas, and a few Indians being together, and Leonard with the Yankee trapper and one Indian by themselves. The sport for a time was *nil*. It was the hottest hour of the day, and every creature was sheltering from the fierce sunlight. Hardly knowing or caring what he did or where he went, Leonard went straggling up a mountain side, studying the flowers and the strange pieces of ore that lay here and there in all directions.

He was in the act of picking up one of these last when a coughing noise in the bush close by made him start and stand at once to arms. There, not twenty yards from him, and rapidly advancing, was a huge grizzly. Hardly had he time to bring his gun to the shoulder ere the monster prepared to spring. By Heaven's own mercy Leonard fired in time. The roar changed to a choking one, and the bear spat blood; he turned to fly, Leonard following fast behind him. He managed to fire again ere the brute headed away for a canon at some distance – fired, but in his hurry missed. All along down the hill, after reloading, he tracked the bear by his blood. And all along the grassy canon bottom till

halfway up, where it was evident the grizzly had climbed to his cave.

It was foolhardy of him to follow, but he was excited, and in a minute more he was at the cave mouth. In the darkness he could see the angry gleam of the monster's eyes; and at these he took aim, and fired. He remembered the roar the bear gave, then all was a mist. He was found by the Yankee trapper lying insensible at the cliff foot, the bear dead beside him.

Leonard got small praise for this exploit.

"It ain't sport," the Yankee told him, "it's idiocy; there ain't another name for it. You've done it once, but I guess it isn't in you to do it again and live."

One other adventure is worth relating, but in this instance it was Douglas who had a narrow escape. The dogs, of which they had several, had chased and treed an immense cougar or puma. This is but another name for the American lion, now I fear all but extinct. Why he had run from the dogs is a mystery, but there he was standing almost erect on a branch, and looking proudly and defiantly down. Douglas's approach, gun in hand, however, was the signal for resistance. The brute crouched down and prepared to spring. Douglas knelt and prepared to fire. Bang went the gun. Down sprang the fierce and wounded puma. It would have been death indeed for Douglas had not the dogs tackled the animal. It was death for one of these faithful creatures, and others were terribly wounded. But the sportsman had time to load and fire again, and this time he made sure.

There were panthers in the woods as well, but none so large or fierce as the puma.

Killing antelopes, and various kinds of deer and elks, following the wild buffalo on the plains, hunting up the silent haunts of the turkeys, fishing and grouse shooting – all helped to make the time fly fast away, and the summer seemed to pass all too quickly by. Not that it was always fine weather in these vast solitudes. No, far from it. Out on the plains, more than once they were overtaken by terrible sandstorms, while often and often a thunderstorm broke over the mountains of such awful sublimity, that even Captain Blunt was forced to own he had never heard such sounds before, never witnessed such blinding lightning.

Anon a wind of hurricane force would arise suddenly and go tearing through the woods, breaking off branches and hurling them high in air, and snapping the largest trees off in their centres, or rending them up by the roots; and if this storm was accompanied, as it often was, by rains, then the torrents that came roaring down from the mountain sides, bringing boulders and broken wood with them, would have appalled the stoutest heart to look upon them.

Then came on the sweet, soft Indian summer, the woods arrayed in all the glorious tints of the autumn, the sunsets mysterious in their very beauty, the air soft and balmy and bracing.

It was on one of these delightful days that the whole party, with the exception of Leonard – who was busy curing bird-skins

– set out for a hunt for wild sheep across the plains.

The Blizzard. A Race for Life

Towards evening they were quietly returning after a successful day, and were still on the plains, when, with an alarming suddenness, the sun and sky became obscured, and a cold, cutting wind began to blow. Both the trapper and Indians knew what was coming. The buffalo meat was cast away, left on the plain to feed the wolves, and on they dashed to reach the shelter of the canon ere the blizzard came down on them in all its terrible and blinding force. It got rapidly darker, and the snow was driven and whirled around them with the force of a hurricane. Both Douglas and Blunt fell many times, and but for the Indians could never have reached the shelter. They got to the cañon at last, however, and by good luck into the very cave where Leonard had killed the bear. Meanwhile all was darkness, and storm, and chaos without. Here they were, and here they must remain till morning.

Indians

But how fared it with Leonard? His work being finished, towards evening he took his gun, and accompanied by a dog set out to meet his friends. As usual with this student of nature, he was looking more at the ground than around him, till the quick,

sharp ringing bark of his dog fell on his ear. Then he glanced upwards, and found himself face to face with Indians in their war-paint. They were Ojibbeways. On levelling his gun they retreated to a bush, and he made his way back towards the fort, a shower of arrows falling around him, and some piercing his clothes as he did so.

He speedily got up the drawbridge, and none too soon, for on came the savages.

But on came the blizzard. Down swept the storm, and the boldest Indian that ever trod could not face that fearful snow-gale.

All that night the storm raged. All that night Captain Blunt and his party shivered in their cave, while at the fort Leonard waited and watched.

Book Three – Chapter Two

Fighting with Indians

“But yonder comes the powerful king of day
Rejoicing in the east. The lessening cloud,
The kindling azure, and the mountain’s brow
Illumed with gold, his near approach
Betoken glad.”

Thomson.

Scene: The fort in the Rocky Mountains. Morning breaking in the east. Wind hushed. Captain Blunt and party making their way along the bottom of the cañon, which in many places is deep in drifted snow.

Who can paint in words the beauty, the glory of a sunrise among the mountains? Why wish to be a poet – even a Longfellow?

Why wish to be even a Turner? for what artist that ever lived could sketch in colour the deep blue of yonder sky, or the great grey clouds that, even as we look change slowly to yellow and gold; or that strip of crimson, or the darkness of those pine trees outshining from the blue uncertain horizon’s haze?

Some such thoughts as these rushed through Leonard’s mind as he stood on the ramparts of the little fort that had been to him

and his friends a quiet romantic home for so many months. For those friends, though still absent, he somehow felt no anxiety. They were well armed, and if they met the hostile Indians, they could no doubt give a good account of them, if indeed the enemy should be brave enough to come to close quarters. But despite the tales of Cooper – who has managed to encircle the Red Man with a halo of romance – Leonard had been long enough in the woods to find out that just as the American novelist depended upon imagination for the facts embodied in his delightful stories, so the American Indian depends upon numbers for his courage. He is bold and daring enough when he is in strong force, and when sure of victory. Then he will fight. I am not belying him.

When the party did arrive at the fort, they were much astonished at what Leonard had to tell them.

“And the blizzard sent them adrift, eh?” said Captain Blunt. “Well, it’s an ill wind that blows nobody good.”

“But they’ll come back,” said the trapper. “Gentlemen, they’ll return, that’s as sertain as sunrise.”

The Indian guides thought the same.

So the drawbridge was kept up all day.

But night after night passed by, and still there was no sign of the Ojibbeways. Our party got bolder, and went hunting as usual.

But one day a scout found an unmistakable trail, and they followed it up and up for many miles, till it led them to the top of a high hill. They did not show themselves over this, for far away in a green valley beneath they beheld an encampment; Indians on the

warpath undoubtedly, with fleet, wild-looking horses hobbled near them, and a cooking fire smoking in their midst. There could not be less than fifty at the least. Well, the fort was well stocked to stand a siege. But a siege was *the* one thing the party wanted to avoid. Pleasant as was this land in summer and autumn, no one of them wished to winter here. It was determined, therefore, to dispatch one of the Indian scouts for assistance to his tribe. It would be a terrible adventure, to journey all alone over hill and dale and prairie land in an enemy's country, but the promise of a reward was sufficient to make several volunteer.

Another went out every night to watch the enemy. They had come nearer, and were now only three miles from the fort.

Now, there is nothing that Britons will not dare; and when one evening Leonard said, —

“I say, Douglas, some of those Indian horses would come in handy to assist in our journey homeward.”

“That they would,” replied Douglas. “I was thinking the same.”

“Hurrah!” then said Leonard; “let us have them.”

So it was agreed to make the attempt.

And this is how it was accomplished. Four of the friendly Indians made a *détour*, and attacked the camp of the foe in the rear. It was a lovely moonlight night, and this ruse was completely successful. The enemy sprang to their bows and arrows, and prepared to repel the attack. A shot or two was fired, then the friendlies ran pursued by the foe. The white men had it all their

own way now; they speedily picked out eight of the best horses, and were soon galloping off camp-wards as quickly as the nature of the ground would permit.

In this case, at all events, fortune favoured the brave, and all got safe inside the fort, only one Indian being wounded slightly.

But the Ojibbeways determined on revenge, and the very next night quite a cloud of arrows was poured into the fort, and then an attempt made to scale the rampart, the savages making night hideous with their howlings and wild cries. They had to retire worsted, however, and it was nearly a week before they again made an attack. But meanwhile they had been greatly reinforced, and the fight was now a terrible one. It began while it still was dark, but soon the moon rose, then the Indians suffered severely for their rashness.

For many days, and night after night, these attacks were made. None of the white men were wounded, but one friendly was killed, and another put *hors de combat*. Things began to look very serious, and if assistance came not soon Captain Blunt feared the very worst.

“Surely,” thought Leonard and Douglas, “the worst has come,” when one night the poor trapper fell at their feet, pierced through the heart with an arrow. This night’s attack was a fearful one. The savages, regardless of their lives, leapt on top of the rampart, though only to fall dead within the enclosure.

But more took their place, and the fighting went on with redoubled fury.

“I fear all is up,” said Captain Blunt in a moment’s lull; “let us sell our lives dearly.”

But hark! what was that wild, unearthly yell in the rear of the foe?

All listened. The savages who had been coming on again towards the fort fell back. The cries and yells were redoubled, and the din was horrible, awful!

“Hurrah!” cried Blunt, “we are saved! The friendlies have come!”

And so it was. The battle in the bush raged for fully an hour, then up rushed the scout who had so bravely done his duty. The drawbridge was lowered, and in he dashed, and after him fully a hundred of his own tribe, all in their war-paint, all fully armed, and, ghastly sight! nearly all had scalps hanging to their girdles.

The very next day the fort was deserted, and the march eastward was commenced. It was a very long and a very toilsome one. But they reached civilisation safely at last. The friendly Indians thought themselves well rewarded by being presented with the horses. And considering that Captain Blunt and party had obtained the animals cheaply enough, it was no wonder that satisfaction was expressed on both sides.

They found the *Gloaming Star* ready for sea, and after selling their skins and curios they embarked, and made all sail for the sunny south. All the winter and spring was spent in cruising around the West Indian Islands. They even stretched across to lonely Bermuda, encountering a hurricane on the passage, which

well-nigh dismantled the ship, and necessitated a longer stay at the islands than they desired. Then southwards and west, touching at Rio Janeiro, the most romantic and lovely harbour in the world.

Monte Video, however, which they reached at last, did not afterwards shine in their memories as Janeiro did. Its low flat lands, its shallow seas and fogs, were not impressive in a pleasant way. But they found the inhabitants – even then a strange mixture of nationalities – kind and hospitable, and Leonard, Douglas, and Captain Blunt accepted an invitation to go for sport into the interior.

The roads were terribly rough; there were no railways here in those days. The roads were rough and the roads were long, but they found themselves at last on the very confines of civilisation. And here they spent some months, most pleasantly, too, though their adventures were not without danger. They found the new settlers at war with the Indians, the latter being a most treacherous race, possessing all the cunning, though hardly so much of the extreme cruelty, which forms so marked a characteristic of the Red men of the American wilderness.

Both Douglas and Leonard soon became adepts in riding the half-wild horses over the plains, and in hunting the emu and llama, in throwing the lasso and the bolas.

“It seems to me,” said Douglas, one day, “that I would like to live in this wild land for ever and a day.”

“It seems to me,” replied Leonard, “that I have been here all

my life.”

Everything was so new in this country, and as they happened to be favoured with fine weather, some brief but terrible storms excepted, everything was so lovely. They were the guests of a rich Spaniard, whose house was a kind of shooting-box in the midst of most charming and wild scenery. It was a house of logs, but most artistically designed and built, with terraces around it, and porticoes and verandahs, over which trailed flowers of most beautiful colour, shape, and perfume. It was well surrounded – as indeed it needed to be – by a rampart and a ditch, and more than once it had to stand a siege. Sometimes the Indians made a raid down that way and drove away the horses. But Señor Cabelas had many well-armed servants, and they took a delight in following up and fighting Los Indianos, and returning triumphantly, which they invariably did, with the re-captured animals, or most of them.

Our heroes were always on the hunting path very early in the morning. They went prepared to shoot or fight anything. Wolves there were in plenty, but they gave the horsemen a wide berth, nor were they really worth powder and shot. But far away among the wild hills, those long-haired wolves are really a source of very great danger.

But there were panthers or pumas, and a few jaguars, and although none of these attacked, still once or twice, when at bay, they made a terrible resistance. In a case like this, if a man does not keep cool, or if he allows any nervousness to interfere with

his aim, it is ten to one that the jaguar will have the best of the battle, and the huntsman be left dead or terribly wounded.

When the day's sport or hunting in the pampas was over and done, when the dinner in Señor Cabelas' tall-ceiled room had been discussed, how pleasant it was to get out and sit under the verandah in the cool of a summer's evening, and tell tales, and think and talk of home.

How pleasantly tired and drowsy Leonard and Douglas used to be by bedtime, and how soon they were wrapped in dreamless slumber when their limbs were stretched in bed, their heads upon the downy pillows!

How loud the great frogs croaked and snored around the lodge, ay, and even in it; but their croaking and snoring never once wakened our pampas sportsmen!

Book Three – Chapter Three

Here and There in Many Climes

“Heaven speed the canvas gallantly unfurled,
To furnish and accommodate a world,
To give the pole the produce of the sun,
And knit unsocial climates into one.”

“The luxuries of seas and woods,
The airy joys of social solitude,
Famed each rude wanderer.”

Scenes: The shores of South America. The lonely isles of the Pacific, Antarctic Ocean, and Antarctic ice.

If my young reader took an ordinary sized map or chart of the world he could follow with eye or finger the route, *en voyage*, taken by our wanderers for the next few months, till we find them amid the lovely scenery briefly depicted above. Southwards along the eastern shore of South America, but keeping well to sea, and only seeing the wild romantic coast, now and then lying like a blue-grey storm-cloud on the horizon, sailed the *Gloaming Star*. Leaving the Falkland Islands on the port beam, they passed the Straits of Magellan, not venturing in them now; and reaching farther southward, after encountering a terrific gale of wind

which tried the timbers of the bonny barque and the mettle of her gallant tars, after having narrowly escaped being crushed during a dismal fog by heavy ice, they succeeded in weathering the Cape, and stretched away north now, once more along a wild coast – its mountains towering to the moon – and after many, many dreary weeks at sea, they landed at the wonderful isle of Juan Fernandez, celebrated, as all know, for having been the prison isle of Alexander Selkirk, the hero of that best of boys' books – “Robinson Crusoe.”

The hut was still there, and many another curious memento of the sailor hermit, and strange thoughts passed through the wanderers' minds as they walked on the very beach where, according to Defoe, his hero had seen the footstep in the sands.

North and west they went now, and in a few weeks fell in with the trade-winds, although they were not of too great force to prevent stunsails being carried aloft and aloft.

Bounding over that lovely sea, the *Gloaming Star* looked like some beautiful sea-bird.

Whatever might come of it, our heroes were determined to see something of the Sandwich Islands. But there was danger in their doing so. For but few white men ever ventured there in those days.

About Savages

There are, according to my own experience, very great

differences, not only in physique, but in mental qualities, betwixt the savages – as they are called – of different parts of the world, and even between different tribes who live in the same vicinity, or within a few hundred miles of each other. Look, for example, at the good-natured simplicity of the Eskimo Indians, and compare it with the wild, cruel nature of the Red men of the Rockies, or forest lands of the Far West. Or witness the innocent, harmless nature of the tribes who dwell south of the Equator on the eastern shores of Africa, as compared with the treacherous ferocity of the Somali Africans, who live but a little way north.

Yet there is a right way and a wrong way of dealing with even the wildest tribes of what I may call fighting savages. There are certain peculiarities of character which are common to all, and at which, seeing the manner of life they lead, we cannot wonder. They are all suspicious, especially as regards the intentions of white men – or “white demons” as we are sometimes called – landing on their coast. They are all greedy, all superstitious in a high degree, and all lawless, and easily inclined to give vent to unbridled passions of any kind. All these traits of character must be borne in mind by any one going amongst them. Nor must it be forgotten that they are most observant. They cannot perhaps speak or understand a word of your language, but they can read your face and eye, and almost know your thoughts therefrom. To show fear among them is fatal to all success of intercommunication; even to feel fear is bad enough, for you can hardly hide it from their scrutiny. You must be cool, determined,

and kindly withal, but bear yourself as if it were a matter of the greatest indifference to you whether you have their friendship or not. You must not so much woo *them* as conduct yourself in a manner that will cause them to woo *you* and seek your good will. It is all, you see, a matter of fact. And I have landed among savages with my hands in my pockets, when, had I carried arms, even a stick, I should have been speared to death in a very short time.

Captain Blunt was wise as regards savages, and he imparted his wisdom to Our heroes, Douglas and Leonard, at dinner one beautiful evening – just the night before they reached the Sandwich Islands.

At New York they had bought large quantities of beads, also knives and hatchets, and these, or rather a portion of them, came in handy in their intercourse with the natives.

They had already passed, on the wings of a favouring breeze, very many little islands, some mere coral reefs green-fringed with trees, looking as if they were afloat in the sea or in the sky's blue. But although they had seen natives both in canoes and on the beach they had made no attempt to communicate with the *Gloaming Star*.

Men were kept constantly in the chains, and when the water became too shallow, or breakers ahead were seen frothing on a shallow green reef, her way was stopped and the course altered. By night they often cast anchor.

I wish I had the power to describe in words a thousandth

part of all the beauty they saw about and around them in this enchanting ocean, in sky, on shore, and in the water itself. The marine gardens, with their many-coloured corals, their waving wealth of tinted seaweed, the strange-shaped and curious fishes, the lovely medusae and marvellous shell-fish, some beautiful as a dream, others more hideous than a nightmare; the bright inexpressible blue sky above, the azure ocean beneath, patched here and there with sheets of green or grey, where cloud shadows fell or where the banks shone through, and last, but not least, the thousand isles, each more delightful to behold than another, all formed a scene, or series of scenes, that to cast eyes on but once is to look back to with pleasure ever after.

I have it not on record at which of these islands our wanderers first landed. It was a large one, however, and, to commence with, they had but a cool reception.

For days they ventured no farther than the beach, so threatening was the aspect of the natives. But by degrees their confidence was won, then all was hospitality, all was safety on the island, far into its very interior. Having once made friends with the white men, these poor savages thought they had dropped from the sky, and vied with each other in their kindness towards them. They brought them kids and fowl and fruit and flowers, and escorted them through the forests, to glorious glens, across streams and little lovely lakes embowered in trees, festooned and hung with wild climbing flowers, and to cataracts whose waters as they tumbled over the rocks made drowsy music in the summer

sunshine.

“Was nought around but images of rest,
Sleep-soothing groves, and quiet lawns between,
And flowery beds, that slumbrous influence cast
From poppies breathed; and beds of pleasant green.
Meanwhile unnumbered glittering streamlets played,
And hurled everywhere their waters’ sheen;
That as they bickered through the sunny glade,
Though restless still themselves, a lulling murmur made.”

They stayed for months at the Sandwich Islands, and their residence among the wild natives exemplifies in a remarkable way two facts – first, that the influence of the white man over the savage is very great and very potent; and secondly, that almost anything can be done by means of kindness and sincerity. Our heroes were sincere, and these poor black folks were quick to perceive it.

It is but fair to Captain Blunt and his party to state that they did not leave the islands without telling its inhabitants the beautiful Biblical story of the world, of the creation, the fall, and of Redemption through a Saviour’s love. And one never knows what good fruits may not be borne of a few seeds thus let fall even among darkened savages.

And now we return to the scene of the first chapter of this book, where we left Leonard and Douglas pacing the storm-swept decks of the *Gloaming Star*, night falling, and the wind

blowing high and cold from off the Antarctic ice.

They had sojourned and had many adventures among the snows of the far, far north, where in summer "*Daylight never shuts its eye,*" and they were now to have a peep at the other pole.

For days and days they cruised along the edge of the great icefields here, and very different they found them from anything they had ever seen before. The edge of the main body was one vast indented glacier of glittering crystal, rising sheer up from the ocean beneath it. From the top of this enormous icy cliff an immense field of snow stretched away southwards, rising, in some places, mountains high, so that they could not be certain that it was not actually land they were looking on. The ice-rocks shimmered in the sun's rays in all the colours of the rainbow, with a beauty that at times was dazzling to behold.

The detached icebergs that floated off this strange weird-looking coast were less jagged than those of the North Pole. Very often they were immense square snow-clad blocks. They were nearly all very large. Here comes floating along, slowly moving up and down, a good representation of a cathedral without a spire. Behind, a library of books piled one above the other, truly a Titanic collection, for every volume is as large as a church, yet the representation is faithful. But what comes behind? A giant's head upreared above the black water; eyes and nose and all are perfect, and it is bigger than the Egyptian Sphinx, while in the rear of this pyramids innumerable, and lo! as they pass these they come upon – what? They may well ask what. A soldiers'

camp, sure enough, larger than any at Aldershot. But there are no soldiers about, only the white and shapely tents all afloat on the deep dark sea.

A Strange Change

Yet in one week's time a wondrous change came over the spirit of the scene.

The great whales, the mighty sharks, and the huge sea-elephants, that for days they had seen tumbling and wallowing in the waters round the vessel, suddenly disappeared, and even the birds ceased to go whirling and screaming through the air, and one evening they seemed sailing into the blackness of darkness. There was a good breeze behind them, but as night fell – and it came on before its time – so did the wind. And so the ship lay becalmed, or nearly so. No one went to bed that night. The darkness was a darkness that could be felt; the air was close, sulphurous, oppressive, and at midnight the stillness was broken by explosions of thunder so terrific as to appal the boldest heart on board. Then the darkness was illuminated by one vast sheet of flame, that shot upwards from the horizon some miles inland among the ice, carrying with it smoke and steam and great boulders that burst in the air with a noise like the loudest artillery.

They were undoubtedly witnessing a volcanic eruption on a terribly grand scale.

All that night it continued, while the noise of the thunder

and the explosions grew louder and louder, and the flames and lightning increased in vividness. When at last the clock hands pointed to the hour of daybreak it still was dark, as far as sunlight was concerned; the sea was perfectly calm, though every now and then strangely moved, so that the ship was shaken from stem to stern.

Ashes, too, began to fall till they lay inches deep on the deck, and it was almost impossible to breathe. At the same time stones fell around them, hissing and spurting and throwing up volumes of steam as they reached the water.

It was an awful scene, a never-to-be-forgotten time.

But despite the want of wind, Captain Blunt determined not to be idle. Boats were got out, and the ship was slowly towed northwards direct. All that dark and fearful day, and even by the glare of volcanic fires on the dismal night that succeeded, the men rowed and rowed as for dear life, and about nine o'clock next morning they saw the sun. It was gleaming like a great crimson ball through the ash-laden air, but there it was – the sun; and not a heart of all the crew was there that did not rejoice, not a soul, I'm sure, that did not breathe its thanks to Him Who rules on earth and sea.

Once More in Summer Seas

This is a chapter of changes, the reader may say. From the dreary scene I have just tried – in all too feeble language –

to describe, wafted on the wings of a favourable breeze, the *Gloaming Star* sailed northward and west, and ere many weeks had elapsed the good ship was once more sailing over summer seas, with the dangers they had escaped in the Antarctic regions dwelling in their minds only like dreams of yesterday.

Ah! but soft, sweet, and balmy was the breeze that now filled the sails, and wondrous were the curious creatures they saw day after day. Some may think that when a ship is far away at sea, with no land nor sail in sight, there can be little to look at and admire. But there *is*, for nature is everywhere in this bright world of ours, and real solitude nowhere.

Not a day now passed without strange birds coming about the ship. Sometimes these were evidently winged wanderers from some far-off land, that had been blown to sea by a gale, for they were sadly tired, and looked woebegone as they alighted on the yards. Others were curious, dark birds of the swallow tribe. They alighted on the ship quite as a matter of business, and chirped little songs to the crew as they perched aloft, as if thankful and joyous because of the rest. Then away they went again, south or north as the case might be.

There were Cape pigeons, and great cormorants, and wild gannet-like birds, that it was pleasant to watch as they descended from the clouds, swift almost as a thunderbolt, and disappeared beneath the waves, presently, perhaps, to emerge with their prey. Then there were fulmar petrels, that went darting about the waves, and were said by the sailors to catch the flying-fish, and

to forebode the coming of storms, the lovely, pearly-white bird, which once seen can never be forgotten, the molly hawk, and the great dusky albatross itself, of which – built upon the superstition of sailors – Coleridge writes so charming a tale, and which the ancient mariner shot so cruelly, causing such dire and terrible sorrow to the vessel and all on board; albeit, it had brought them the best of good fortune, for it saved them from the ice, and —

“A good south wind sprung up behind,
The albatross did follow.
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariner’s hollo!

“In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
It perched for vespers nine,
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmered the white moonshine.”

The albatross is a stately and noble bird, and the stretch of its wings has been known to be fully twelve feet from tip to tip. The creature, they tell me, will devour the dead, but never touch a living man.

The fish and marine monsters they saw on this sunny voyage were sometimes most lovely, sometimes hideous in the extreme. Giant rays, the skins of which would have been big enough to have carpeted a schoolroom; great whales and sharks innumerable, – the blue shark, the white shark, and the large

basking shark, which really seems to go asleep on the warm surface of the water.

Land ho! was the hail from the masthead one beautiful morning, and they had all been so long at sea that they certainly were not sorry to hear it.

But what land was it? And could they find water, fruit, and fresh provisions on it?

Book Three – Chapter Four

The Unknown Land

“After the sea-ship, after the whistling winds,
After the white-grey sails, taut to their spars and ropes,
Below a myriad, myriad waves hastening, lifting up their
necks,
Tending in ceaseless flow toward the track of the ship,
A motley procession with many a fleck of foam and many
fragments,
Following the stately and rapid ship, in the wake following.”

Whitman's Leaves of Grass.

Scene: The *Gloaming Star* standing in towards the land, which looks like a long low greenish cloud on the horizon. The sky is a burning blue, the day is hot and sultry, and the pitch boils in the seams of the deck. Land birds, some very pretty, and hosts of butterflies as large as small fans, and surpassingly radiant in colour, are hovering about the vessel. Medusae, like open umbrellas, and whose limbs seem studded with gems, float around the ship, while now and then huge turtles can be seen, each one as big and as broad as a blacksmith's bellows.

The log before me is so water-stained, so yellow with age, and so worn, that I cannot make out – do what I may – the latitude and

longitude of the *Gloaming Star* at this particular time. But from all I have read and from all I know of these oceans and islands, I think the land now in sight must have been either Tasmania itself or some of the isles not far off. Seeing, on a nearer approach, no signs of a harbour, nor any deep water, only the white foaming breakers booming on a low sandy beach; and the green woods beyond, and the wind coming on to blow higher and higher from the west, they put to sea again, and stood away still farther north.

In the morning, land was in sight again, and not far off, and the coast was rocky and wild; the wind, too, had gone down considerably, so sail was made, and seeing a wide gap in the rocks they made for it, and found themselves in an hour's time in a lovely wood-girt bay. But wood is too tame a term to apply to it. Primeval forest is surely better. Never before had any one on board beheld such wondrous trees, nor such a wealth of vegetation. The ferns, which were of gigantic size, were a special feature in this tree-landscape, while immense climbing plants, with gorgeous hanging flowers, made an intricate wildery of this forest land. Great flocks of pigeons sometimes rose into the air, which they almost darkened. Ibises grey and red sat and nodded on the rocks, looking like rows of soldiers and riflemen, while the woods resounded with the cries of strange birds and the chattering of innumerable monkeys.

Boats landed about noon, and came off laden with fruit, but they could find no water that was not brackish.

An expedition was accordingly got up to go farther inland

and search for it. Both Leonard and Douglas went with it. They were fortunate enough to find a running stream. The casks were filled, and after a rest, they were preparing to return, when a wild war-whoop rent the air, and they found themselves suddenly confronted by a dozen nearly naked savages, armed with club, and spear, and shield. The march shore-wards, however, was commenced, and carried out in perfect order, the natives following slowly on after them, and threatening their rear. They grew bolder when they noticed the intention of the men to embark with their casks. Spears were thrown, and more than one man was wounded. Then Leonard and Douglas lost their patience and fired. Two savages bit the dust. The others stood as if petrified. They had evidently never heard of or seen such a thing as a gun before. Then recovering themselves, with one unearthly shriek they turned and fled away into the darkness of the forest.

Nothing was to be gained by stopping here and fighting those dusky sons of the woods, so anchor was got up that evening, and the *Gloaming Star* resumed her voyage. Although the ship was still, to some extent, scarce of water, they trusted to future good fortune, as brave sailors were in the habit of doing in those days.

After coasting about for nearly a fortnight, with variable winds, land breezes, sea breezes, and even half-gales, they found themselves one forenoon once more approaching the land. The wind was fair, the day was fine, and men were kept constantly in the chains lest, the water suddenly shoaling, the vessel might

get stranded.

There was plenty of dash and “go” about Captain Blunt, but no such thing as rashness, a quality which in a commander is oftentimes fatal, and involves the loss of many a gallant ship and thousands of lives annually.

Strange birds such as they had never seen before kept constantly wheeling and screaming around the vessel, and there were stranger creatures still in the water. They had all heard of sea-serpents or of *the* sea-serpent, but here they were on this particular bank in scores and in hundreds, gliding along in the water or floating in knots – ugly-looking flat-tailed creatures, though of no great size. I have heard of a lieutenant having been killed by the bite of one of these strange snakes; at the same time I can hardly believe it. The story, briefly told, is as follows: —

Bitten by a Sea-Snake

It was in the gun-boat B – some few hundred miles south of Bombay in the Indian Ocean. Lieutenant Archer was asleep in his cabin in the afternoon, just after luncheon, and the day being fine and the weather fair when he lay down, he had opened his little port for fresh air; in other words, he had pulled the scuttle out. One of those sudden squalls, however – so common in this lovely sea – came down on the ship just as she was about to cross a coral bank infested with these serpents.

The tramping noise on deck, the rattle of ropes overhead, and

the flapping of sails and shouting of orders might have failed to waken Archer – he was used to it – but something else did. No, not a snake; the snake comes in afterwards. But he shipped a sea through the scuttle which deluged the bed. The officer sprang out, put in and fastened the scuttle, shook the rug, and then himself as a big dog might have done, and quietly turned in again. He got up to keep the first dog-watch, and on putting his hand down to take up his jacket the terrible sea-viper struck him. It is said he was almost instantly paralysed with terror and pain. The doctor found him, pale, perspiring, with starting eyeballs, and almost bloodless, and nothing could rally him, for he sank and died.

Now I give the story as I got it. It *may* be true. It may be like some of Rory O'Reilly's yarns, worthy of credence as far as one half goes, the other half being left for the story-teller himself to make the best of.

It was strange now that, although far away among the woods they had seen the smoke of fires, on landing with men to dig wells and search for water, not a sight of a human being could be seen. They dug well after well, but all were brackish.

So this island had to be deserted.

The next place they came to swarmed with natives, and very fine-looking fellows they were, armed to the teeth, however. They obstinately refused to hold any palaver with the officers or crew of the *Gloaming Star*. Even the display of beads did not tempt them, and although here were streams of fresh water, it

was ultimately decided to sail away and seek for it on other and probably more hospitable shores.

It is impossible to chronicle all the wanderings of our heroes in those lovely islands, and their cruises round their coasts, but all summer long off and on they voyaged in their midst. Then came the autumn – which is contemporaneous with our spring – and higher winds began to blow, and the weather got sensibly cooler and more pleasant.

There was no dearth of fresh provisions anywhere, there was fish in the sea and game on shore, and although the dangers they had to incur in search of water were sometimes great, they succeeded in getting it nevertheless.

One day about the middle of February they found themselves approaching a beautiful though small island, which, as it was well-wooded and hilly, gave promise not only of water, but of a supply of good things for the larder as well. The weather was not quite so clear, however, as usual. As the wind seemed freshening and blowing towards the land, the *Gloaming Star* altered her course, and towards evening found herself at the lee side of this *terra incognita*, when she dropped anchors, being sheltered on one side by the rocks, and on another by a long spit of land, covered with shingle, that jutted out into the sea.

There was no smoke to be seen among the trees, no huts near the shore, never a sign of human life anywhere. The island was as much their own as Robinson Crusoe's was.

Leonard and Douglas with a boat's crew of five men landed

in the afternoon, and after making their boat fast to the trunks of some mangrove trees, that grew near the spit of land, they went away into the interior on a prospecting expedition.

They found the island far more lovely than they could have imagined in their wildest dreams. It was indeed a garden of nature – hills and glens, woods and waters, and even inland lakes, foaming cataracts, wondrous trees, and climbing flowers of every shape and colour. Birds and strange beasts, but nothing apparently hurtful or venomous. And yet all was in the smallest compass.

No wonder that the sun was almost setting before – laden with delicious fruit – they began to make their way back to the beach.

A Fearful Gale

As long as they were in the shelter of the trees and hills, they had no idea how high it was blowing, but as soon as they gained the beach things appeared in their true light. The sea, even with the wind blowing off the land, was houses high, and like a snow-field with the froth and spume that covered it. The *Gloaming Star* could hardly be seen in the midst of the spray and even green seas that dashed over her.

As they gazed despairingly towards her, the gale suddenly increased to tenfold its former violence. The waves now made a clean breach over the spot of land that sheltered the ship, if shelter it could be called. Gravel, sand, earth, and dead

branches were torn off the ground and hurled into the air; it got darker and darker; the lightning played quick, vivid, and bright everywhere about them; and high over the roaring of wind and water rose the deafening rattle of thunder. While trees were being uprooted in the woods, or snapped like twigs, and the whole island was shaken to its very foundation, Leonard and his party were creeping on all fours to the shelter of a rock, and night fell just as they found themselves safe inside a cave on the sea-beach.

All that night the wind howled and roared, and the rain came down in torrents. Sleep was out of the question, for the thunder was constant, and by the glimmer of the lightning's flash they could see each other's blue, pale faces as they crouched on the sandy floor of the cave.

Morning broke at last, and the wind went down, the sun rose and shone luridly over the heaving waters, and they stood together on the sea-beach – alone!

The *Gloaming Star* was nowhere to be seen, but whether she broke her moorings, and drifted out to sea to founder, or whether Captain Blunt had thought it would be safer to run before the fearful gale, they could not guess.

The wind still blew stiff, but the force of the hurricane was spent. They went to the place where the boat had been left. It had been smashed to pieces, hardly a timber was left, and the keel stuck up out of a sandbank, beside the tree to which the painter had been attached.

Leonard looked at Douglas, and Douglas at Leonard, and

both smiled, though somewhat sadly. The same thoughts were evidently passing through the minds of each.

“Well,” said Douglas, “if the ship is safe, and I believe she is, she is sure to come back for us.”

“And a few days or even weeks in so beautiful a place won’t hurt,” said Leonard.

“This is like being marooned, isn’t it, gentlemen?” one of the sailors remarked.

“Well, it is being marooned by fortune, but we must make the best of it.”

In the bright lexicon of youth there is no such word as “fail.” There should not be, at all events; and so these deserted sailors at once set about making the best of a bad job.

They had hope in their hearts – which were stout ones all of them – and after a bit they quite enjoyed their Crusoe life.

They had axes, and spades, and knives, and guns, and plenty of ammunition; but even had they possessed none of these tools, they could have lived on the fruit that grew so abundantly everywhere, on bushes on the hills, and on trees in every glade and glen.

As gales of wind or hurricanes might come again and level the strongest hut they could build, they determined to become for a time cave-dwellers. They searched for, and found farther inland, and up on a terrace in the side of a woody hill, just the place that would suit – a large, dry, lofty cave in sight of the sea. They at once set about fitting it up for a dwelling. The floor was covered

deep in silvery sand. Nothing could be better, whether to squat in by day, or sleep on by night. The entrance to the cave was built up with felled trees, leaving only a small entrance for light, and a doorway. Thus the dwelling-house was speedily completed.

“Why not,” said Leonard, “fortify this terrace?”

“Good,” replied Douglas; “we have nothing else to do, and I can’t forget that footstep in the sand of Crusoe’s Isle.”

“And as we never know what may happen,” continued Douglas, “I propose that we store our guns and ammunition, and trap game for our food.”

This proposal was carried unanimously.

Some of the men were clever trappers, and others were good fishermen, so there was no want of food, and water was abundant.

On the sea-beach a fire was kindled, and day and night this was kept up, sentries being always posted here, armed.

The rampart was soon completed round the terrace, and a strong one it was.

A whole week had gone, and as yet nothing had been seen of the *Gloaming Star*, and the hopes of our heroes began to get very low indeed.

A whole week, then another and another. Their hearts sank with each recurring day. They got tired even of the beauty of the island, and tired and sick of gazing always out to the sea, which looked to them now so void and merciless. They envied even the sea-birds, that seemed so happy and joyous, and whom nothing could imprison.

“It would be a good idea,” said Douglas one day, “to build a boat and sail away somewhere.”

“Yes, but whither?”

“Yes, whither?” repeated Douglas sadly.

One day, while roaming together on the other side of the island, suddenly there sprang up in front of Leonard and Douglas, as if from the very earth, a naked savage. He stood but for a moment, then waving a club aloft with a wild shout of fear and wonder, he fled far away into the woods.

They returned to the cave, and reported what they had seen, and all agreed that though danger might accrue from the visit of natives to the island, still it might end in their being set free.

It was determined, however, to be now doubly vigilant. The sentry was no longer placed on the beach but inside the rampart, and never less than four men went to the woods together.

Days and days went past, a sad time of doubt and uncertainty, and still no signs of savages. They came at last, however.

And one morning, looking down over the ramparts, they could see a group of tall, armed, and painted natives, standing on the sand spit examining the broken keel of the boat.

Then they disappeared in the bush.

Arms were got out now; the one little gate that led through the rampart was doubly barricaded; the little garrison waited and watched.

The forenoon wore on, birds sang in the trees, the low wind sighed through the woods, and the lovely flowers opened their

petals to bask in the sweet sunshine. There were joy and gladness everywhere except in the hearts of those anxious mariners.

The day wore on, and the sun began to decline in the west. Our heroes had just finished dinner when the sentry lifted his finger, and beckoned to them. Through an opening in the rampart they could perceive fully a score of club- and spear-armed savages creeping stealthily up the hill.

As soon, however, as they were boldly hailed from the fort – for fort it might now be considered – they cast all attempts at concealment aside, and with a yell that was re-echoed back from every rock around they dashed onwards to the attack.

“Steady, men. Take good aim, and don’t throw away a shot.”

A volley completely staggered the enemy. They fell back quicker than they had come, going helter-skelter down the hill, and leaving several dead and wounded behind them.

Not for long though. Savages may be beaten, but if there is the slightest chance to overcome by numbers they invariably return.

The day passed, however, and eke the long, dreary night, during which no one closed an eye till the sun once more rose over the sea in the morning. Most of the men slept all the forenoon. Luckily they did, for in the afternoon the savages returned in redoubled numbers, and this time many of them actually swarmed over the ramparts, but only to be felled inside.

It was a terrible *mêlée*, but ended once more in victory for our side.

A whole week now wore away without further molestation,

but the worst was to come, for the garrison was reduced to five defenders, two having been wounded in the last fight, one of whom had succumbed to his wounds.

It was early in the morning, and the stars were still shining bright and clearly over the sea, when one of the sentries reported the woods on fire to windward. The flames spread with alarming rapidity, and by daybreak were close at hand; the fort was enveloped in smoke, while sparks as thick as falling snowflakes in a winter's storm were showered around them.

In the midst of smoke and fire the savages intended making their final attempt to carry the fort, and our heroes determined to sell their lives dearly, and fight to the end.

Already they could hear the yells of the approaching spearmen, though they were invisible.

But why come they not on? Why does the yelling continue and go farther and farther back and away? Hark! it is the ring of firearms.

Oh, joy! the *Gloaming Star* must have returned. But was this really so? No, for the white men now engaged in a hand-to-hand combat with those daring savages are men of a different class from the honest crew of the *Gloaming Star*.

The sound of the battle grows fainter and fainter, till it ceases entirely.

Leonard and Douglas wait and watch, trying to peer through the smoke, and unravel, if possible, some of the mystery that has been taking place below.

Dimly through the haze at last they can notice figures dressed in white clambering up the hill.

“Come out at once, you white fellows,” cries a bold English voice. “Come forth, if you don’t want to be roasted alive. The fire is close on you.”

The rampart gates were opened, and the besieged bade speedy farewell for ever to their cave and fort. Sturdy, bare, brown-armed sailors, armed with cutlasses and pistols, were their rescuers, but presently they found themselves on the beach, and standing in front of the ringleader or captain of the band. A tall handsome man he was, dressed in white, with a turban of silk around his head, and a sword by his side. He was smoking a cheroot.

“Happy to see you, anyhow,” he said. “Squat yourselves down on the sand there; I guess you’re tired.”

“And I, Captain Bland, am glad to see *you* once again.”

“What! you know me then?”

“Yes, though you can hardly be expected to remember the lad you kidnapped.”

Bland jumped up and seized Leonard by the hand, while tears filled his eyes.

“Oh!” he said, “this is a greater joy than ever I could have dreamt of, greater than ever I deserved. I care little now how soon my wanderings are ended, or how soon I leave the world itself.”

“Do not speak in this sad tone, Captain Bland; believe me, it is a pleasure to me to meet you. I never believed you the hardened

criminal that some would have you.”

“Criminal!” cried Bland, flushing excitedly, “who dare call me criminal? And yet,” he added, in a tone of great sadness, and even pathos, “perhaps I have been a criminal, a smuggler, yea, even to some extent a pirate. I have never yet, however, done one cruel action; but had I my life to begin over again, how different it would all be!”

“And that barque lying out there is yours?”

“Yes; and my trade you would ask? I deal in slaves and gold. I have found gold. But what good is it all? I live a life of constant excitement; were this to fail me I should die. But you saved my worthless life, lad.”

“And now you have saved ours.”

“Yes, and I’ll do more. I’ll restore you to your ship and your captain. He it was who sent me here in search of you, but he mentioned no name, and little did he know the pleasure he was giving me.”

“And the *Gloaming Star*?”

“Is in the hands of my merry men. Do not be alarmed. It was a bloodless victory. And now she shall be restored to you safe and sound.

“Come, my boats are here to take you off, and your ship lies safe at anchor not sixty miles away. Come.”

Book Three – Chapter Five

The Old Folks at Home

“Gloomy winter’s noo awa,
Soft the westlin’ breezes blow,
Amang the birks o’ Stanley Shaw
The mavis sings hoo cheery O?”

Burns.

“I asked a glad mother, just come from the post,
With a letter she kissed, from a far-away coast,
What heart-thrilling news had rejoiced her the most,
And – gladness for mourning! Her boy was returning
To love her – at home.”

Tupper.

Scene: The wildery round Grayling House in early spring. Everything in gardens and on lawns looks fresh and joyful. Spring flowers peeping through the brown earth, merle and mavis making music in the spruce and fir thickets, and louder than all the clear-throated chaffinch. Effie walking alone with book in hand, a great deerhound, the son of faithful Ossian, following step by step behind.

Effie is not reading, though she holds that book in her

hand, and albeit her eyes seem glued to the page. For Effie is thinking, only thinking the same thoughts she thinks so very often, only making the same calculations she makes every day of her somewhat lonely life, and which often cause her pillow at night to be bedewed with tears.

Thinking, wondering, calculating.

Thinking of the past, thinking what a long, long time has elapsed since Leonard and Douglas – her brother's friend – went last away to sea; wondering where they might be at that very moment, and calculating the weeks and days that had yet to elapse before the time they had promised to return should arrive. She finished by breathing a little prayer for them. What a joyful thing it is for us poor mortals, that He, Who sticketh closer than a brother, is ever and always by our side, and ever and always ready to lend a willing ear to our silent supplications!

Effie ended with a sigh that was half a sob, a sigh that made great Orla the deerhound thrust his muzzle right under her elbow, and so throw her arm around his neck.

What would Effie have thought or done, I wonder, had she known that at this very moment Leonard's ship lay safe at Leith, and that not only he, but Douglas and Captain Blunt, were making all the haste that could be made in a chaise and pair towards Glen Lyle?

On the arrival of the *Gloaming Star*, our heroes first and foremost did something which may not accord with my readers' idea of romance. A most useful and most needful something it

was. They paid a visit to a West End tailor. Before doing so, however, they went to Captain Lyle's lawyer.

The old man – he was very old – did not at first know Leonard, but as soon as he did, he shook hands with him over and over again. He was almost childlike in his joy to see him again.

“What will your father say?” he cried, “and all of them, all of them?”

Of course Leonard had a dozen questions to ask, and what a big sigh of relief he got rid of, when told that not only were all of them well, including Peter and Peter's pike, which by some means or another – considered supernatural by Peter – was once more all alive and plunging, but that the estate of Glen Lyle was free again, and that Captain Fitzroy had rented one of the farms, thus figuratively, if not literally, turning his sword into a ploughshare.

Leonard had stood all the time he was getting this news, but now that the hysterical ball of doubt and anxiety had left his throat, he flung his hat to the other end of the room, and took a chair. Douglas and Blunt did the same, and the whole four glided right away into a right jolly, right merry whole hour's conversation, what the Scotch folks would call “a foursome crack.” The old lawyer's clerk – and *he* was old, too – came on tiptoe to the door and listened, for he had not heard such laughing and joking and merriment for many and many a long year.

The wanderers rose at last to say good-bye for the present.

“*Now* don't write and tell them we've come,” said Leonard.

“We want to go and surprise them.”

“But, my dear young squire – ”

“Bother the squire!” cried Leonard, laughing.

“Well, my dear Leonard, then – ”

“Yes, that’s better.”

“Aren’t you going right away down at once? Do you mean to say you’ll let the grass grow beneath your shoes for an hour?”

And now Douglas put in his oar.

“Why, Mr Fraser,” he said, “look at us. Run your eagle eye over us from stem to stern. Rough and unkempt. Covered with salt. Barnacles growing on us. Could you, Mr Fraser, suggest our putting in an appearance before ladies in such a plight? No, sir, the tailor must first and foremost come upon the scene.”

Mr Fraser laughed heartily.

“Well, well,” he said, “young men will be young men, but I’ll warrant you, gentlemen, the ladies would be right glad to see you, barnacles and all.”

And the old gentleman laughed and rubbed his hands, as if he had said something very clever indeed.

Once upon a time, as the fairy stories begin, my good ship *M* — had arrived at Portsmouth after a long commission of cruising along the shores of Eastern Africa and round India.

At luncheon the day after we came in, our chief engineer said, in his quiet, stoical manner, —

“My wife is coming to-day by the three train.”

“What!” cried somebody. “And you are not going to meet her

at the station, after so long an absence?"

"No, I'm not," was the answer. "The fact is, I've a very great horror of anything approaching what people call a scene. Now if I had gone to meet my wife, the poor thing, overcome by her feelings, would be sure to faint in my arms or something. So I've sent my assistant to meet her. She isn't likely to faint in little Jones's arms."

On the same principle, the reader must excuse me if I omit describing the scene of the meeting and reunion at Grayling House. I will not even tell of the tears that were shed, tears of joy and anxiety long pent up, of the hearty handshakes, of the whispered words and half-spoken sentences of welcome, for all this can be better imagined than told.

It was three days, at least, before the old house settled down again to anything like solid order, and conversation became less spasmodic in character.

Old Peter, who, of course, was quite one of the family, was probably the last to settle down, owing perhaps to the fact that he listened with wonder and astonishment to the conversation at table, and to the tales the wanderers had to tell, about the wonders they had seen, and the adventures they had come through. More than once, indeed, he had let fall a plate, and he had actually filled up Effie's cup on the second morning from the water-bottle instead of the teapot. That same day, when he found Leonard and Douglas in the garden by themselves, he treated them to the following morsel of edification.

“Oh, laddies!” he said, “it’s a wondrous warld we live in, whether we dwell upo’ the dry lan’ or gang doon to the sea in ships. But few, unco few, hae come through what ye’ve come through. And what brocht ye back, think ye? What else but prayer, prayer, prayer? Your father prayed, and your lady mither prayed, and Miss Effie prayed, and poor auld Peter prayed, and – and thare ye are. And yonder is Grayling Ha’, and all aroond us is the bonnie estate o’ Glen Lyle, its hills and dells, and moors and fields, and woods and waters, a’ oor ain again. And the muckle pike ploupin’ aboot (ploupin’, *Scottice*– plunging) as if naething had ever ailed him. Verily, verily, we’ve a lot to be thankfu’ for!”

“Well, bless you, Peter, dear old friend, for your prayers, and long may you live to pray. But tell me, Peter, for I forgot to ask mother, what has become of Zella the gipsy girl?”

“Oh! hae they no tauld you? It’s a year ago come Whitsunday since they cam’ for her.”

“Who?”

“Who? who but the Faas of her ain tribe, and bonnily they decked her, in a muslin gown o’ gowden-spangled white, and they put roses and ferns in her dark hair, and a croon upon her head, and it’s wondrous beautiful she looked. Ay, ye may stare, but Zella is queen o’ the gipsies, and no doubt ye’ll see her ere lang.”

He turned sharp round towards Douglas as he spoke.

“I dinna doubt, sir,” he said, “but that the gipsy queen will come to your weddin’.”

Now Douglas’s face was, from exposure to sun and weather,

of a sort of dignified brick-dust hue. One would have thought it impossible for such a face to blush, but deeper in colour it really got as he laughingly replied to the garrulous old Peter.

“My wedding, Peter! Why, my dear old friend, you’ve been dreaming.”

“Och, mon!” said Peter, with a sly wink. “I can see as far through a millstone as the miller himself. But I’m off, there’s the bell. It’s that auld limmer of a cook, she keeps ring, ring, ringing for me a’ day lang, with ‘Peter, do this’ and ‘Peter, do that.’ Sorrow tak’ her! Ring, ring, ring; there it goes again. Comin’, comin’, comin’.”

“Strange old man!” said Douglas.

“That he is,” said Leonard, “but yet how leal and true he has been to our family.”

A day or two after this the old family carriage was had out – and a stately and ancient-looking affair it was, hung on monster leather straps, which permitted it to swing about like a hammock, while inside it was as snug and soft as a feather bed – the carriage was got out, and accompanied by a phaeton, in which rode the younger folks, a visit was made to the gipsy camp in a far-off forest.

A horseman had been sent the day before with a note to her gracious majesty Queen Zella to apprise her of their coming, so that after a delightful drive on this lovely spring day they arrived at the encampment, safe and merry, and were received in state.

The gipsies were arrayed in their very best, and the queen was

a sight to see, and indeed she really did look charming.

“Oh!” she said to Mr Lyle, “I was pleased to be with you in your cottage by the sea, and pleased to be at bonnie Glen Lyle, but the brown blood is strong within me. I was *born to wander*, and here I am wild and free as the birds that sing so sweetly on the trees to-day.

“Oh!” she continued, turning to our heroes, “it is not altogether because the sun is shining so brightly that their notes are so joyous. They sing thus madly because *you* have returned.”

Verily the queen knew how to pay a pretty compliment.

“And,” she added, “you have been happy. Oh! you must have been happy. Every one must be happy at sea. I dreamt you had met Captain Bland.”

“Your majesty has dreamt a strange dream, and a true one, for we did. He saved our lives. But, alas! he is no more. For just two days after he left us we saw a fire at sea. We bore down towards the burning ship. It was Bland’s barque. There was no sign of life on board. All was silent except for the rush of the flames and the crackling of the burning wood. And I fear no one was saved.”

The conversation was somewhat saddened for a time by Leonard’s recital, but what hearts could long remain sad in the fair, fresh scene, amid the greenery of trees, the wild melody of birds, and the soft spring sunshine?

“Man was made to mourn.” No, great poet, no; I will not have it. Man was made to be glad and to rejoice with everything that is glad and rejoiceth around him on this fair earth of ours.

“Tell me not in mournful numbers
Life is but an empty dream,
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are *not* what they seem.

“Life is real; life is earnest,
And the grave is not its goal.
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.”

If there be anything in this world more lovely than a ship under full sail on a summer's sea, I have yet to learn what it is. Look at the *Gloaming Star* yonder as she goes proudly bowing and curtsying westward over the Atlantic waves. A thing of beauty, a thing of life almost. Let us glance on board for a moment. How white the decks! almost as white as the beard of her commander Captain Blunt. Her woodworks are polished, her brass shines like yellow gold, the men are neat and tidy, and every rope is coiled and in its place on deck. Yonder on the quarter-deck sits Effie beside her brother's friend. Her brother's friend? Yes, but Effie's husband now!

And Leonard himself is at the wheel.
Let us quietly drop the curtain then, while —

“The western sea is all aglow,
And the day is well-nigh done,
And almost on the western wave

Now rests the broad bright sun.”