

Our Little Irish and Scotch Twins, and Celtic Cousin

VOLUME FIFTEEN

LUCY FITCH PERKINS
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Our Little Irish and Scotch Twins, and Celtic Cousin

Volume 15

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Libraries of Hope

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Twins, and Celtic Cousin

Volume 15

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The Irish Twins

Lucy Fitch Perkins

Illustrated by Lucy Fitch Perkins







Chapter I

Grannie Malone and the Twins

One day of the world, when it was young summer in Ireland, old Grannie Malone sat by her fireplace knitting. She was all alone, and in her lap lay a letter.



Sometimes she took the letter in her hands, and turned it over and over, and looked at it. Then she would put it down again with a little sigh.

"If I but had the learning," said Grannie Malone

to herself, "I could be reading Michael's letters without calling in the Priest, and 'tis long since he passed this door. 'Tis hard work waiting until someone can tell me what at all is in it."

She stooped over and put a bit of peat on the fire, and because she had no one else to talk to, she talked to the tea kettle. "There now," she said to it, "'tis a lazy bit of steam that's coming out of the nose of you! I'll be wanting my tea soon, and no water boiling."

She lifted the lid and peeped into the kettle. "'Tis empty entirely!" she cried, "and a thirsty kettle it is surely, and no one but myself to fetch and carry for it!"

She got up slowly, laid her knitting and the letter on the chair, took the kettle off the hook, and went to the door.

There was but one door and one window in the one little room of her cabin, so if the sun had not been shining brightly it would have been quite dark within.

But the upper half of the door stood open, and the afternoon sun slanted across the earthen floor and brightened the dishes that stood on the old dresser. It even showed Grannie Malone's bed in the far end of the room,

and some of her clothes hanging from the rafters overhead.

There was little else in the room to see, except her chair, a wooden table, and a little bench by the fire, a pile of peat on the hearth, and a bag of potatoes in the corner. Grannie Malone opened the lower half of the door and stepped out into the sunshine. Some speckled hens that had been sunning themselves on the doorstep fluttered out of the way, and then ran after her to the well. "Shoo—get along with you!" cried Grannie Malone. She flapped her apron at them. "'Tis you that are always thinking of something to eat! Sure, there are bugs enough in Ireland, without your always being at my heels to be fed! Come now—scratch for your living like honest hens, and I'll give you a sup of water if it's dry you are." The well had a stone curb around it, and a bucket with a rope tied to it stood on the curb. Grannie let the bucket down into the well until she heard it strike the fresh spring water with a splash. Then she pulled and pulled on the rope. The bucket came up slowly and water spilled over the sides as Grannie lifted it to the curb.

She poured some of the water into the dish for the hens, filled her kettle, and then straightened her bent back, and



stood looking at the little cabin and the brown bog beyond.

"Sure, it's old we all are together," she said to herself, nodding her head. "The old cabin with the rain leaking through the thatch of a wet day, and the old well with moss on the stones of it. And the hens themselves, too old to cook, and too old to be laying—except on the doorstep in the sunshine, the creatures!—But 'tis home, thanks be to God."

She lifted her kettle and went slowly back into the house. The hens followed her to the door, but she shut the lower half of it behind her and left them outside.

She went to the fireplace and hung the kettle on the hook, blew the coals to a blaze with a pair of leaky bellows,



and sat down before the fire once more to wait for the water to boil.

She knit round and round her stocking, and there was no sound in the room but the click-click of her needles, and the tick-tick of the clock, and the little purring noise of the fire on the hearth.

Just as the kettle began to sing, there was a squawking among the hens on the doorstep, and two dark heads appeared above the closed half of the door.

A little girl's voice called out, "How are you at all, Grannie Malone?"

And a little boy's voice said, "We've come to bring you a sup of milk that Mother sent you."

Grannie Malone jumped out of her chair and ran to the door. "Och, if it's not the McQueen twins—the two of them!" she cried. "Bless your sweet faces! Come in, Larry and Eileen! You are as welcome as the flowers of spring. And how is your Mother, the day? May God spare her to her comforts for long years to come!" She swung the door open as she talked, took the jug from Eileen's hand, and poured the milk into a jug of her own that stood on the dresser.

"Sure, Mother is well. And how is yourself, Grannie Malone?" Eileen answered, politely.

"Barring the rheumatism and the asthma, and the old age in my bones, I'm doing well, thanks be to God," said Grannie Malone. "Sit down by the fire, now, till I wet a cup of tea and make a cakeen for you! And indeed it's yourselves can read me a letter from my son Michael, that's in America! It has been in the house these three days waiting



for someone with the learning to come along by."

She ran to the chair and picked up the letter. The twins sat down on a little bench by the fireplace, and Grannie Malone put the letter in their hands.

"We've not got *all* the learning yet," Larry said. "We might not be able to read it."

"You can try," said Grannie Malone.

Then she opened the letter, and a bit of folded green paper with printing on it fell out. "God bless the boy," she cried, "there's one of those in every letter he sends me! 'Tis

money that is! Can you make out the figures on it, now?"

Larry and Eileen looked it over carefully. "There it is, hiding in the corner," said Larry. He pointed to a "5" on the green paper.

"Five pounds it is!" said Grannie Malone. "Sure it's a fortune! Oh, it's himself is the good son to me! What does the letter say?"

The twins spread the sheet open and studied it, while Grannie hovered over them, trembling with excitement.

"Sure, that's *Dear*, isn't it?" said Eileen, pointing to the first word.

"Sure," said Larry; "letters always begin like that."

"Dear G-r-a-n-n-i-e," spelt Eileen. "What could that be but Grannie?"

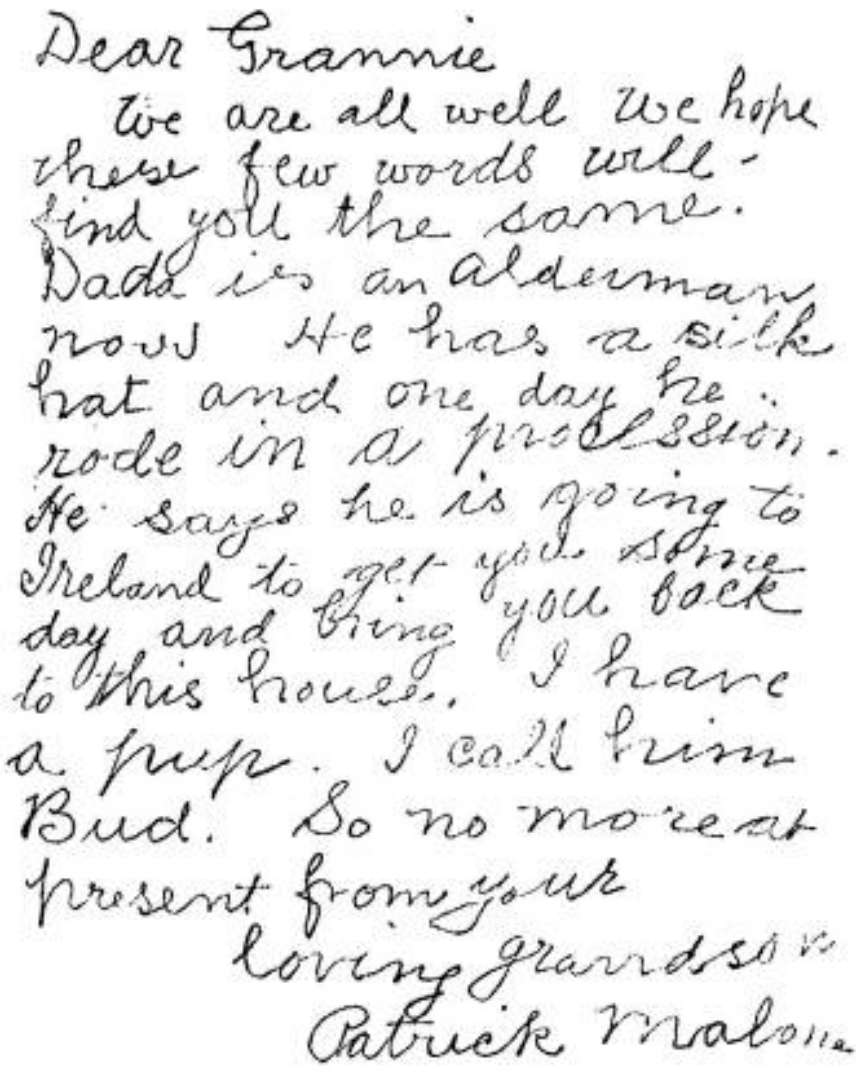
"'Tis from my grandson, young Patrick, then," cried Grannie. "Indeed, he's but the age of yourselves! How old are you at all?"

"We're seven," said the twins.

"Patrick might be eight," said his Grandmother, "but surely the clever children like yourselves and the two of you together should be able to make it out. There's but one of

Patrick, and there should be more learning between the two of you than in one alone, even though he is a bit older! Try now."

Larry and Eileen tried. This was the letter. It was written in a large staggery hand.


Dear Grannie
We are all well We hope
these few words will
find yoll the same.
Dadd is an alderman
now He has a silk
hat and one day he
rode in a procession.
He says he is going to
Ireland to get you. Some
day and bring you back
to this house. I have
a pup. I call him
Bud. So no more at
present from yourk
loving grandson
Patrick Malone

"Will you listen to that now!" cried Grannie Malone. "Is it taking me back to America, he'd be! 'Tis a terrible journey altogether, and a strange country at the end of it, for me to be laying my old bones in! But I'd be a proud woman to see my own son, in any country of the world, and he an alderman!"

There was a letter from Michael himself in the envelope also, but the twins could not read that, however much they tried.

So Grannie was obliged to put the two letters and the green paper under the clock over the fireplace, to wait until the Priest should pass that way.



Chapter II

The Tea Party

"Sure, this is a fine day for me, altogether," said Grannie Malone as she got out her bit of flour to make the cake. "I can wait for the letter from himself, the way I know they're in health, and have not forgotten their old Mother. Troth, we'll have a bit of a feast over it now," she said to the twins. "While I'm throwing the cakeen together do you get some potatoes from the bag, Eileen, and put them down in the ashes, and you, Larry, stir up the fire a bit, and keep the kettle full. Sure, 'tis singing away like a bird this instant minute! Put some water in it, avic, and then shut up the hens for me."

Eileen ran to the potato bag in the corner and took out four good-sized potatoes. "There's but three of us," she said to herself, "but Larry will surely be wanting two, himself."

She got down on her knees and buried the potatoes in



the burning peat. Then she took a little broom that stood nearby, and tidied up the hearth.

Larry took the kettle to the well for more water. He slopped a good deal of it as he came back. It made great spots of mud, for there was no wooden floor—only hard earth with flat stones set in it.

"Arrah now, Larry, you do be slopping things up the equal of a thunderstorm," Eileen said to him.

"Never you mind that, now, Larry," said Grannie

Malone. "It might have been that the kettle leaked itself, and no fault of your own at all! Sure, a bit of water here or there does nobody any harm."

She hung the tea kettle on the hook over the fire again. Then she brought the cakeen and put it into a small iron baking kettle, and put a cover over it. She put turf on top of the cover. "'Twill not be long until it's baked," said Grannie, "and you can be watching it, Eileen, while I set out the table."

She pulled a little wooden table out before the fire, put three plates and three cups on it, some salt, and the jug of milk. Meanwhile Larry was out trying to shut the hens into the little shelter beside the house. But he couldn't get them all in. One old speckled hen ran round the house to the door. Larry ran after her. The hen flew up on top of the half-door. She was very much excited. "Cut-cut-cut," she squawked.

"Cut-cut yourself now!" cried Grannie Malone.

She ran toward the door, waving her spoon. "Shoo along out of this with your bad manners!" she cried.

Just that minute Larry came up behind the hen and tried

to catch her by the legs.

"Cut-cut-cut-a-cut," squawked old Speckle; and up she flew, right over Grannie's head, into the rafters! Then she tucked herself cozily down to go to sleep.

"Did you ever see the likes of that old Speckle, now?" cried Grannie Malone. She ran for the broom. "Sure she must be after thinking I was lonesome for a bit of company! Do you think I'd be wanting you at all, you silly, when I have the twins by me?" she said to the hen. She shook the broom at her, but old Speckle wasn't a bit afraid of Grannie; she didn't move.

Then Grannie Malone put the broom under her and tried to lift her from her perch, but old Speckle had made up her mind to stay. So she flew across to another rafter, and lit on Grannie Malone's black coat that she wore to Mass on Sundays. She thought it a pleasant warm place and sat down again.

"Bad luck to you for an ill-favoured old thief!" screamed Grannie. "Get off my Sunday cloak with your muddy feet! It's ruined you'll have me entirely!"

She shook the cloak. Then old Speckle, squawking all



the way, flew over to Grannie's bed! She ran the whole length of it. She left a little path clear across the patchwork quilt. Larry stood in one corner of the room waving his arms. Eileen was flapping her apron in another, while Grannie Malone chased old Speckle with the broom. At last, with a final squawk, she flew out of the door, and ran

round to the shelter where the other hens were, and went in as if she thought home was the best place for a hen after all. Larry shut her in.

As soon as the hen was out of the house, Eileen screamed, "I smell something burning!"

"'Tis the cakeen," cried Grannie.

She and Eileen flew to the fireplace. Eileen got there first. She knocked the cover off the little kettle with the tongs, and out flew a cloud of smoke.

"Och, murder! 'Tis destroyed entirely!" poor Grannie groaned.

"I'll turn it quick," said Eileen.

She was in such a hurry she didn't wait for a fork or stick or anything! She took right hold of the little cakeen, and lifted it out of the kettle with her hand!

The little cake was hot! "Ow! Ow!" shrieked Eileen, and she dropped it right into the ashes! Then she danced up and down and sucked her fingers.

"The Saints help us! The cakeen is bewitched," wailed poor Grannie. She picked it up, and tossed it from one hand to the other, while she blew off the ashes.



Then she dropped it, burned side up, into the kettle once more, clapped on the cover, and set it where it would cook more slowly.

When that was done, she looked at Eileen's fingers. "It's not so bad at all, mavourneen, praise be to God," she said. "Sure, I thought I had you killed entirely, the way you screamed!"

"Eileen is always burning herself," said Larry. "Mother

says 'tis only when she's burned up altogether that she'll learn to keep out of the fire at all!"

"'Twas all the fault of that disgraceful old hen," Grannie Malone said. "Sure, I'll have to be putting manners on her! She's no notion of behavior at all, at all. Reach the sugar bowl, Larry, avic, and sit down by the table and rest your bones. I'll have the tea ready for you in a minute. Sit you down, too, Eileen, while I get the potatoes." She took the tongs and drew out the potatoes, blew off the ashes, and put them on the table. Then she poured the boiling water over the tea leaves, and set the tea to draw, while she took the cakeen from the kettle.

"'Tis not burned so much, after all," she said, as she looked it over. "Sure, we can shut our eyes when we eat it."

She drew her own chair up to the table; the twins sat on the bench on the other side. Grannie Malone crossed herself, and then they each took a potato, and broke it open. They put salt on it, poured a little milk into the skin which they held like a cup, and it was ready to eat.

Grannie poured the tea, and they had milk and sugar in it. The little cakeen was broken open and buttered, and,

"Musha, 'tis fit for the Queen herself," said Larry, when he had taken his first bite.

And Eileen said, "Indeed, ma'am, it's a grand cook you are entirely."

"Sure, I'd need to be a grand cook with the grand company I have," Grannie answered politely, "and with the fine son I have in America to be sending me a fortune in every letter! 'Tis a great thing to have a good son, and do you be that same to your Mother, the both of you, for 'tis but one Mother that you'll get in all the world, and you've a right to be choice of her."

"Sure, I'll never at all be a good son to my Mother," laughed Eileen.

"Well, then," said Grannie, "you can be a good daughter to her, and that's not far behind. Whist now, till I tell you the story of the Little Cakeen, and you'll see that 'tis a good thing entirely to behave yourselves and grow up fine and respectable, like the lad in the tale. It goes like this now:[1]"

"It was once long ago in old Ireland, there was living a

[1] Adapted from "Marygold House" in *Play-Days* by Sarah Orne Jewett



fine, clean, honest, poor widow woman, and she having two sons, and she fetched the both of them up fine and careful, but one of them turned out bad entirely. And one day she says to him, says she:—

"'I've given you your living as long as ever I can, and it's you must go out into the wide world and seek your fortune.'

"'Mother, I will,' says he.

"'And will you take a big cake with my curse, or a little

cake with my blessing?' says she.

"'A big cake, sure,' says he.

"So she baked a big cake and cursed him, and he went away laughing! By and by, he came forninst a spring in the woods, and sat down to eat his dinner off the cake, and a small, little bird sat on the edge of the spring.

"'Give me a bit of your cake for my little ones in the nest,' said she; and he caught up a stone and threw at her.

"'I've scarce enough for myself,' says he, and she being a fairy, put her beak in the spring and turned it black as ink, and went away up in the trees. And whiles he looked for a stone for to kill her, a fox went away with his cake!

"So he went away from that place very mad, and next day he stopped, very hungry, at a farmer's house, and hired out for to tend the cows.

"'Be wise,' says the farmer's wife, 'for the next field is belonging to a giant, and if the cows get into the clover, he will kill you dead as a stone.'

"But the bad son laughed and went out to watch the cows; and before noontime he went to sleep up in the tree, and the cows all went in the clover. And out comes the

giant and shook him down out of the tree and killed him dead, and that was the end of the bad son.

"And the next year the poor widow woman says to the good son:—

"'You must go out into the wide world and seek your fortune, for I can keep you no longer,' says the Mother.

"'Mother, I will,' says he.

"'And will you take a big cake with my curse or a little cake with my blessing?'

"'A little cake,' says he.

"So she baked it for him and gave him her blessing, and he went away, and she a-weeping after him fine and loud. And by and by he came to the same spring in the woods where the bad son was before him, and the small, little bird sat again on the side of it.

"'Give me a bit of your cakeen for my little ones in the nest,' says she.

"'I will,' says the good son, and he broke her off a fine piece, and she dipped her beak in the spring and turned it into sweet wine; and when he bit into his cake, sure, it was turned into fine plum cake entirely; and he ate and drank

and went on lighthearted. And next day he comes to the farmer's house.

"'Will ye tend the cows for me?' says the farmer.

"'I will,' says the good son.

"'Be wise,' says the farmer's wife, 'for the clover field beyond is belonging to a giant, and if you leave in the cows, he will kill you dead.'

"'Never fear,' says the good son, 'I don't sleep at my work.'

"And he goes out in the field and lugs a big stone up in the tree, and then sends every cow far out in the clover fields and goes back again to the tree! And out comes the giant a-roaring, so you could hear the roars of him a mile away, and when he finds the cowboy, he goes under the tree to shake him down, but the good little son slips out the big stone, and it fell down and broke the giant's head entirely. So the good son went running away to the giant's house, and it being full to the eaves of gold and diamonds and splendid things.

"So you see what fine luck comes to folks that is good and honest! And he went home and fetched his old

Mother, and they lived rich and contented, and died very old and respected."

"Do you suppose your son Michael killed any giants in America, the way he got to be an Alderman?" asked Eileen, when Grannie had finished her story.

"I don't rightly know that," Grannie answered. "Maybe it wasn't just exactly giants, but you can see for yourself that he is rich and respected, and he with a silk hat, and riding in a procession the same as the Lord-Mayor himself!"

"Did you ever see a giant or a fairy or any of the good little people themselves, Grannie Malone?" Larry asked.

"I've never exactly seen any of them with my own two eyes," she answered, "but many is the time I've talked with people and they having seen them. There was Mary O'Connor now—dead long since, God rest her. She told me this tale herself, and she sitting by this very hearth. Wait now till I wet my mouth with a sup of tea in it, and I'll be telling you the tale the very same way she told it herself."

Chapter III

The Tale of the Leprechaun

Grannie reached for the teapot and poured herself a cup of tea. As she sipped it, she said to the twins, "Did you ever hear of the Leprechauns? Little men they are, not half the bigness of the smallest baby you ever laid your two eyes on. Long beards they have, and little pointed caps on the heads of them.

"And it's forever making the little brogues (shoes) they are, and you can hear the tap-tap of their hammers before you ever get sight of them at all. And the gold and silver and precious things they have hidden away would fill the world with treasures.

"But they have the sharpness of the new moon, that's sharp at both ends, and no one can get their riches away from them at all. They do be saying that if you catch one in your two hands and never take your eyes off him, you can

make him give up his money.

"But they've the tricks of the world to make you look the other way, the Leprechauns have. And then when you look back again, faith, they're nowhere at all!"

"Did Mary O'Connor catch one?" asked Eileen.

"Did she now!" cried Grannie. "Listen to this. One day Mary O'Connor was sitting in her bit of garden, with her knitting in her hand, and she was watching some bees that were going to swarm.

"It was a fine day in June, and the bees were humming, and the birds were chirping and hopping, and the butterflies were flying about, and everything smelt as sweet and fresh as if it was the first day of the world.

"Well, all of a sudden, what did she hear among the bean rows in the garden but a noise that went tick-tack, tick-tack, just for all the world as if a brogue-maker was putting on the heel of a pump!

"'The Lord preserve us,' says Mary O'Connor; 'what in the world can that be?'

"So she laid down her knitting, and she went over to the beans. Now, never believe me, if she didn't see sitting right

before her a bit of an old man, with a cocked hat on his head and a dudeen (pipe) in his mouth, smoking away! He had on a drab colored coat with big brass buttons on it, and a pair of silver buckles on his shoes, and he working away as hard as ever he could, heeling a little pair of pumps!

"You may believe me or not, Larry and Eileen McQueen, but the minute she clapped her eyes on him, she knew him for a Leprechaun.

"And she says to him very bold, 'God save you, honest man! That's hard work you're at this hot day!' And she made a run at him and caught him in her two hands!

"'And where is your purse of money?' says she.

"'Money!' says he; 'money is it! And where on top of earth would an old creature like myself get money?' says he.

"'Maybe not on top of earth at all, but *in* it,' says she; and with that she gave him a bit of a squeeze. 'Come, come,' says she. 'Don't be turning your tricks upon an honest woman!'

"And then she, being at the time as good-looking a young woman as you'd find, put a wicked face on her, and pulled a knife from her pocket, and says she, 'If you don't

give me your purse this instant minute, or show me a pot of gold, I'll cut the nose off the face of you as soon as wink.'

"The little man's eyes were popping out of his head with fright, and says he, 'Come with me a couple of fields off, and I'll show you where I keep my money!'

"So she went, still holding him fast in her hand, and keeping her two eyes fixed on him without so much as a wink, when, all of a sudden, what do you think?

"She heard a whiz and a buzz behind her, as if all the bees in the world were humming, and the little old man cries out, 'There go your bees a-swarming and a-going off with themselves like blazes!'

"She turned her head for no more than a second of time, but when she looked back there was nothing at all in her hand.

"He slipped out of her fingers as if he were made of fog or smoke, and sorrow a bit of him did she ever see after."[1]

"And she never got the gold at all," sighed Eileen.

"Never so much as a ha'penny worth," said Grannie Malone.

---

[1] Adapted from Thomas Keightley's *Fairy Mythology*.

"I believe I'd rather get rich in America than try to catch Leprechauns for a living," said Larry.

"And you never said a truer word," said Grannie. "'Tis a poor living you'd get from the Leprechauns, I'm thinking, rich as they are."

By this time the teapot was empty, and every crumb of the cakeen was gone, and as Larry had eaten two potatoes, just as Eileen thought he would, there was little left to clear away.

It was late in the afternoon. The room had grown darker, and Grannie Malone went to the little window and looked out.

"Now run along with yourselves home," she said, "for the sun is nearly setting across the bog, and your Mother will be looking for you. Here, put this in your pocket for luck." She gave Larry a little piece of coal. "The Good Little People will take care of good children if they have a bit o' this with them," she said; "and you, Eileen, be careful that you don't step in a fairy ring on your way home, for you've a light foot on you like a leaf in the wind, and 'The People' will keep you dancing for dear knows how long, if once they



get you."

"We'll keep right in the boreen (road), won't we, Larry? Goodbye, Grannie," said Eileen.

The twins started home. Grannie Malone stood in her

doorway, shading her eyes with her hand, and looking after them until a turn in the road hid them from sight. Then she went into her little cabin and shut the door.



Chapter IV
The Tinkers

After Larry and Eileen had gone around the turn in the road there were no houses in sight for quite a long distance.

On one side of the road stretched the brown bog, with here and there a pool of water in it which shone bright in the colors of the setting sun. It was gay, too, with patches of yellow buttercups, of primroses, and golden whins. The whins had been in bloom since Easter, for Larry and Eileen had gathered the yellow flowers to dye their Easter eggs. On the other side of the road the land rose a little, and was so covered with stones that it seemed as if there were no earth left for things to grow in. Yet the mountain fern took root there and made the rocks gay with its green fronds.

The sun was so low that their shadows stretched far across the bogland beside them as the twins trudged along.

Three black ravens were flying overhead, and a lark was

singing its evening song.

Eileen looked up in the sky. "There's the ghost of a moon up there! Look, Larry," she said.

Larry looked up. There floating high above them, was a pale, pale moon, almost the color of the sky itself. "It looks queer and lonesome up there," he said, "and there's no luck at all in three ravens flying. They'll be putting a grudge on somebody's cow, maybe. I wonder where the little lark does be hiding herself."

Larry was still looking up in the sky for the little lark, when Eileen suddenly seized his arm. "Whist, Larry," she whispered. "Look before you on the road!"

Larry stopped stock-still and looked. A man was coming toward them. The man was still a long way off, but they could see that he carried something on his back. And beside the road, not so far away from where the twins stood, there was a camp, like a gypsy camp.

"'Tis the tinkers!" whispered Larry. He took Eileen's hand and pulled her with him behind a heap of stones by the road. Then they crept along very quietly and climbed over the wall into a field.

From behind the wall they could peep between the stones at the tinkers' camp without being seen.

The twins were afraid of tinkers. Everybody is in Ireland, because the tinkers wander around over the country without having any homes anywhere.

They go from house to house in all the villages mending the pots and pans, and often they steal whatever they can lay their hands on.

At night they sleep on the ground with only straw for a bed, and they cook in a kettle over a campfire.

The twins were so badly scared that their teeth



chattered.

Eileen was the first to say anything.

"However will we g-g-g-get home at all?" she whispered. "They've a dog with them, and he'll b-b-b-bark at us surely. Maybe he'll bite us!"

They could see a woman moving about through the camp. She had a fire with a kettle hanging over it. There were two or three other people about, and some starved-looking horses. The dog was lying beside the fire, and there was a baby rolling about on the ground. A little pig was tied by one hind leg to a thorn bush.

"If the dog comes after us," said Larry, "I'd drop a stone on him, out of a tree, just the way the good son did in the story, and kill him dead."

"But there's never a tree anywhere about," said Eileen. "Sure, that is no plan at all."

"That's a true word," said Larry, when he had looked all about for a tree, and found none. "We'll have to think of something else."

Then he thought and thought. "We might go back to Grannie's," he said after a while.

"That would be no better," Eileen whispered, "for, surely, our Mother would go crazy with worrying if we didn't come home, at all, and we already so late."

"Well, then," Larry answered, "we must just bide here until it's dark, and creep by, the best way we can. Anyway, I've the piece of coal in my pocket, and Grannie said no harm would come to us at all, and we having it."

Just then the man, who had been coming up the road, reached the camp. The dog ran out to meet him, barking joyfully. The man came near the fire and threw the bundle off his shoulder. It was two fat geese, with their legs tied together!

"The Saints preserve us," whispered Eileen, "if those aren't our own two geese! Do you see those black feathers in their wings?"

"He's the thief of the world," said Larry.

He forgot to be frightened because he was so angry, and he spoke right out loud! He stood up and shook his fist at the tinker. His head showed over the top of the wall. Eileen jerked him down.

"Whist now, Larry darling," she begged. "If the dog sees



you once he'll tear you to pieces."

Larry dropped behind the wall again, and they watched the tinker's wife loosen the string about the legs of the geese, and tie them by a long cord to the bush, beside the little pig. Then all the tinker people gathered around the pot and began to eat their supper.

The baby and the dog were on the ground playing together. The twins could hear the shouts of the baby, and the barks of the dog.

It was quite dusk by this time, but the moon grew brighter and brighter in the sky, and the flames of the tinkers' fire glowed more and more red, as the night came on.

"Sure, it isn't going to get real dark at all," whispered Larry.

"Then we'd better be going now," said Eileen, "for the tinkers are eating their supper, and their backs are towards the road, and we'll make hardly a taste of noise with our bare feet."

They crept along behind the rocks, and over the wall. "Now," whispered Larry, "slip along until we're right beside them, and then run like the wind!"

The twins took hold of hands. They could hear their hearts beat. They walked softly up the road.

The tinkers were still laughing and talking; the baby and the dog kept on playing.

The twins were almost by, when all of a sudden, the

geese stood up. "Squawk, squawk," they cried. "Squawk, squawk."

"Whatever is the matter with you, now?" said the tinker's wife to the geese. "Can't you be quiet?" The dog stopped romping with the baby, sniffed the air, and growled. "Lie down," said the woman; "there's a bone for your supper." She threw the dog a bone. He sprang at it and began to gnaw it.

Larry and Eileen had crouched behind a rock the minute the geese began to squawk. "I believe they know



us," whispered Eileen.

They waited until everything was quiet again. Then Larry whispered, "Run now, and if you fall, never wait to rise but run till we get to Tom Daly's house!"

Then they ran! The soft pat-pat of their bare feet on the dirt road was not heard by the tinkers, and soon another turn in the road hid them from view, but, for all that, they ran and ran, ever so far, until some houses were in sight.

They could see the flicker of firelight in the windows of the nearest house. It was Tom Daly's house. They could see Tom's shadow as he sat at his loom, weaving flax into beautiful white linen cloth. They could hear the clack! clack! of his loom. It made the twins feel much safer to hear this sound and see Tom's shadow, for Tom was a friend of theirs, and they often went into his house and watched him weave his beautiful linen, which was so fine that the Queen herself used it. Up the road, in the window of the last house of all, a candle shone.

"Sure, Mother is watching for us," said Larry. "She's put a candle in the window."

They went on more slowly now, past Tom Daly's, past

the Maguires' and the O'Briens' and several other houses on the way, and when they were quite near their own home Larry said, "Sure, I'll never travel again without a bit of coal in my pocket. Look at all the danger we've been in this night, and never the smallest thing happening to us."

And Eileen said, "Indeed, musha, 'tis well we're the good children! Sure, the Good Little People would never at all let harm come to the likes of us, just as Grannie said."



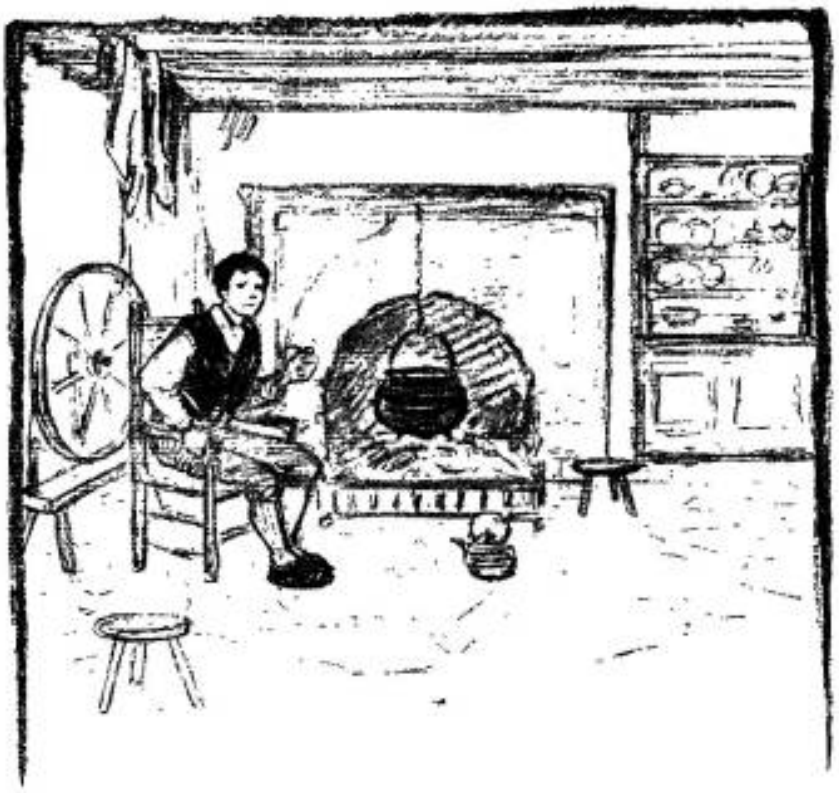
Chapter V
The Twins Get Home

When they were nearly home, the twins saw a dark figure hurrying down the road, and as it drew near, their Mother's voice called to them, "Is it yourselves, Larry and Eileen, and whatever kept you till this hour? Sure, you've had me distracted entirely with wondering what had become of you at all! And your Dada sits in the room with a lip on him as long as today and tomorrow!"

The twins both began to talk at once. Their mother clapped her hands over her ears.

"Can't you hold your tongues and speak quietly now—one at a time like gentlemen and ladies?" she said. "Come in to your father and tell him all about it."

The twins each took one of her hands, and they all three hurried into the house. They went into the kitchen. Their Father was sitting by the chimney, with his feet up, smoking



his pipe when they came in. He brought his feet to the floor with a thump, and sat up straight in his chair.

"Where have you been, you Spalpeens?" he said. "It's nine o'clock this instant minute."

The twins both began again to talk. Their Mother flew about the kitchen to get them a bite of supper.

"Come now," said the Father, "I can't hear myself at all with the noise of you. Do you tell the tale, Larry."

Then Larry told them about the cakeen, and the silk

hat, and Michael Malone, and the tinkers, while his Mother said, "The Saints preserve us!" every few words, and Eileen interrupted to tell how brave Larry had been—"just like the good son in Grannie Malone's tale, for all the world."

But when they came to the geese part of the story, the Father said, "Blathers," and got up and hurried out to the place where the fowls were kept, in the yard behind the house.

In a few minutes he came in again. "The geese are gone," he said, "and that's the truth or I can't speak it!"

"Bad luck to the thieves, then," cried the Mother. "The back of my hand to them! Sure, I saw a rough, scraggly man with a beard on him like a rick of hay, come along this very afternoon, and I up the road talking with Mrs. Maguire! I never thought he'd make that bold, to carry off geese in the broad light of day! And me saving them against Christmastime, too!"

"Wait till I get that fellow where beating is cheap, and I'll take the change out of him!" said the Father.

Eileen began to cry and Larry's lip trembled.

"Come here now, you poor dears," their Mother said. "Sit down on the two creepeens by the fire, and have a bite to eat before you go to bed. Indeed, you must be starved entirely, with the running, and the fright, and all. I'll give you a drink of cold milk, warmed up with a sup of hot water through it, and a bit of bread, to comfort your stomachs."

While the twins ate the bread and drank the milk, their Father and Mother talked about the tinkers. "Sure, they are as a frost in spring, and a blight in harvest," said Mrs.



McQueen. "I wonder wherever they got the badness in them the way they have."

"I've heard said it was a tinker that led Saint Patrick astray when he was in Ireland," said Mr. McQueen. "I don't know if it's true or not, but the tale is that he was brought here a slave, and that it would take a hundred pounds to buy his freedom. One day, when he was minding the sheep on the hills, he found a lump of silver, and he met a tinker and asked him the value of it.

"'Wirra,' says the tinker, ''tis naught but a bit of solder. Give it to me!' But Saint Patrick took it to a smith instead, and the smith told him the truth about it, and Saint Patrick put a curse on the tinkers, that every man's face should be against them, and that they should get no rest at all but to follow the road."

"Some say they do be walking the world forever," said Mrs. McQueen, "and I never in my life met anyone that had seen a tinker's funeral."

"There'll maybe be one if I catch the tinker that stole the geese!" Mr. McQueen said grimly.

Mrs. McQueen laughed. "It's the fierce one you are to

talk," she said, "and you that good-natured when you're angry that you'd scare not even a fly! Come along now to bed with you," she added to the twins. "There you sit with your eyes dropping out of your heads with sleep."

She helped them undress and popped them into their beds in the next room; then she barred the door, put out the candle, covered the coals in the fireplace, and went to bed in the room on the other side of the kitchen. Last of all, Mr. McQueen knocked the ashes from his pipe against the chimney piece, and soon everything was quiet in their cottage, and in the whole village of Ballymora where they lived.

Chapter VI

How They Went to the Bog

The next morning when the twins woke up, the sun was shining in through the one little square window in the bedroom, and lay in a bright patch of yellow on the floor. Eileen sat up in bed and rubbed her eyes. Then she stuck her head out between the curtains of her bed. "Is it today or tomorrow? I don't know," she said.

Larry sat up in his bed and rubbed his eyes. He peeped out from his curtains. "It isn't yesterday, anyway," he said, "and glad I am for that. Do you mind about the tinkers, Eileen?"

"I do so," said Eileen, "and the geese."

Their Mother heard them and came to the door. "Sure, I thought I'd let you sleep as late as ever you liked," she said, "for there's no school today, but you're awake and clacking, so how would you like to go with your Dada to



the bog to cut turf? Himself will put a bit of bread in his pocket for you, and you can take a sup of milk along."

"Oh, wirra!" cried Eileen. "What have we done but left the milk jug at Grannie Malone's!"

"You can take the milk in the old brown jug, then," said the Mother, "and come along home by way of Grannie's, and get the jug itself. I'd like your Father to get a sight of the tinkers' camp, and maybe of that thief of the world that stole the geese on us."

It didn't take the twins long to dress. They wore few clothes, and no shoes and stockings, and their breakfast of bread and potatoes was soon eaten. The Mother had already milked the cow, and when they had had a drink of fresh milk they were ready to start.

Mr. McQueen was at the door with "Colleen," the donkey, and when Larry and Eileen came out, he put them both on Colleen's back, and they started down the road toward the bog.

When they came to the place where the tinkers' camp should be, there was no camp there at all! They looked east and west, but no sign of the tinkers did they see.



"If it were not for the two geese gone, I'd think you had been dreaming!" said Mr. McQueen to the twins.

"Look there, then," said Larry. "Sure, there's the black mark on the ground where their fire was!"

The twins slid off Colleen's back, and ran to the spot where the camp had been. There, indeed, was the mark of

a fire, and nearby were some wisps of straw. There were the marks of horses' feet, too, and Eileen found a white goose feather by the thorn bush, and a piece of broken rope.

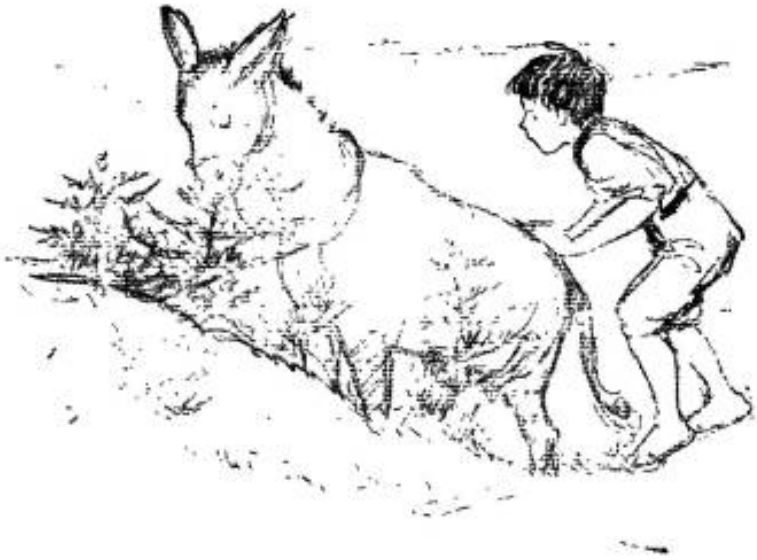
"They were here surely," Mr. McQueen said, "and far enough away they are by this time, no doubt. It's likely the police were after them."

They went back to the road, and the twins got up again on Colleen's back, and soon they had reached the near end of the bog.

Mr. McQueen stopped. "I'll be cutting the turf here," he said, "and the two of you can go on to Grannie Malone's with the donkey, and bring back the jug with yourselves. Get along with you," and he gave the donkey a slap.

The twins and the donkey started along the road. Everything went well until Colleen spied a tuft of green thistles, on a high bank beside the road. Colleen loved thistles, and she made straight for them. The first thing the twins knew they were sliding swiftly down the donkey's back, while Colleen stood with her fore feet high on the bank and her hind feet in the road.

Larry, being behind, landed first, with Eileen on top of



him. She wasn't hurt a bit, but she was a little scared. "Sure, Larry, but you're the soft one to fall on," she said as she rolled over and picked herself up.

"I may be soft to fall on," said Larry, "but I'm the easier squashed for that! Look at me now! It's out of shape I am entirely, with the print of yourself on me!"

Then—"Whatever will we do with Colleen?" Eileen said. "She's got her nose in the thistles and we'll never be able to drag her away from them."

They pulled on the halter, but Colleen refused to budge. Larry got up on the bank and pushed her. He even pulled her backward by the tail! Colleen didn't seem to mind it at

all. She kept right on eating the thistles.

At last Larry said, "You go on with yourself to Grannie Malone's for the jug, Eileen, and I'll stay here until she finishes the thistles."

So he sat down by the road on a stone and Eileen trotted off to Grannie's.



Chapter VII

The Bog

When Eileen got back with the jug, she found Larry still sitting beside the road. He was talking with a freckled-faced boy, and Colleen's head was still in the thistles.

"The top of the morning to you, Dennis Maguire," Eileen called to the freckled boy when she saw him. "And does it take the two of you to watch one donkey at his breakfast? Come along and let's play in the bog!"

"But however shall we leave Colleen? She might run away on us," said Larry.

"She's tethered by hunger fast enough," said Eileen. "Ropes would not drag her away. But you could throw her halter over a stone, to be sure."

Larry slipped the halter over a stone, they set the milk jug in a safe place, and the three children ran off into the bog.



The bogland was brown and dark. Tufts of coarse grass grew here and there, and patches of yellow gorse. There were many puddles, and sometimes there were deep holes, where the turf had been cut out.

Mr. McQueen was a thrifty man, and got his supply of turf early in the season. He would cut it out in long black blocks, like thick mud, and leave it in the sun to dry. When it was quite dry he would carry it home on Colleen's back,

pile it in a high turf stack near the kitchen door, and it would burn in the fireplace all winter.

The children were barefooted, so they played in the puddles as much as ever they liked.

By and by Eileen said, "Let's play we are Deirdre and the sons of Usnach."

"And who were they, indeed?" said Dennis.

"It was Grannie told us about them," said Eileen, "and sure it's the sorrowfullest story in Ireland."

"Then let's not be playing it," said Dennis.

"But there's Kings in it, and lots of fighting!"

"Well, then, it might not be so bad, at all. Tell the rest of it," Dennis answered.

"Well, then," Eileen began, "there once was a high King of Emain, and his name was Conchubar (pronounced *Connor*). And one time when he was hunting out in the fields, he heard a small little cry, crying. And he followed the sound of it, and what should he find, but a little baby girl, lying alone in the field!"

"Well, listen to that now," said Dennis.

"He did so," Eileen went on; "and he loved the child and

took her to his castle, and had her brought up fine and careful, intending for to marry her when she should be grown up. And he hid her away, with only an old woman to take care of her, in a beautiful house far in the mountain, for he was afraid she'd be stolen away from him.

"And she had silver dishes and golden cups, and everything fine and elegant, and she the most beautiful creature you ever laid your two eyes on."

"Sure, I don't see much fighting in the tale, at all," said Dennis.

"Whist now, and I'll come to it," Eileen answered.

"One day when Deirdre had grown to be a fine big girl, she looks out of the window, and she sees Naisi (pronounced *Naysha*) going along by with his two brothers, the three of them together, they having been hunting in the mountain. And the minute she slaps her eyes on Naisi, 'There,' says she, 'is the grandest man in the width of the world, and I'll be wife to no man but him,' says she.

"So she calls in the sons of Usnach, though the old woman is scared to have her, and she tells Naisi she's going to marry him.

"And Naisi says, says he, 'I'll never be one to refuse a lady, but there'll be murder the day Conchubar finds it out!' says he.

"So they went away that same night, and the old woman fair distraught with fear. Soon along comes Conchubar to see Deirdre, for to marry her. And he had many men with him. When he finds Deirdre gone, 'It's that Naisi,' says he, 'that stole her away.' And he cursed him. And all his men and himself went out for to chase Naisi and his two brothers. But they never caught up with them at all for ten years, and Naisi and Deirdre living all the time as happy as two birds in the springtime."

"No fighting at all yet," said Dennis, "and ten years gone by. Musha, indeed, 'tis not much of a tale at all."

"There was fighting enough when the years were up," Eileen said. "The men of Conchubar pursued them up hill and down dale, and when they finally caught them, there was fighting that made the ground red with the blood spilled.

"And when Naisi and his brothers were all caught together, and Conchubar was after killing them, sure,

didn't Deirdre put an end to herself entirely, and the four of them were buried together in one grave."

"But however will we play it at all?" said Larry.

"Listen, now," said Eileen. "I'll be Deirdre, of course. You can just be Naisi, Larry, and Dennis can be Conchubar, and he after us, and we running as fast as ever we can, to get away from him. You must give us a start, Dennis."



Chapter VIII

"Diddy"

Larry and Eileen took hold of hands, and began running as fast as they could. They jumped from one tuft of grass to another. Dennis came splashing through the puddles after them. He had almost caught them, when all of a sudden, Larry stopped and listened.

"What's that now?" he said. Eileen and Dennis listened too. They heard a faint squealing sound.

They looked all around. There was nothing in sight but the brown bog, and the stones, and the blue hills far beyond. They were a little bit scared.

"Do you suppose it might be a Leprechaun?" Eileen whispered.

"'Tis a tapping noise they make; not a crying noise at all," Larry answered.

"Maybe it's a Banshee," Dennis said. "They do be crying

about sometimes before somebody is going to die."

"'Tis no Banshee whatever," Eileen declared. "They only cry at night."

They heard the squealing sound again.

"'Tis right over there," cried Eileen, pointing to a black hole in the bog where turf had been cut out. "Indeed, and it might be a beautiful baby like Deirdre herself! Let's go and see."

They crept up to the bog hole, and peeped over the edge. The hole was quite deep and down in the bottom of it was a little pig! Dennis rolled over on the ground beside the bog hole and screamed with laughter.

"Sure, 'tis the beautiful child entirely!" he said.

"'Tis the little pig the tinkers had!" cried Eileen.

"It broke the rope and ran away with itself," shouted Larry.

"However will we get it out?" said Eileen. "The hole is too deep entirely!"

"The poor little thing is nearly destroyed with hunger," Larry said. "I'll go down in the hole and lift her out."

"However will you get out yourself, then, Larry darling?"



cried Eileen.

"The two of you can give me your hands," said Larry, "and I'll be up in no time."

Then Larry jumped down into the hole. He caught the little pig in his arms. The little pig squealed harder than ever and tried to get away, but Larry held it up as high as he could.

Eileen and Dennis reached down and each got hold of one of the pig's front feet. "Now then for you!" cried Larry.

He gave the pig a great shove. He shoved so hard that Eileen and Dennis both fell over backwards into a puddle! But they held tight to the pig, and there the three of them were together, rolling in the bog with the pig on top of

them!

"Hold her, hold her!" shrieked Larry. By standing on tiptoe his nose was just above the edge of the bog hole, so he could see them.

"I've got her," Eileen cried. "Run back for the bit of rope the tinkers left, Dennis, and tie her, hard and fast!"

Dennis ran for the rope while Eileen sat on the ground and held the little pig in her arms. The little pig squealed and kicked and tried every minute to get away. She kicked even after her hind legs were tied together. But Eileen held on!

"You'll have to get Larry out alone, Dennis, while I never let go of this pig," cried Eileen, breathlessly. "She's that wild, she'll be running away with herself on her two



front legs, alone."

Dennis reached down, and took both of Larry's hands and pulled and pulled until he got him out.

Larry was covered with mud from the bog hole, and Eileen and Dennis were wet and muddy from falling into the puddle.

But they had the pig!

"Sure, she is a beautiful little pig, and we'll call her Deirdre, because we found her in the bog just in the same



way as Conchubar himself," said Larry.

"Indeed, Deirdre was too beautiful altogether to be naming a pig after her," Eileen said.

"Isn't she a beautiful little pig, then?" Larry answered.

"Well, maybe we might be calling her 'Diddy,' for short, and no offence to herself at all," Eileen agreed.

The poor little pig was so tired out with struggling, and so hungry, that she was fairly quiet while Dennis carried her on his shoulder to the road. Eileen walked behind Dennis and fed her with green leaves.

She was so quiet that Larry said: "We'll tie the rope to one of Diddy's hind legs, and she'll run home herself in front of us."

So when they reached the road he and Dennis tied the rope securely to Diddy's left hind leg and set her down.

They found Colleen asleep, standing up.

Larry woke her. Then he said, "Eileen, come now, you take the jug, and get on Colleen's back. Dennis can lead her, and I'll drive the pig myself."

But Diddy was feeling better after her rest. She made up her mind she didn't like the plan. She squealed and tried to



get away. Once she turned quickly and ran between Larry's legs and tripped him up. But she was a tired little pig, and so it was not long before, somehow, they got her back to where Mr. McQueen was working.

He hadn't heard them coming, though, what with the pig squealing, and the children all speaking at once, they made noise enough. But Mr. McQueen had his head down digging, and he was in a bog hole besides, so when they

came up right beside him, with the pig, he almost fell over with astonishment.

He stopped his work and leaned on his clete, while they told him all about the pig, and how they found it, and got it out of the hole, and how the tinkers must have lost it. And when they were all done, he only said, "The Saints preserve us! We'll take it home to herself and let her cosset it up a bit!"

So the children hurried off to take the pig to their Mother without even stopping to eat their bit of lunch. Mr. McQueen came, too.

When they got home, they found Mrs. McQueen leaning on the farmyard fence. When she saw them coming with the pig, she ran out to meet them.

"Wherever did you find the fine little pig?" she cried. Then she threw up her hands. "Look at the mud on you!" she said.

Then the twins and Dennis told the story all over again, and Mrs. McQueen took the little pig in her apron. "The poor little thing!" she said. "Its heart is beating that hard, you'd think its ribs would burst themselves. I'll get it some

milk right away this minute when once you've looked in the yard."

Mr. McQueen and Dennis and the twins went to the fence. There in the yard were the two geese with the black feathers in their wings! "Faith, and the luck is all with us this day," said Mr. McQueen. "However did you get them back at all?"

"'Twas this way, if you'll believe me," said Mrs. McQueen. She scratched the little pig's back with one hand as she talked. "I was just after churning my butter when what should I see looking in the door but that thief of a tinker with the beard like a rick of hay! Thinks I to myself, sure, my butter will be bewitched and never come at all with the bad luck of a stranger, and he a tinker, coming in the house!

"But he comes in and gives one plunge to the dasher for luck and to break the spell, and says he, very civil, 'Would you be wanting to buy any fine geese today?'

"My heart was going thumpity-thump, but I says to him, 'I might look at them, maybe,' and with that I go to the door, for the sake of getting him out of it, and if there

weren't our own two geese, with the legs of them tied together!"

"The impudence of that!" cried Mr. McQueen. "Get along with your tale, woman! Surely you never paid the old thief for your own two geese!"

"Trust me!" replied Mrs. McQueen. "I'm coming around to the point of my tale gradual, like an old goat grazing around its tethering stump! I says to him, 'They look well enough, but I'm wishful to see them standing up on their own two legs. That one looks as if it might be a bit



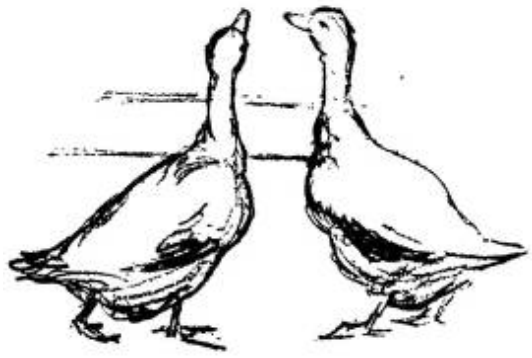
lame, and the cord so tight on it! And meanwhile, will you be having a bit of a drink on this hot day?'

"Then I gave him a sup of milk, in a mug, and with that he thanks me kindly, loosens the cord, and sets the geese up on their legs for me to see. In a minute of time I stood between him and the geese, and 'Shoo!' says I to them, and to him I says, 'Get along with you before I call the man working behind the house to put an end to your thieving entirely!'

"And upon that he went in great haste, taking the mug along with him, but it was cracked anyway!"

"Woman, woman, but you've the clever tongue in your head," said Mr. McQueen with admiration.

"'Tis mighty lucky we have," said Mrs. McQueen, "for it's little else women have in this world to help themselves with!"



Then she put the little pig down in the empty pigpen in the farmyard and went to fetch it some milk.



Chapter IX

The Secret

Mr. McQueen was a good farmer, but at the time he lived in Ireland, farmers could not own their farms.

The land was all owned by rich landlords, who did not do any work themselves. These landlords very often lived away in England or France, and did not know much about how the poor people lived at home, or how hard they had to work to get the money for the rent of their farms.

Sometimes, when they did know, they didn't care. What they wanted was all the money they could get, so they could live in fine houses and wear beautiful clothes, and go where they pleased, without doing any work.

When the landlords were away, they had agents to collect the rents for them.

The business of these agents was to get all the rent

money they could, and they made life very hard for the farmers.

Sometimes when the farmers couldn't pay all the rent, the agent would turn them out of their houses. This was called "evicting" them. The farm that Mr. McQueen lived on, as well as the village and all the country roundabout, was owned by the Earl of Elsmore, who lived most of the year in great style in England. The agent who collected rents was Mr. Conroy. Nobody liked Mr. Conroy very much, but everybody was afraid of him, because he could do so much to injure them.

So one morning when Mr. McQueen came back very early from his potato field, he was not glad to see Mr. Conroy's horse standing near his door, and Mr. Conroy himself, leaning on the farmyard fence, looking at the fowls.

"How are you, McQueen?" said Mr. Conroy, when Mr. McQueen came up.

"Well enough, Mr. Conroy," said Mr. McQueen.

"And you're doing well with the farm, too, it seems," said Mr. Conroy. "Those are good-looking fowls you have, and the pig is fine and fat. How many cows have you, now?"

"Two, and a heifer," said Mr. McQueen.

"You drained that field over by the bog this year, didn't you, and have it planted to turnips?" went on Mr. Conroy. "I'm glad to see you so prosperous, McQueen. Of course, now, the farm is worth more than it was when you first took it, and so you'll not be surprised that I'm raising the rent on you."

"If the farm is worth more, 'tis my work that has made it so," said Mr. McQueen, "and I shouldn't be punished for that. The house is none too good at all, and the place is not worth more. Last year was the drought and all manner of bad luck, and next year may be no better. Truly, Mr. Conroy, if you press me, I don't know how I can scrape more together than I'm paying now."

"Well, then," said Mr. Conroy. "You must just find a way, for this is one of the best farms about here, and you should pay as much as anyone."

"You can't get money by shaking a man with empty pockets," said Mr. McQueen.

But Mr. Conroy only laughed and said: "You'll have five pounds in yours when next rent day comes around, or 'twill

be the worse for you. You wouldn't like to be evicted, I'm sure."

Then he mounted his horse and rode away.

Mr. McQueen went into the house with a heavy heart, and told his wife the bad news.

"Faith," said Mrs. McQueen, "I'd not be in that man's shoes for all you could offer. It's grinding down the faces of the poor he is, and that at the telling of someone else! Not even his badness is his own! He does as he's bid."

"He gets fat on it," said Mr. McQueen.

"Faith, we'll get along somehow," said Mrs. McQueen. "We always have, though 'tis true it's been scant fare we've had now and again."

Mr. McQueen didn't answer. He went back to his work in the fields. Mrs. McQueen got the twins started off to school, with their lunch in a little tin bucket, and began her washing, but she did not sing at her work that day as she sometimes did.

Larry and Eileen knew that something was wrong, though their Father and Mother had not said anything to them about it.



They had seen Mr. Conroy talking with their Father in the yard. "And it's never a sign of anything good to see Mr. Conroy," Eileen said.

Larry was thinking the same thing, for he said:—

"When I'm a man, I'm going to be rich, and then I'll give you and Mother and Dada a fine house, and fine clothes, and things in plenty."

"However will you get the money?" asked Eileen.

"Oh! Giants or something," Larry answered, "or maybe



being an Alderman."

"Blathers!" said Eileen. "I've a better plan in my head. You know Dada and Mother said we could have Diddy for our very own, because we found her ourselves."

"I do," said Larry.

"Well, then," said Eileen, "I know it's about the rent they are bothered, for it always is the rent that bothers them. Now, when the fair time comes we'll coax Dada to let us take Diddy to the fair. She'll be nice and fat by that time, and we'll sell her, and give the money to Dada for the rent!"

"Sure, it will be hard parting with Diddy, that's been like one of our own family since the day we found her crying in the bog," said Larry.

"Indeed, and it will," said Eileen, "but we think more of our parents than of a pig, surely."

"But however will we get her to the fair to sell her?" said Larry.

"We'll get Dada to take her for us, but we'll never tell him we mean the money to go for the rent until we put it in his hands," Eileen answered, "and we won't tell anyone

else at all. It's a secret."

"I'd like to be telling Dennis, maybe," said Larry.

"We can tell Dennis and Grannie Malone, but no one else at all," Eileen agreed.



Chapter X

School

By this time they had reached the schoolhouse. The schoolmaster was standing in the door calling the children to come in.

He was a tall man dressed in a worn suit of black. He wore glasses on his nose, and carried a stick in his hand.

The schoolhouse had only one room, with four small windows, and Larry hung his cap and Eileen her shawl, on nails driven into the wall.

The schoolroom had benches for the children to sit on, with long desks in front of them. On the wall hung a printed copy of the Ten Commandments. At one side there was a fireplace, but, as it was summer, there was no fire in it.

The Master rapped on his desk, which was in the front of the room, and the children all hurried to their seats. Larry sat on one side of the room, with the boys. Eileen sat

on the other, with the girls.

The Master called the roll. There were fifteen boys and thirteen girls. When the roll was called and the number marked down on a slate in front of the school, the Master



said, "First class in reading."

All the little boys and girls of the size of Larry and Eileen came forward and stood in a row. There were just three of them: Larry and Eileen and Dennis.

"Larry, you may begin," said the Master.

Larry read the first lines of the lesson. They were, "To do ill is a sin.

"Can you run far?"

Larry wondered who it was that had done ill, and if he were running away because of it, and who stopped him to ask, "Can you run far?" He was thinking about it when Eileen read the next two sentences.

They were, "Is he friend or foe?

"Did you hurt your toe?"

This did not seem to Larry to clear the mystery.

"Next!" called the Master.

Dennis stood next. He read, "He was born in a house on the hill.

"Is rice a kind of corn?

"Get me a cork for the ink jar."

Just at this point the Master went to the open door to



drive away some chickens that wanted to come in, and as Dennis had not been told to stop he went right on. Dennis was eight, and he could read quite fast if he kept his finger on the place. This is what he read:—

"The morn is the first part of the day.

"This is my son, I hope you will like him.

"Sin not, for God hates sin.

"Can a worm walk?

"No, it has no feet, but it can creep.

"Did you meet Fred in the street?

"Weep no more."

By this time the chickens were frightened away and Dennis was nearly out of breath.

The Master came back. Then Eileen had a turn. They could almost say the lessons by heart, they knew them so well.

After the reading lesson they went back to their benches, and studied in loud whispers, but Larry was thinking of something else. He drew a pig with a curly tail on his slate—like this—



He held it up for Dennis to see. He wanted to tell him about Diddy and the fair, but the Master saw what he had done. "Come here, Larry McQueen, and bring your slate," he said. "Sure, I'll

teach you better manners. Get up on this stool now, and show yourself." He put a large paper dunce cap on Larry's head, and made him sit up on a stool before the whole school!



The other children laughed, all but Eileen. She hid her face on her desk, and two little tears squeezed out between her fingers. But Larry didn't cry. He pretended he didn't care at all. He sat there for what seemed a very long time, while other children recited other lessons in reading, and grammar, and arithmetic. The Master gave him this poem to learn by heart:—

"I thank the Goodness and the Grace
That on my birth have smiled,
And made me in these Christian days,
A happy English child."

Larry wondered why he was called an English child,

when he knew he was Irish. And he wasn't so sure either about the "Christian days"; but he learned it and said it to the teacher before he got down off the stool. It seemed to him that it was about three days before noontime came. At last they were dismissed, and the twins went out with the other children into the schoolyard to eat their luncheon. Dennis ate his with them, and Larry told him the Secret.

After lunch they went back into the dark, smoky little schoolroom for more lessons, and when three o'clock came, how glad they were to go dancing out into the sunshine again, and walk home along the familiar road, with the air sweet about them, and the little birds singing in the fields.



Chapter XI

The Fair

For many weeks Eileen and Larry kept the secret. They told no one but Dennis and Grannie Malone, and they both promised they would never, never tell.

Mr. McQueen worked hard—early and late—over his turnips and cabbages and potatoes, and Larry and Eileen helped by feeding the pig and chickens, and driving the cows along the roadsides, where they could get fresh sweet grass to eat.

One evening Mr. McQueen said to his wife. "Rent day comes soon, and next week will be the fair."

Larry and Eileen heard him say it. They looked at each other and then Eileen went to her Father and said, "Dada, will you take Larry and me to the fair with you? We want to sell our pig."

"*You* sell your pig!" cried Mr. McQueen. "You mean you want to sell it *yourselves*?"

"You can help us," Eileen answered; "but it's our pig and we want to sell it, don't we, Larry?"

Larry nodded his head up and down very hard with his mouth tight shut. He was so afraid the secret would jump out of it!

"Well, I never heard the likes of that!" said McQueen. He slapped his knee and laughed.

"We've got it all planned," said Eileen. She was almost ready to cry because her Father laughed at her. "We've fed the pig and fed her, until she's so fat she can hardly walk, and we are going to wash her clean, and I have a ribbon to tie on her ear. Diddy will look so fine and stylish, I'm sure someone will want to buy her!"

Mrs. McQueen was just setting away a pan of milk. She stopped with the pan in her hand.

"Leave them go," she said.

Mr. McQueen smoked awhile in silence. At last he said:—

"It's your own pig, and I suppose you can go, but you'll



have a long day of it."

"The longer the better," said the twins.

All that week they carried acorns, and turnip tops, and everything they could find that was good for pigs to eat, and fed them to Diddy, and she got fatter than ever.

The day before the fair, they took the scrubbing pail and

the broom, and some water, and scrubbed her until she was all pink and clean. Then they put her in a clean place for the night, and went to bed early so they would be ready to get up in the morning.

When the first cock crowed, before daylight the next morning, Eileen's eyes popped wide open in the dark. The cock crowed again. *Cock-a-doodle-doo!*

"Wake up, Larry darling," cried Eileen from her bed. "The morn is upon us, and we are not ready for the fair."

Larry bounded out of bed, and such a scurrying around as there was to get ready! Mrs. McQueen was already blowing the fire on the hearth in the kitchen into a blaze, and the kettle was on to boil. The twins wet their hair and their Mother parted it and then they combed it down tight on the sides of their heads. But no matter how much they wet their hair, the wind always blew it about their ears again in a very little while. They put on their best clothes, and then they were ready for breakfast.

Mr. McQueen was up long before the twins. He had harnessed Colleen and had loaded the pig into the cart somehow, and tied her securely. This must have been hard

work, for Diddy had made up her mind she wasn't going to the fair.

Mr. McQueen had found room, too, for some crocks of butter, and several dozen eggs carefully packed in straw.

When breakfast was over, Mrs. McQueen brought a stick with notches cut in it and gave it to Mr. McQueen.

She explained what each notch meant. "There's one notch, and a big one, for selling the pig," she said, "and mind you see that the twins get a good price for the creature. And here's another for selling the butter and eggs. And this is a pound of tea for Grannie Malone. She's been out of tea this week past, and she with no one to send. And this notch is for Mrs. Maguire's side of bacon that you're to be after bringing her with her egg money, which is wrapped in a piece of paper in your inside pocket, and by the same token don't you be losing it.

"And for myself, there's so many things I'm needing, that I've put all these small notches close together. There's yarn for stockings for the twins, and some thread for myself, to make crochet, that might turn me a penny in my odd moments, and a bit of flour, and some yellow meal. Now

remember that you forget nothing of it all!"

Mr. McQueen shook his head sadly. "Faith, there's little pleasure in going to the fair with so many things on my mind," he said.

The sun was just peeping over the distant hills, when Colleen started up the road, pulling the cart with Diddy in it, squealing "like a dozen of herself" Mrs. McQueen said. Mr. McQueen led the donkey, and Larry and Eileen followed on foot. They had on shoes and stockings, and



Eileen had on a clean apron and a bright little shawl, so they looked quite gay.

They walked miles and miles, beside bogs, and over hills, along country roads bordered by hedgerows or by stone walls. At last they saw the towers of the Castle which belonged to the Earl of Elsmore. It was on top of a high hill.

The towers stood up strong and proud against the sky. Smoke was coming out of the chimneys.

"Do you suppose the Earl himself is at home?" Eileen asked her Father.

"'Tis not unlikely," Mr. McQueen answered. "He comes home sometimes with parties of gentlemen and ladies for a bit of shooting or fishing."

"Maybe he'll come to the fair," Eileen said to Larry.

"Sure, he'd never miss anything so grand as the fair and he being in this part of the world," said Larry.

Some distance from the Castle they could see a church spire, and the roofs of the town, and nearer they saw a little village of stalls standing in the green field, like mushrooms that had sprung up overnight.

"The fair! The fair!" cried the twins.

Chapter XII
How They Sold the Pig

Although they had come so far, they were among the earliest at the fair. People were hurrying to and fro, carrying all sorts of goods and arranging them for sale on counters in little stalls, around an open square in the center of the grounds.

Cattle were being driven to their pens, horses were being brushed and curried, sheep were bleating, cows were lowing, and even the hens and ducks added their noise to the concert. Diddy herself squealed with all her might.

Larry and Eileen had never seen so many people together before in all their lives.

They had to think very hard about the secret in order not to forget everything but the beautiful things they saw in the different stalls.

There were vegetables and meats, and butter and eggs.

There were hats and caps. There were crochet work, and bed quilts, and shawls with bright borders, spread out for people to see.

There were hawkers going about with trays of things to eat, pies and sweets, toffee and sugar-sticks. This made the twins remember that they were dreadfully hungry after their long walk, but they didn't have anything to eat until quite a while after that, because they had so much else to do. They followed their Father to the corner where the pigs were. A man came to tell them where to put Diddy.

"You can talk with these two farmers," said Mr. McQueen. He brought the twins forward. "It's their pig."

Then Larry and Eileen told the man about finding Diddy in the bog, and that their Father had said they could have her for their own, and so they had come to the fair to sell her.

"And whatever will you do with all the money?" asked the man.

The twins *almost* told! The secret was right on the tip end of their tongues, but they clapped their hands over their mouths, quickly, so it didn't get out.

The man laughed. "Anyway, it's a fine pig, and you've a right to get a good price for her," he said. And he gave them the very best pen of all for Diddy.

When she was safely in the pen, Eileen and Larry tied the red ribbon, which Eileen had brought in her pocket, to Diddy's ear, and another to her tail. Diddy looked very gay.

When the twins had had a bite to eat, they stood up before Diddy's pen, where the man told them to, and Diddy stood up on her hind legs with her front feet on the rail, and squealed. Larry and Eileen fed her with turnip tops.

There were a great many people in the fairgrounds by that time. They were laughing and talking, and looking at the things in the different booths. Every single one of them stopped to look at Diddy and the twins, because the twins were the very youngest farmers in the whole fair.

Everybody was interested, but nobody offered to buy, and the twins were getting discouraged when along came some farmers with ribbons in their hands. They were the Judges!

The twins almost held their breath while the Judges looked Diddy over. Then the head man said, "That's a very



fine pig, and young. She is a thoroughbred. Wherever did you get her, Mr. McQueen?"

Mr. McQueen just said, "Ask them!" pointing to the twins.

The twins were very much scared to be talking to the Judges, but they told about the tinkers and how they found Diddy in the bog, and the Judges nodded their heads and looked very wise, and finally the chief one said, "Faith, there's not her equal in the whole fair! She gets the blue

ribbon, or I'm no Judge."

All the other men said the same. Then they gave the blue ribbon to the twins, and Eileen tied it on Diddy's other ear! Diddy did not seem to like being dressed up. She wiggled her ears and squealed.

Just then there was the gay sound of a horn. *Tara, tara, tara*! it sang, and right into the middle of the fairground drove a great tally-ho coach, with pretty young ladies and fine young gentlemen riding on top of it.

Everybody turned away from Diddy and the twins to see this grand sight!

The footman jumped down and helped down the ladies, while the driver, in livery, stood beside the horses' heads with his hand on their bridles.

Then all the young gentlemen and ladies went about the Fair to see the sights.

"'Tis a grand party from the Castle," said Mr. McQueen to the twins. "And sure, that's the Earl's daughter, the Lady Kathleen herself, with the pink roses on her hat! I haven't seen a sight of her since she was a slip of a girl, the size of yourselves."

Lady Kathleen and her party came by just at that moment, and when she saw Diddy with her ribbons and the twins beside her, the Lady Kathleen stopped.

The twins could hardly take their eyes off her sweet face and her pretty dress, and the flowered hat, but she asked them all sorts of questions, and finally they found themselves telling her the story of how they found the pig.

"And what is your pig's name?" said Lady Kathleen.

"Sure, ma'am, it's Deirdre, but we call her Diddy for short," Eileen answered.

All the young gentlemen and ladies laughed. The twins didn't like to be laughed at—they were almost ready to cry.

"And why did you call her Deirdre?" asked Lady Kathleen.

"It was because of finding her in the bog all alone with herself, the same as Deirdre when she was a baby and found by the high King of Emain," Eileen explained.

"A very good reason, and it's the finest story in Ireland," said Lady Kathleen. "I'm glad you know it so well, and she is such a fine pig that I'm going to buy her from you myself."

All the young ladies seemed to think this very funny,

indeed. But Lady Kathleen didn't laugh. She called one of the footmen. He came running. "Do you see that this pig is sent to the Castle when the fair is over," she said.

"I will, your Ladyship," said the footman. Then Lady Kathleen took out her purse. "What is the price of your pig?" she said to the twins.



They didn't know what to say, but the Judge, who was standing near, said, "She is a high-bred pig, your Ladyship, and worth all of three pounds."

"Three pounds it is, then," said the Lady Kathleen. She opened her purse and took out three golden sovereigns.

She gave them to the twins and then almost before they found breath to say, "Thank you, ma'am," she and her gay company had gone on to another part of the fair. The Judge made a mark on Diddy's back to show that she had been sold.

The twins gave the three golden sovereigns to their Father to carry for them, and he put them in the most inside pocket he had, for safe keeping! Then while he stayed to sell his butter and eggs, and to do his buying, the twins started out to see the fair by themselves.

Chapter XIII
What They Saw

The first person they stopped to watch was a Juggler doing tricks. It was quite wonderful to see him keep three balls in the air all at the same time, or balance a pole on the end of his nose. But when he took out a frying pan from behind his stall, and said to the twins, who were standing right in front of him, "Now, I'll be after making you a bit of an omelet without any cooking," their eyes were fairly popping out of their heads with surprise.

The Juggler broke an egg into the frying pan. Then he clapped on the cover, waved the pan in the air, and lifted the cover again. Instead of an omelet there in the frying pan was a little black chicken crying "Peep, peep," as if it wanted its mother!

The Juggler looked very much surprised himself, and the twins were simply astonished.



"Will you see that now!" Larry whispered to Eileen. "Sure, if only Old Speckle could be learning that trick, 'twould save her a deal of sitting."

"Indeed, then, 'tis magic," Eileen answered back, "and there's no luck in that same! Do you come away now, Larry McQueen, or he might be casting his spells on yourself and turning you into something else entirely, a goat maybe, or a Leprechaun!"

This seemed quite likely to Larry, too, so they slipped hurriedly out under the elbows of the crowd just as the Juggler was in the very act of finding a white rabbit in the crown of his hat. They never stopped running until they found themselves in the middle of a group of people in a distant part of the fairgrounds.

This crowd had gathered around a rough looking man with a bundle of papers under his arm. He was waving a leaflet in the air and shouting, "Ladies and Gentlemen—Whist now till I sing you a song of Old Ireland. 'Tis the Ballad of the Census Taker!" Then he began to sing in a voice as loud as a clap of thunder. This was the first verse of the song:—

"*Oh*, they're taking of the Census
In the country and the town.
Have your children got the measles?
Are your chimneys tumbling down?"

Everyone seemed to think this a very funny song and at the end of the second verse they all joined in the chorus. The Ballad Singer sang louder than all the rest of the people put together.

"Musha, the roars of him are like the roars of a giant," Eileen said to Larry. "Indeed, I'm fearing he'll burst himself with the noise that's in him."

The moment the song ended, the Ballad Singer passed the hat, and the crowd began to melt away. "There you go, now," cried the Singer, "lepping away on your two hind legs like scared rabbits! Come along back now, and buy the Ballad of 'The Peeler and the Goat.' Sure, 'tis a fine song entirely and one you'll all be wanting to sing yourselves when once you've heard it." He seized a young man by the arm. "Walk up and buy a ballad now," he said to him. "Troth, you've the look of a fine singer yourself, and dear knows what minute you may be needing one, and none

handy. Come now, buy before 'tis too late."

The young man turned very red. "I don't think I'll be wanting any ballads," he said, and tried to pull away.

"You don't think!" shouted the Ballad Singer. "Of course, you don't think, you've nothing whatever to do it with!"

The crowd laughed. The poor young man bought a ballad.

"There now," cried the Singer, "you're the broth of a boy after all! Who'll be after buying the next one off of me?"

His eyes lighted on the twins. They shook in their shoes. "He'll be clapping one of them on us next," Larry said to Eileen. "We'd best be going along;" and they crept out of the crowd just as he began to roar out a new song.

An old woman, with a white cap and a shawl over her head and a basket on her arm, smiled at them as they slipped by. She jerked her thumb over her shoulder at the Ballad Singer. "Melodious is the closed mouth," she said.

"Indeed, ma'am, I've often heard my Mother say so," Eileen answered politely. She curtsied to the old woman.

The old woman looked pleased. "Will you come along



with me out of the sound of this—the both of you?" she said. "And I'll take you to hear things that will keep the memory of Ireland green while there's an Irishman left in the world."

She led them to a raised platform some distance away. Over the platform there floated a white flag with a green

harp on it. The old woman pointed to it. "Do you remember the old harp of Tara?" she said to the twins. "'Tis nowhere else at all now but on the flag, but time was, long, long years ago, when the harp itself was played on Tara's hill. And in those days there were poets to praise Ireland, and singers to sing her songs. And here they will be telling of those days, and singing those songs. Come and listen. 'Tis a Feis (pronounced *faysh*) they're having, and prizes given for the best tale told, or the best song sung."

The old woman and the twins made their way to the



platform and sat down on a bench near the edge of it. Many other people were sitting or standing about. An old man stood up on the platform. He told the story of Cuchulain (pronounced *Koohoolin*)—the "Hound of Culain"—and how he fought all the greatest warriors of the world on the day he first took arms.

When he had finished, another man took his place and told the story of Deirdre and Naisi, and another told the fate of the four children of Lir that were turned into four beautiful swans by their cruel stepmother.

And when the stories were finished a prize was given for the best one, and the twins were glad that it was for the story of Deirdre, for that tale was like an old friend to them.

After that there was music, and the dances of old Ireland—the reel and the lilt. And when last of all came the Irish jig, the old woman put her basket down on the ground.

"Sure, the music is like the springtime in my bones," she said to the twins. "Be-dad, I'd the foot of the world on me when I was a girl and I can still shake one with the best of them, if I do say it myself."

She put her hands on her hips and began to dance! The music got into everybody else's bones, too, and soon everybody around the platform, and on it, too—old and young, large and small—was dancing gayly to the sound of it.



The twins danced with the rest, and they were having such a good time that they might have forgotten to go home at all if all of a sudden, Larry hadn't shaken Eileen's arm and said, "Look there!"

"Where?" Eileen said. "There!" said Larry. "The rough man with the brown horse."

The moment Eileen saw the man with the brown horse she took Larry's hand and they both ran as fast as they could back to their Father.

"We saw the tinker!" they cried the moment they saw Mr. McQueen.

"Then we'd as well be starting home," said Mr. McQueen. "I'd rather not be meeting the gentleman on the road after dark." He got Colleen and put her into the cart once more. Then he and the twins had something to eat. They bought a ginger cake shaped like a rabbit, and another like a man from one of the hawkers, and they bought some sugar-sticks, too, and these, with what they had brought from home, made their supper.

Then Mr. McQueen brought out his notched stick. "We've sold the pig," he said, with his finger on the first

notch, "and the butter and eggs was the second notch." Then he went over all the other notches. "And besides all else I've bought Herself a shawl," he said to the twins.

The twins wanted to get home because the secret was getting so big inside of them, they knew they couldn't possibly hold it in much longer, and they didn't want to let



it out until they were at home and could tell their Father and Mother both at the same time. So they said goodbye to Diddy, and Eileen took off the ribbons and kept them to remember her by. Then they hurried away.

It was after dark when at last they drove into the yard. Mrs. McQueen came running to the door to greet them and hear all about the fair.

Eileen and Larry told her about the prize, and about Lady Kathleen buying the pig, and about seeing the tinker, while their Father was putting up Colleen.

Then when he came in with all his bundles, and took the three golden sovereigns out of his pocket, to show to the Mother, the twins couldn't keep still another minute. "It's for you! To pay the rent!" they cried.

The Father and Mother looked at each other. "Now, what are they at all," said Mrs. McQueen, "but the best children in the width of the world? Wasn't I after telling you that we'd make it out somehow? And to think of her being a thoroughbred like that, and we never knowing it at all." She meant the pig!

But Mr. McQueen never said a word. He just gave Larry

and Eileen a great hug. Then Mr. McQueen went over all the errands with his wife, and last of all he brought out the shawl. "There, old woman," he said, "is a fairing for you!"

"The Saints be praised for this day!" cried Mrs. McQueen. "The rent paid, and me with a fine new shawl the equal of any in the parish."

It was a happy family that went to bed in the little farmhouse that night. Only Mrs. McQueen didn't sleep well. She got up a number of times in the night to be sure there were no tinkers prowling about. "For one can't be too careful with so much money in the house," she said to herself.



Chapter XIV

Sunday

The next Sunday all the McQueen family went to Mass and Mrs. McQueen wore her new shawl. The chapel was quite a distance away, and as they walked and all the neighbors walked, too, they had a pleasant time talking together along the way.

Dennis and the twins walked together, and Larry and Eileen told Dennis all about the fair, and about selling the pig to the Lady Kathleen. "Begorra," said Dennis, "but that little pig was after bringing you all the luck in the world, wasn't she?" All the other boys and girls wanted to hear about it. Most of them had never been to a fair. So Eileen and Larry talked all the way to church, and that was two miles and a half of talk, the shortest way you could go.

Just as they neared the church, what should they see but

Grannie Malone, coming in grandeur, riding on a jaunting car! Beside her was a big man with a tall hat on his head.

"'Tis her son Michael, back from the States!" cried the twins. "He said in a letter he was coming."

They ran as fast as they could to reach the church door in time to see them go in. Everybody else stopped, too, they



were so surprised, and everybody said to everybody else, "Well, for dear's sake, if that's not Michael Malone come back to see his old Mother!"

And then they whispered among themselves, "Look at the grand clothes on him, and the scarf pin the bigness of a ha'penny piece, and the hat! Sure, America must be the rich place entirely."

And when Michael got out of the cart and helped out his old Mother, there were many hands held out for him to shake, and many old neighbors for him to greet.

"This is a proud day for you, Grannie Malone," said Mrs. McQueen.

"It is," said Grannie, "and a sad day, too, for he's after taking me back to America, and 'tis likely I'll never set my two eyes on old Ireland again, when once the width of the sea comes between us."

She wiped her eyes as she spoke. Then the bell rang to call the people into the chapel. It was little the congregation heard of the service that day, for however much they tried they couldn't help looking at the back of Michael's head and at Grannie's bonnet.

And afterward, when all the people were outside the church door, Grannie Malone said to different old friends of Michael, "Come along to my house this afternoon, and listen to Himself telling about the States!"

That afternoon when the McQueens had finished their noon meal, the whole family walked up the road to Grannie's house. There were a good many people there before them. Grannie's little house was full to the door. Michael stood by the fireplace, and as the McQueens came in he was saying, "It's the truth I'm telling you! There are over forty States in the Union, and many of them bigger than the whole of Ireland itself! There are places in it where you could travel as far as from Dublin to Belfast without ever seeing a town at all; just fields without stones or trees lying there begging for the plough, and sorrow a person to give it them!"

"Will you listen to that now?" said Grannie.

"And more than that, if you'll believe me," Michael went on, "there do be places in America where they *give away* land, let alone buying it! Just by going and living on it for a time and doing a little work on it, you can get one

hundred and sixty acres of land, for your own, mind you!"

"The Saints preserve us, but that might be like Heaven itself, if I may make bold to say so," said Mrs. Maguire.

"You may well say that, Mrs. Maguire," Michael answered, "for there, when a man has bent his back, and put in sweat and labor to enrich the land, it is not for someone else he does it, but for himself and his children. Of course, the land that is given away is far from big cities, and it's queer and lonely sometimes on the distant farms, for they do not live in villages, as we do, but each farmhouse is by itself on its own land, and no neighbors handy. So for myself, I stayed in the big city."

"You seem to have prospered, Michael," said Mr. McQueen.

"I have so," Michael answered. "There are jobs in plenty for the willing hands. Sure, no Irishman would give up at all when there's always something new to try. And there's always somebody from the old sod there to help you if the luck turns on you. Do you remember Patrick Doran, now? He lived forninst the blacksmith shop years ago. Well, Patrick is a great man. He's a man of fortune, and a good

friend to myself. One year when times were hard, and work not so plenty, I lost my job, and didn't Patrick help me to another the very next week? Not long after that Patrick ran for Alderman, and myself and many another like me, worked hard for to get him elected, and since then I've been in politics myself. First Patrick got me a job on the police force, and then I was Captain, and since then, by one change and another, if I do say it, I'm an Alderman myself!"

"It's wonderful, sure," Mr. Maguire said, when Michael had finished, "but I'm not wishful for to change. Sure, old Ireland is good enough for me, and I'd not be missing the larks singing in the spring in the green fields of Erin, and the smell of the peat on the hearth in winter. It's queer and lonesome I'd be without these things, and that's the truth."

He threw his head back and began to sing. Everybody joined in and sang, too. This is the song they sang:—

"Old Ireland you're my jewel sure,
My heart's delight and glory,
Till Time shall pass his empty glass
Your name shall live in story.

"And this shall be the song for me,
The first my heart was learning,
When first my tongue its accents flung,
Old Ireland, you're my darling!

"From Dublin Bay to Cork's Sweet Cove,
Old Ireland, you're my darling
My darling, my darling,
From Dublin Bay to Cork's Sweet Cove;
Old Ireland, you're my darling."



Chapter XV

Mr. McQueen Makes Up His Mind

Michael sang with the others. And when the song was ended, he said, "'Tis a true word, Mr. Maguire, that there's no place like old Ireland; and you'll not find an Irishman anywhere in America that wouldn't put the man down that said a word against her. But what with the landlords taking every shilling you can scrape together and charging you higher rent whenever you make a bit of an improvement on your farm, there's no chance at all to get on in the world. And with the children, God bless them, coming along by sixes and dozens, and little for them to do at home, and no place to put them when they grow up, sure, it's well to go where they've a better chance.

"Look at the schools now! If you could see the school that my Patrick goes to, you'd never rest at all until your children had the same! Sure, the schoolhouses are like

palaces over there, and as for learning, the children pick it up as a hen does corn!"

"And are there no faults with America, whatever?" Mr. McQueen said to Michael.

"There do be faults with her," Michael answered, "and I'll never be the man to say otherwise. There's plenty of things to be said about America that would leave you thinking 'tis a long way this side of Heaven. But whatever it is that's wrong, 'tis the people themselves that make it so, and by the same token it is themselves that can cure the trouble when they're so minded. It's not like having your troubles put down on you by the people that's above you, and that you can't reach at all for to be correcting them! All I say is there's a better chance over there for yourself and the children."

The twins and Dennis and the other young people were getting tired of sitting still by this time, and when Michael stopped talking about America they jumped up. The children ran outdoors and played tag around Grannie's house, and the older people stayed inside.

By and by Grannie came to the door and called them.

"Come in, every one of you," she cried, "and have a fine bit of cake with currants in it! Sure, Michael brought the currants and all the things for to make it yesterday, thinking maybe there'd be neighbors in. And maybe 'tis the last bit of cake I'll be making for you at all, for 'tis but two weeks now until we start across the water." She wiped her eyes on her apron.

Mr. McQueen was very quiet as he walked home with Mrs. McQueen and the twins. And that evening, after the children were in bed, he sat for a long time silent, with his pipe in his mouth. His pipe went out and he did not notice it. By and by he said to Mrs. McQueen, "I've made up my mind—"

"The Lord save us! To what?" said Mrs. McQueen.

"To go to America," said Mr. McQueen.

Mrs. McQueen hid her face in her hands and rocked back and forth and cried. "To be leaving the place I was born, and where my father and mother were born before me, and all the neighbors, and this old house that's been home since ever I married you—'twill break the heart in my body," she said.



"I like that part of it no better than yourself," said Mr. McQueen, "but when I think of the years to come, and Larry and Eileen growing up to work as hard as we have worked without getting much at all, and think of the better chance altogether they'll have over there, sure, I can't be thinking of the pain, but only of the hope there is in it for them."

"I've seen this coming ever since the children told us about Grannie Malone's letter," said Mrs. McQueen. "'Tis Michael has put this in your head."

"'Tis not Michael alone," said Mr. McQueen; "'tis also

other things. Tomorrow I pay Conroy the rent money. And it will take all that the pig brought and all I've been able to rake and scrape myself, and nothing left over at all. And there's but ourselves and the twins, and the year has not been a bad one. We have had the pig, which we wouldn't be having another year. And what would it be like if there were more of us to feed, and no more pigs to be found in the bog like manna from Heaven, to be helping us out?"

"Sure, if it's for the children," sobbed Mrs. McQueen, "I'd go anywhere in the world, and that you know well."

"I do know it," said Mr. McQueen. "And since we're going at all, let it be soon. We'll go with Grannie and Michael."

"In two weeks' time?" cried Mrs. McQueen.

"We will so," said Mr. McQueen. "I've no debts behind me, and we can sell the cows and hens, and take with us whatever we need from the house. Michael Malone will lend me the money and find me a job when we get there. The likes of this chance will never befall us again, and faith, we'll take it."

"Did he tell you so?" asked Mrs. McQueen.

"He did, indeed."

"Well, then, I've no other word to say, and if it must be done, the sooner the better," said Mrs. McQueen.

That night she lay awake a long time. She was planning just what they should take with them to their new home, and trying to think what the new home would be like.



Chapter XVI

Mr. McQueen Pays the Rent

The next morning Mr. McQueen went to Mr. Conroy and paid the rent. Then he said, "This is the last rent I'll be paying you, Mr. Conroy!"

Mr. Conroy was surprised. "What do you mean by that?" he said.

"I mean that I'm going to leave old Ireland," said Mr. McQueen.

"Well, now!" cried Mr. Conroy. "To think of a sensible man like yourself leaving a good farm to go off, dear knows where! And you not knowing what you'll do when you get there as like as any way! I thought you had better sense, McQueen."

"It's because of my better sense that I'm going," said Mr. McQueen. "Faith, do you think I'd be showing the judgment of an old goat to stay where every penny I can get out



of the land I have to pay back in rent? I'm going to America where there'll be a chance for myself."

"I thought Michael Malone would be sowing the seeds of discontent in this parish, with his silk hats and his grand talk," said Mr. Conroy angrily, "but I didn't think you were the fish to be caught with fine words!"

"If the seeds of discontent have been sown in this parish, Terence Conroy," said Mr. McQueen, "'tis you and the

likes of you that have ploughed and harrowed the ground ready for them! Do you think we're wishful to be leaving our old homes and all our friends? But 'tis you that makes it too hard entirely for people to stay. And I can tell you that if you keep on with others as you have with me, raising the rent when any work is done to improve the farm, you'll be left in time with no tenants at all. And then where will you be yourself, Terence Conroy?"

Mr. Conroy's face was red with anger, but he said, "While I'm not needing you to teach me my duty, I will say this, McQueen. You're a good farmer, and I hate to see you do a foolish thing for yourself. If you'll stay on the farm, I'll not raise the rent on you."

"You're too late, altogether," said Mr. McQueen; "and as you said yourself I'm not the fish to be caught with fine words. I know better than to believe you. I'll be sailing from Queenstown in two weeks' time."

And with that he stalked out of the room and slammed the door, leaving Mr. Conroy in a very bad state of mind.

All that Larry and Eileen could remember of the next two weeks was a queer jumble of tears and goodbyes, of

good wishes and blessings, and strange, strange feelings they had never had before. Their Mother went about with a white face and red eyes, and their Father was very silent as he packed the few household belongings they were to take with them to their new home.

At last the great day came. The McQueens got up very early that morning, ate their potatoes and drank their tea from a few cracked and broken dishes which were to be left behind. Then, when they had tidied up the hearth and put on their wraps ready to go, Mrs. McQueen brought some water to quench the fire on the hearth. She might almost have quenched it with her tears. And as she poured the water upon the ashes she crooned this little song[3] sadly to herself:—

> "Vein of my heart, from the lone mountain
> The smoke of the turf will die.
> And the stream that sang to the young children
> Run down alone from the sky—
> On the doorstone, grass—and the

[3] Copyright of this poem by Herbert Trench, held by John Lane.

Cloud lying

Where they lie

In the old country."

Mr. McQueen and the twins stood still with their bundles in their hands until she had finished and risen from



her knees, then they went quietly out the door, all four together, and closed it after them.

Mrs. McQueen stooped to gather a little bunch of shamrock leaves which grew by the doorstone, and then the McQueen family was quite, quite ready for the long journey.

Mr. Maguire had bought Colleen and the cows, and he was to have the few hens that were left for taking the McQueen family to the train.

Larry and Eileen saw him coming up the road, "Here comes Mr. Maguire with the cart!" they cried, "and Dennis is driving the jaunting car with Michael and Grannie on it."

They soon reached the little group by the roadside, and then the luggage was loaded into the cart. Mrs. McQueen got up with Grannie on one side of the jaunting car and Eileen sat between them. Michael and Mr. McQueen were on the other side with Larry. The small bags and bundles were put in the well of the jaunting car.

"Get up!" cried Dennis, and off they started. Mrs. McQueen looked back at the old house, and cried into her new shawl. Grannie was crying, too. But Michael said,



"Wait until you see your new home, and sure, you'll be crying to think you weren't in it before!" And that cheered them up again, and soon a turn in the road hid the old house from their sight forever.

The luggage was heavy, and Colleen was slow. So it took several hours to reach the railroad. It took longer, too, because all the people in the village ran out of their houses to say goodbye. When they passed the schoolhouse, the

Master gave the children leave to say goodbye to the twins. He even came out to the road himself and shook hands with everybody.

But for all that, when the train came rattling into the station, there they all were on the platform in a row ready to get on board. When it stopped, the guard jumped down and opened the door of a compartment. He put Grannie in first, then Mrs. McQueen and the twins. They were dreadfully afraid the train would start before Mr. McQueen and Michael and all the luggage were on board.

It was the first time Grannie had ever seen a train, or the twins either. But at last they were all in, and the guard locked the door. Larry and Eileen looked out of the window and waved their hands to Mr. Maguire and Dennis. The engine whistled, the wheels began to turn, and above the noise the twins heard Dennis call out to them, "Sure, I'll be coming along to America myself someday."

"We'll be watching for you," Eileen called back.

Then they passed the station, and were soon racing along over the open fields at what seemed to poor Grannie a fearful rate of speed.

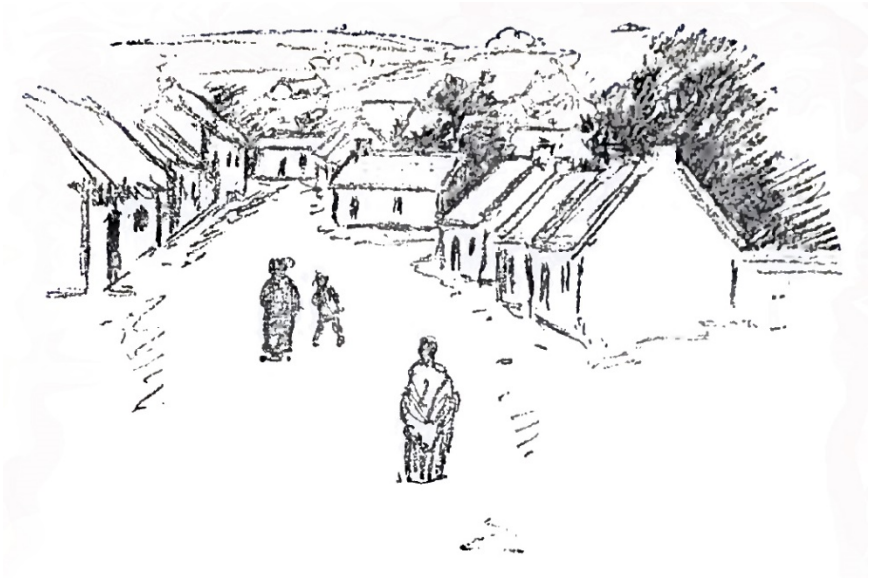


"Murder! murder!" she screamed. "Is it for this I left my cabin? To be broken in bits on the track like a piece of old crockery! Wirra, wirra, why did I ever let myself be persuaded at all? Ochanee, but it is Himself has the soothering tongue in his mouth to coax his old Mother away for to destroy her entirely!"

Michael laughed and patted her arm, and "Whist now," he said, "sure, I'd never bring you where harm would come to you, and that you know well. Look out of the window, for 'tis the last you'll be seeing of old Ireland."

Grannie dried her eyes, but still she clung to Michael's arm, and when the train went around a curve she crossed herself and told her beads as fast as she could.

The twins were not frightened. They were busy seeing things. And besides, Larry had Grannie's piece of coal in his pocket. From the window they caught glimpses of distant blue hills, and of lakes still more blue. They passed by many a brown bog, and many a green field with farmers and farmers' wives working in them. The hillsides were blue with blossoming flax, and once they passed a field all spread with white linen bleaching in the sun.



They flew by little towns with queer names, like Ballygrady and Ballylough, and once when they were quite near Cork they saw the towers of Blarney Castle.

At last the train rattled into a great station. There was so much noise from puffing engines and rumbling trucks and shouting men, that the twins could only take hold of their Mother's hands and keep close behind their Father as he followed Michael, with Grannie clinging to him, to another train. Then there were more flying fields, and a city and more fields still, until they reached Queenstown.

The next thing they knew they were walking across a gangplank and on to a boat. The twins had never seen

anything larger than a rowboat before, and this one looked very big to them, though it was only a lighter. This lighter was to carry luggage and passengers from the dock to the great steamer lying outside the harbor in the deep water of the main channel.

When they were all safely on board the lighter, and Michael had counted their bundles to be sure they had not lost anything, the twins and their Father and Mother, with Michael and Grannie, stood by the deck rail and looked back at the dock. It was crowded with people running to and fro. There were groups of other emigrants like themselves, surrounded by great piles of luggage—waiting for the next lighter, for one boat would not carry all who wanted to go.

There were many goodbyes being said and many tears falling, and in the midst of all the noise and confusion the sailors were loading tons of barrels and bags and boxes and trunks on board the ship.

There was no friend to see them off, but when they saw people crying all about them, the twins cried a little, too, for sympathy, and even Mr. McQueen's eyes were red along

the rims.

At last the gangplanks were drawn in, and the cables thrown off. The screws began to churn the green water into white foam, and the boat moved slowly out of the harbor.

The twins and their Father and Mother, with Grannie and Michael, stood by the rail for a long time, and watched the crowd on the pier until it grew smaller and smaller, and at last disappeared entirely from sight around a bend in the Channel.

They stood there until the lighter reached the great ship that was waiting to take them across the water to a new world.

And when at last they were safely on board, and the lighters had gone back empty into the harbor, they stood on the wide deck of the ship, with their faces turned toward Ireland, until all they could see of it in the gathering dusk was a strip of dark blue against the eastern sky, with little lights in cottage windows twinkling from it like tiny stars.

Then they turned their faces toward the bright western sky.



Chapter XVII
Twenty Years After

In the middle of one of the busiest crossings in Chicago, there stands a big man in a blue uniform. His eyes are blue, and there are wrinkles in the corners of them, the marks of many smiles.

On his head is a blue cap, and under the edge of the cap you catch a glimpse of dark hair. There are bands of gold braid on his sleeve, and on his breast is a large silver star.

He is King of the Crossing. When he blows his whistle, all the streetcars and automobiles and carriages—even if it were the carriage of the Mayor himself—stop stock-still. Then he waves his white-gloved hands and the stream of people pours across the street.

If there is a very small boy among them, the King of the Crossing sometimes lays a big hand on his shoulder and

goes with him to the curb. And he has been known to carry a small girl across on his shoulder and set her safely down on the other side.

When the people are all across, he goes back to the middle of the street once more, and blows twice on his little whistle.

Then all the wheels that have been standing as still as if they had gone to sleep suddenly wake up, and go rolling down the street, while those that have just been turning stop and wait while the big man helps more people over the crossing the other way.

All day long the King of the Crossing stands there, blowing his whistle, waving his white-gloved hands, and turning the stream of people up first one street, then the other.

Everybody minds him. If everybody didn't, they might get run over and wake up in a hospital. Oh, he must be minded, the King of the Crossing, or nobody would be safe!

When the long day is over, he looks up the street and sees another big man coming. This man wears a blue uniform, too, and a silver star, and when the hands on the

big clock at the corner point to five, he steps into the place of the King of the Crossing and reigns in his stead.

Then the King jumps on to the platform of a passing streetcar, and by and by, when it has gone several miles, he jumps off again, and walks up the street to a little house that's as neat as neat can be.

It stands back from the street in a little green yard. The house is painted white, and the front door is green. But he doesn't go to the front door. He goes round by the sidewalk to the kitchen door, and there he doesn't even knock.

He opens the door and walks right in. Through the open door comes the smell of something good cooking, and he sees a plump woman with blue eyes that have smile wrinkles in the corners, just like his own, and crinkly dark hair, just like his own, too, bending over the stove. She is just tasting the something that smells so good, with a spoon.

When she sees the big man in the door she tastes so quickly that she burns her tongue! But she can use it just the same even if it is burned.

She runs to the big man and says, "And is that yourself, now, Larry darling? Sure, I'm that glad to see you, I've

scalded myself with the soup!"

The big man has just time to say, "Sure, Eileen, you were always a great one for burning yourself. Do you remember that day at Grannie Malone's"—when out into the kitchen tumble a little Larry and a little Eileen, and a baby. They have heard his voice, and they fall upon the King of the Crossing as if he weren't a King at all—but just a plain ordinary Uncle.

They take off his cap and rumple his hair. They get into his pockets and find some peppermints there. And the baby even tries to get the silver star off his breast to put into her mouth.

"Look at that now," cries Uncle Larry. "Get along with you! Is it trying to take me off the Force, you are? Sure, that star was never intended by the City for you to cut your teeth on."

"She'll poison herself with the things she's always after putting in her mouth," cries the mother. She seizes the baby and sets her in a safe corner by herself, gives her a spoon and says, "There now—you can be cutting your teeth on that."

And when the children have quite worn Uncle Larry out, he sits upon the floor, where they have him by this time, and runs his fingers through his hair, which is standing straight up, and says to the mother, "Sure, Eileen, when you and I were children on the old sod, we were never such spalpeens as the likes of these! They have me destroyed entirely, and me the biggest policeman on the Force! Is it American they are, or Irish, I want to know?"

"It's Irish-American we are," shouts little Larry.

"And with the heft of both countries in your fists," groans big Larry.

And then the mother, who has been laying the table, meanwhile, interferes. "Come off of your poor Uncle," she says, "and be eating your soup, like gentlemen and ladies. It's getting cold on you waiting for you to finish your antics. Your poor Uncle Larry won't come near you at all, and you all the time punishing him like that."

And then the baby, still sucking her spoon, is lifted into her high chair. A chair is placed for Uncle Larry, and they all eat their soup around the kitchen table, just as the very last rays of the summer sun make long streaks of light across

the kitchen floor.

"Where's Dennis?" says Uncle Larry, while the children are quiet for a moment.

"Oh, it's Himself is so late that I feed the children and put them to bed before he gets home at all," says the mother. "It's little he sees of them except of a Sunday."

"It's likely he'll live the longer for that," says Uncle Larry. He looks reproachfully at the children and rubs his head.

And then—"Mother, tell us, what kind of a boy was Uncle Larry when you and he were twins and lived in Ireland," says little Eileen.

"The best in the width of the world," says her mother promptly. "Weren't you, Larry? Speak up and tell them now."

And Uncle Larry laughs and says, "Sure, I was too good entirely! It wouldn't be modest to tell you the truth about myself."

"Tell us about Mother, then," says little Eileen. "Was she the best in the width of the world, too?"

"Sure, I'll never be telling tales on my only twin sister,"

says Uncle Larry, "beyond telling you that there was many another in green old Ireland just like her, whatever kind she was. But I can't stay here wearing out my tongue! Look out the window! The chickens have gone to roost, and the sun is down. So get along with you to your beds."

When he had gone, and the children were in bed, and the house quiet, the mother sat down by the light in the kitchen with a basket of mending beside her.

And while she darned and mended and waited for Himself to come home, she remembered and remembered about when she was little Eileen, herself, and the King of the Crossing was just her twin brother Larry.

And this book is what she remembered.

The End.



The Scotch Twins

Lucy Fitch Perkins

Illustrated by Lucy Fitch Perkins

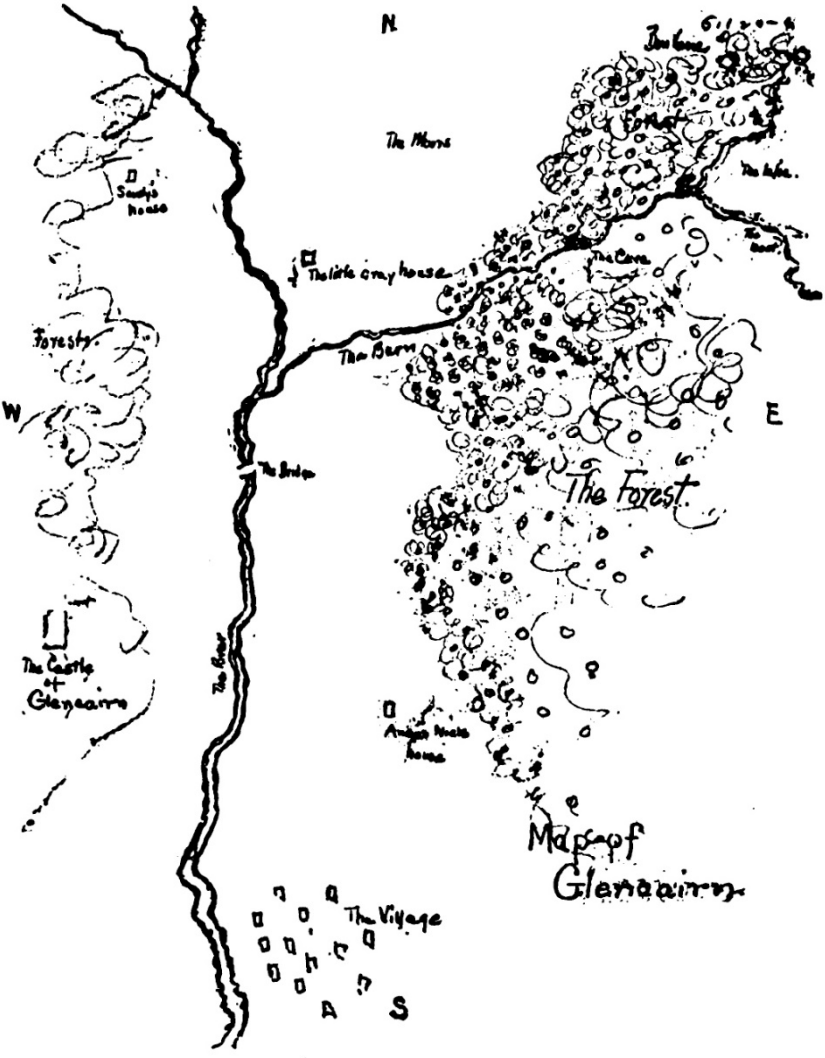




To the friends of The
Rob Roy Clan.






N
W
E
S
The Moors
Forest
The Burn
The Bridge
The Forest
The Village
Forestry
The Castle of Glenaairn
Map of Glenaairn



Chapter I

The Little Gray House on the Brae

If you had peeped in at the window of a little gray house on a heathery hillside in the Highlands of Scotland one Saturday morning in May some years ago, you might have seen Jean Campbell "redding up" her kitchen. It was a sight best seen from a safe distance, for, though Jean was only twelve years old, she was a fierce little housekeeper every day in the week, and on Saturday, when she was getting ready for the Sabbath, it was a bold person indeed who would venture to put himself in the path of her broom. To be sure, there was no one in the family to take such a risk except her twin brother Jock, her father, Robin Campbell, the Shepherd of Glen Easig, and True Tammas, the dog, for the twins' mother had "slippit awa'" when they were only ten years old, leaving Jean to take a woman's care

of her father and brother and the little gray house on the brae.

On this May morning Jean woke up at five o'clock and peeped out of the closet bed in which she slept to take a look at the day. The sun had already risen over the rocky crest of gray old Ben Vane, the mountain back of the house, and was pouring a stream of golden sunlight through the eastern windows of the kitchen. The kettle was singing over the fire in the open fireplace, a pan of skimmed milk for the calf was warming by the hearth, and her father was just going out, with the pail on his arm, to milk the cow. She looked across the room at the bed in the corner by the fireplace to see if Jock were still asleep. All she could see of him was a shock of sandy hair, two eyes tight shut, and a freckled nose half buried in the bed clothes.

"Wake up, you lazy laddie," she called out to him, "or when I get my clothes on I'll waken you with a wet cloth! Here's the sun looking in at the windows to shame you, and Father already gone to the milking."

Jock opened one sleepy blue eye.

"Leave us alone, now, Jeanie," he wheedled. "I was just

having a sonsie wee bit of a dream. Let me finish, and syne I'll tell you all about it."

"Indeed, and you'll do nothing of the kind," retorted Jean, with spirit. "Up with you, mannie, or I'll be dressed before you, and I ken very well you'd not like to be beaten by a lassie, and here your own sister, too."

Jock cuddled down farther into the blankets without answering, and Jean began putting on her clothes. It seemed but a moment before she slid to the floor, rolled her sleeves high above a pair of sturdy elbows, and went to finish her toilet at the basin. There she washed her face and combed her hair, while Jock, cautiously opening one eye again, observed her from his safe retreat. He watched her part her hair, wet it, plaster it severely back from her brow, and tie it firmly in place with a piece of black ribbon. Jock could read Jean's face like print, and in this stern toilet he foresaw a day of unrelenting house cleaning.

"Aye," he said to himself bitterly, "she's putting on her Saturday face. There's trouble brewing, I doubt! It'll be Jock this and Jock that both but and ben all day long, and whatever is the use of all this tirley-wirly I can't see, when



on Monday the house will look as if it had never seen the sight of a besom! I'll just bide where I am." He closed his eyes and pretended to be asleep.

It is true that Jean's Saturday face had such a housekeepery pucker between the eyes and such a severe arrangement of the front hair that anyone who did not peep behind the black ribbon might have thought her a very stern young person indeed, but behind the black ribbon Jean's true character stood revealed! However prim and

smooth she might make it look in front, where the cracked glass enabled her to keep an eye on it, behind her back, where she couldn't possibly see it, her hair broke into the jolliest little waves and curls, which bobbed merrily about even on the worst Saturday that ever was; and spoiled the effect whenever she tried to be severe.

When she had given a final wipe with the brush, she took another look at Jock. There was still nothing to be seen of him but the shock of sandy hair and a series of bumps under the blanket. Jock could feel Jean looking at him right through the bed clothes.

"Jock," said Jean—and her voice had a Saturday sound to it—"You can't sleep in this day! Get up!"

There was no answer. Jock might well have known that Jean was in no mood for trifling, but, having decided on his course of action, he stuck to it like a true Scotchman and neither moved nor opened his eyes. Jean was driven to desperate measures. She took a few drops of water in the dipper, marched firmly to the bedside, and stood with it poised directly above Jock's nose.

"Jock," she said solemnly, "I'm telling you! Don't ever

say I didn't. If you don't stir yourself before I count five, you'll be sorry. One, two, three!" Still no move from Jock. "Four, five," and, without further parley, she emptied the dipper on his freckled nose.

There was a wrathful snort and a violent convulsion of the blankets, and an instant later Jock was tearing about the kitchen like a cat in a fit, but by this time Jean was out of doors and well beyond reach.

"Come here, you limmer!" he howled. But Jean knew better than to accept his invitation. Instead she skipped



laughing down the path from the door to the brook which ran bubbling and gurgling by the house. Even in her hasty exit from the cottage, Jean had had the presence of mind to take the pail with her, and now she stopped to fill it from the clear, sparkling water of the burn. It was such a wonderful bright spring morning that, having filled it, she stopped for a moment to look about her at the dear familiar surroundings of her home.

There was the little gray house itself, with the peat smoke curling from the chimney straight up into the blue sky. Back of it was the garden patch with its low stone wall, and back of that were the fowl yard and the straw covered byre for the cow. Beyond, and to the north lay the moors, covered with heather and dotted with grazing sheep. Jean could hear the tinkle of their bells, the bleating of the lambs, and the comforting maternal answers of the ewes. Above the dark forest which spread itself over the slopes of the foothills toward the south and east a lava rock was singing, and she could hear the cry of whaups wheeling and circling over the moors. They were pleasant morning sounds, dear and familiar to Jean's ear, and oh, the sparkle

of the dew on the bracken, and the smell of the hawthorn by the garden wall! Jean lifted her pail of water and went singing with it up the hillslope to the house for sheer joy that she was alive.

"The Campbells are coming, O ho, O ho!" she sang, and the hills, taking up the refrain, echoed "O ho, O ho!"

True Tammas, who had slept all night under the straw stack by the byre, came bounding down the little path to meet her, wagging his tail and barking his morning greeting. They reached the door together, but Jock, mindful of his injuries, had shut and barred it, and was grinning at them through the window. Jean sat placidly down upon the step with True Tammas beside her and continued her song. Her calmness irritated Jock.

"Aye," he shouted through the crack, "the Campbells may be coming, but they'll not get in this house! You can just sit there blethering all day, and I'll never unbar the door."

Jean stopped singing long enough to answer: "You'll get no breakfast, then, you mind, unless you'll be getting it yourself, for the porridge is not cooked and the kettle's

nearly boiled away. I've the water pail with me, and there's not a drop else in the house."

She left him to consider this and resumed her song. For several minutes she and True Tammas sat there gazing westward across the valley with the little river flowing through it, to the hills swimming in the blue distance beyond.

At last she called over her shoulder, "Jock, Father's coming," and Jock, seeing that his cause was hopelessly lost, unfastened the door. Jean, her father, and True Tammas all came into the kitchen together, and the moment she was in the room again you should have seen how she ordered things about!

"Set the milk right down here, Father," she said, tapping the table with her finger as she flew past to get the strainer and a pan, "and you, Jock, fill the kettle. It's almost dry this minute. And stir up the fire under it. Tam,"—that was what they called the dog for short—"go under the table or you'll get stepped on!"

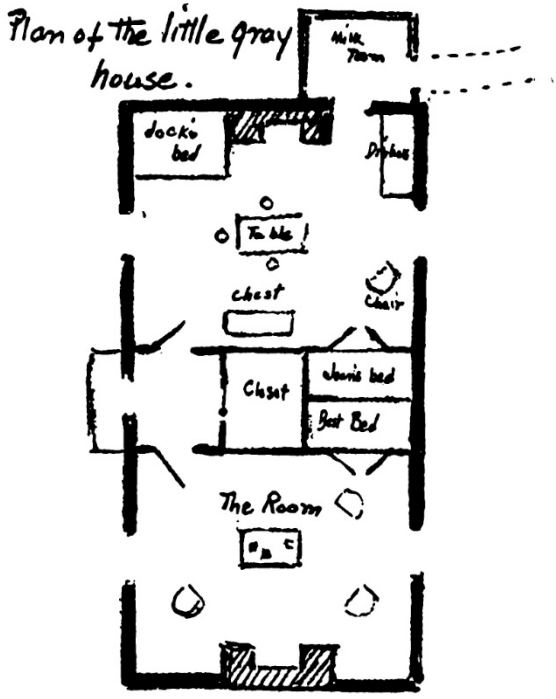
You should have seen how they all minded!—even the father, who was six feet tall, with a jaw like a nutcracker

and a face that would have looked very stern indeed if it hadn't been for his twinkling blue eyes. When the milk was strained and put away in the little shed room back of the kitchen chimney, Jean got out the oatmeal kettle and hung the porridge over the fire, and while that was cooking she set three places at the tiny table and scalded the churn. Meanwhile Jock went out to feed the fowls. By half past six the oatmeal was on the table and the little family gathered about it, reverently bowing their heads while the Shepherd of Glen Easig asked a blessing upon the food.

There was only porridge and milk for breakfast, so it took but a short time to eat it, and then the real work of the day began. The Shepherd put on his Kilmarnock bonnet and called Tam, who had had his breakfast on the hearth, and the two went away to the hills after the sheep. Jock led the cow to a patch of green turf near the bottom of the hill, where she could find fresh pasture, and Jean was left alone in the kitchen of the little gray house. Ah, you should have seen her then! She washed the dishes and put them away in the cupboard, she skimmed the milk and put the cream into the churn, she swept the hearth and shook

the blankets out of doors in the fresh morning air. Then she made the beds, and when the kitchen was all in order, she "went ben"—that was the way they spoke of the best room—and dusted that too. There wasn't really a bit of need of dusting the room, for it was never, never used except on very important occasions, such as when the minister called. The little house was five miles from the village, so the minister did not come often, but Jean kept it clean all the time just to be on the safe side.

There wasn't so very much work to do in the room after all, for there was nothing in it but the fireplace, a little table with the Bible, the Catechism, and a copy of Burns's poems on it, and three chairs. The kitchen was a different matter: there were the beds, and they were hard for a small girl to manage, and the cupboard with its shelves of dishes. There were three stools, and a big chair for the Shepherd, and the great chest where the clothes were kept, and besides all these things there was the wag-at-the-wall clock on the mantel shelf which had to be wound every Saturday night. If you want to know just where these things stood, you have only to look at the plan, where their places are so plainly



marked that, if you were suddenly to wake up in the middle of the night and find yourself in the little gray house, you could go about and put your hand on everything in it in the dark.

Jock stayed with the cow as long as he dared, and went back to the house only when he knew he couldn't postpone his tasks any longer. Jean was sweeping the doorstep as he came slowly up the hill.

"Come along, Grandfather," she called out, her brow sternly puckered in front and her curls bobbing gaily up and

down behind. "A body'd think you were seventy-five years old and had the rheumatism to see you move! Come and work the churn a bit. 'Twill limber you up."

Jock knew that arguments were useless. His father had told him, girl's work or not, he was to help Jean, so he slowly dragged into the house and slowly began to move the dasher up and down.

"Havers!" said Jean, when she could stand it no longer. "It's lucky there's a cover to the churn else you'd drop to sleep and fall in and drown yourself in the buttermilk! The butter won't be here at this rate till tomorrow, when it would break the Sabbath by coming!"

She seized the dasher, as she spoke, and began to churn so vigorously that the milk splashed up all around the handle. Soon little yellow specks began to appear; and when they had formed themselves into a ball in the churn, she lifted it out with a paddle and put it in a pan of clear cold water. Then she gave Jock a drink of buttermilk.

"Poor laddie!" she said. "You are all tired out! Take a sup of this to put new strength in you, for you've got to go out and weed the garden. I looked at the potatoes

yesterday, and the weeds have got the start of them already."

"If I must weed the garden, give me something to eat too," begged Jock. "This milk'll do no more than slop around in my insides to make me feel my emptiness."

Jean opened the cupboard door and peeped within.

"There's nothing for you, laddie," she said, "but this piece of a scone. I'll have to bake more for the Sabbath, and you can have this to give yourself a more filled-up feeling. And now off with you!"

She took him by the collar and led him to the door; and there on the step was Tam.

"What are you doing here?" cried Jean, astonished to see him. "You should be with Father, watching the sheep! It's shame to a dog to be lolling around the house instead of away on the hills where he belongs."

Tam flattened himself out on his stomach and dragged himself to her feet, rolling his eyes beseechingly upward, and if ever a dog looked ashamed of himself, that dog was Tam. Jean shook her head at him very sternly, and oh, how the jolly little curls bobbed about.

"Tam," she said, "you're as lazy as Jock himself. Whatever shall I do with the two of you?"

Jock had already finished his scone and he thought this a good time to disappear. He slipped round the corner of the house and whistled. All Tam's shame was gone in an instant. He gave a joyous bark and bounded away after Jock, his tail waving gayly in the breeze.



Chapter II

The Rabbit and the Gamekeeper

Out in the garden a rabbit had for some time been enjoying himself nightly in the potato patch, biting off the young sprouts which were just sticking their heads through the ground. When the rabbit heard Tam bark she dashed out of sight behind a burdock leaf and sat perfectly still. Now if Tam and Jock had come into the garden by the wicket gate, as they should have done, this story might never have been written at all, because in that case the rabbit would perhaps have got safely back to her burrow in the woods without being seen, and there wouldn't have been any story to tell.

But Tam and Jock didn't come in by the gate. They jumped over the wall. Jock jumped first and landed almost on top of the rabbit, but when Tam, a second later, landed in the same place, she was running for dear life toward the

hole in the stone wall where she had got in. Shouting and barking, Jock and Tam tore after her. Round and round the garden they flew, but just as they thought they had her cornered, the rabbit slipped through the hole in the wall and ran like the wind for the woods. Jock and Tam both cleared the wall at a bound and chased after her, making enough noise to be heard a mile away.

It happened that there was someone much less than a mile away to hear it. And it happened, too, that he was the one person in all the world that Jock would most wish not to hear it, for he was gamekeeper to the Laird of Glen Cairn, and the Laird of Glen Cairn owned all the land for miles and miles about in every direction. He owned the little gray house and the moor, the mountain, and the forest, and even the little brook that sang by the door. To be sure, the Laird seemed to care very little for his Highland home. He visited it but once in a great while, and then only for a few days' hunting. The rest of the year his great stone castle was occupied only by Eppie McLean, the housekeeper, and two or three other servants. The Laird did not know his tenants, and they did not know him. The rents

were collected for him by Mr. Craigie, his factor, who lived in the village, and Angus Niel was appointed to see that no one hunted game on the estate.

Angus was a man of great zeal in the performance of his duty, to judge by his own account of it. He was always telling of heroic encounters with poachers in the forests, and though he never seemed to succeed in catching them and bringing them before the magistrate, his tales were a warning to evildoers and few people dared venture into the region which he guarded. He was often seen creeping along the outskirts of the woods, his gun on his shoulder, his round eyes rolling suspiciously in every direction, or even loitering around the cow byres as if he thought game might be secreted there.

At the very moment when Jock and Tam came flying over the fence and down the hill like a cyclone after the rabbit, Angus was kneeling beside the brook to get a drink. His lips were pursed up and he was bending over almost to the surface of the water, when something dashed past him, and an instant later something else struck him like a thunderbolt from behind, and drove him headforemost into

the brook! It wasn't Tam that did it. It was Jock! Of course, it was an accident, but Angus thought he had done it on purpose, and he was probably the most surprised as well as the angriest man in Scotland at that moment. He lifted his head out of the brook and glared at Jock as fiercely as he could with little rills of water pouring from his hair and nose, and trickling in streams down his neck.

"I'll make you smart for this, you young blatherskite," he roared at Jock, who stood before him frozen with horror. "I'll teach you where you belong! You were running after that rabbit, and your dog is yelping down a hole after her this minute!" He was such a funny sight as he knelt there, dripping and scolding, that, scared as he was, Jock could not help laughing. More than ever enraged, Angus made a sudden lunge forward and seized Jock by the ear.

"You come along o' me," he said. His invitation was so urgent that Jock felt obliged to accept it, and together the two started up the slope to the little gray house. Tam, meanwhile, had given up the chase and joined them, his tail at half-mast.

When they reached the house Angus bumped the door

open without knocking, and stamped into the kitchen. Jean was bending over the fire turning a scone on the girdle, when the noise at the door made her jump and look around. She was so amazed at the sight which met her eye that for an instant she stood stock still, and Angus, seeing that he had only two children to deal with, gave Jock's ear a vicious tweak and began to bluster at Jean.

But, you see, he didn't know Jean. When she saw that great fat man abusing her brother and tracking mud all over her kitchen floor at the same time, instead of being frightened, as she should have been, Jean shook her cooking fork at Angus Niel and stamped her foot smartly on the floor.

"You let go of my brother's ear this instant," she shouted, "and take your muddy boots out of my kitchen!"

Angus let go of Jock's ear for sheer surprise, and Jock at once sprang to his sister's side, while Tam, seeing that trouble was brewing, gave a low growl and bared his teeth. Angus gave a look at Tam and decided to explain.

"This young blatherskite here," he began, in a voice that caused the rafters to shake, "has been trespassing. He was

after a rabbit. I caught him in the very act. I'll have the law on him! He rammed me into the burn!"

"I didn't mean to," shouted Jock, "I thought you were a stone, and I just meant to step on you and jump across the burn."

"You meant to step on me, did you?" roared Angus. "Me! Do you know who I am?" Jock knew very well, but he didn't have time to say so before Angus, choking with rage, made a furious lunge for his ear and left two more great spots of mud on the kitchen floor. It was not to be borne. Jean pointed to his feet.

"You're trespassing yourself," she screamed. "You've no right in this house, and you take yourself out of it this minute! Just look at the mud you've tracked on my floor!"

Angus did look. He looked not only at the floor but at Tam, for Tam was now slowly approaching him, growling as he came.

Angus thought best to do exactly as Jean said and as quickly as possible. He reached the door in two jumps with Tam leaping after him and nipping his heels at each jump, and in another instant found himself on the doorstep with

the door shut behind him.

Angus considered himself a very important man. He wasn't used to being treated in this way, and it's no wonder he was angry. He swelled up like a pouter pigeon and shook his fist at the door.

"You just mind who I am," he shouted. "If ever I catch you poaching again, I'll have you up before the bailie as sure as eggs is eggs!"

But the door didn't say a word, and it seemed beneath his dignity to scold a door that wouldn't even answer back, so he stamped away growling. The children watched him until he disappeared in the woods, and when at last they turned from the window, the scone on the girdle was burned to a cinder and had to be given to the chickens!

You might have thought that by this time Jean had done enough work even for Saturday, but there was still the broth to make for supper and for the Sabbath, and the kitchen floor to be scrubbed, and, last of all, the family baths! When the little kitchen was as clean as clean could be, Jean got the washtub and set it on the hearth. Jock knew the signs and decided he'd go out behind the byre and look



for eggs, but Jean had her eye on him.

"Jock Campbell," said she, "you go at once and get the water."

In vain Jock assured her he was cleaner than anything and didn't need a bath. Jean was firm. She made him fill the kettles, and when the water was hot, she shut him up in the kitchen with soap and a towel while she took all the shoes to the front steps to polish for Kirk on the morrow. When

at last Jock appeared before her he was so shiny clean that Jean said it dazzled her eyes to look at him, so she sent him for the cow while she took her turn at the tub.

By four o'clock, Tam, who had spent an anxious afternoon by the hole in the garden wall watching for the rabbit, suddenly remembered his duties and started away over the moors to meet the Shepherd and round up any sheep that might have strayed from the flock, and at five Jock, returning from the byre, met his father coming home with Tam at his heels.

The regular evening tasks were finished just as the sun sank out of sight behind the western hills, and the birds were singing their evening songs, and when they went into the kitchen a bright fire was blazing on the hearth, the broth was simmering in the kettle, and Jean had three bowls of it ready for them on the table.

While they ate their supper Jock told their father all about the rabbit and Angus Niel and his ducking in the burn, and when Jock told about Jean's ordering him out of the kitchen, and of his jumping to the door with Tam nipping at his heels, the Shepherd slapped his knee and

laughed till he cried. Tam, sitting on the hearth with his tongue lolling out, looked as if he were laughing, too.

"Havers!" cried the Shepherd, "I wish I'd been here to see that sight! Angus is that swollen up with pride of position, he's like to burst himself. He needed a bit of a fall to ease him of it, but I'd never have picked out Jean Campbell to trip him up! You're a spirited tid, my dawtie, and I'm proud of you."

"But, Father," said Jock, "whatever shall we do about the rabbits? The woods are full of them, and there'll not be a sprig of green left in the garden. They can hop right over the wall, even if we do stop up the hole."

"Aye," answered his father solemnly, "and that's a serious question, my lad. They get worse every year, and syne we'll have no tatties for the winter, let alone other vegetables. A deer came into Andrew Crumpet's garden one night last week and left not a green sprout in it by the morning. The creatures must live that idle gentlemen may shoot them for pleasure, even though they eat our food and leave us to go hungry." His brow darkened and a long smouldering wrath burst forth into words. "There's no

justice in it," he declared, thumping the table with his fist till the spoons danced, "Lairds or no Lairds, Anguses or no Anguses."

The twins had never before heard their father speak like that, and they were a little frightened. They were too young to know the long years of injustice in such matters that stretched far back into the history of Scotland.

For a few minutes after this outburst the Shepherd remained silent, gazing into the fire; then he roused himself from his brown study and said: "I've been keeping



something from you, my bairns. Mr. Craigie told me last week that the Auld Laird has taken a whim to turn all this region into a game preserve, and that he will not renew our lease when the time is up. It has till autumn to run, and then, God help us, we'll have to be turned out of this house where I've lived all my life and my forebears before me, and seek some other place to live and some other work to do."

"But what can you do else?" gasped Jock. He felt that his world was tumbling about his ears.

"The Lord knows," answered the Shepherd. "Emigrate to America likely. I've always been with the sheep and nothing else. It may be I can hire out to some other body, but chances are few hereabouts, and if the Auld Laird carries out this notion, there'll be many another beside ourselves who'll need to be walking the world. It seems unlikely he would be for taking away the town too, even if it is but a wee bit of a village, and the law gives him the right, for times have changed since that lease was made, long years ago, and there are few in this day who would venture to enforce it. But the Auld Laird's a hard man, I'm told, and he chooses hard men to carry out his will. Mr.

Craigie has little heart, and as for Angus Niel, he'd make things worse rather than better if he had his way." Then, seeing tears gathering in Jean's eyes, he said to comfort her, "There now, dinna greet, my lassie! There's no sense in crossing a bridge till you come to it, and this bridge is still four months and a bittock away. We've the summer before us, and the Lord's arm is not shortened that it cannot save. We'll make the best of it and have one more happy summer, let the worst come at the end of it."

"But, Father," urged Jock, "will he turn every one out, do you think?"

"Who can foretell the whimsies of a selfish man?" answered the Shepherd. "He has only his own will to consider, but my opinion is he'll turn out those whose holdings lie nearest the forests and would be best for game, whatever he may do with the rest."

This was overwhelming news, and the children sat silent beside their silent father, trying to think of something to comfort their sad hearts. At last Jean lifted her head with a spirited toss and said, "Gin we were to go tomorrow, the dishes would still have to be washed," and she began to

clear the table.

Her father laughed, and oh, how his laugh brightened the little kitchen and seemed to bid defiance to the fates!

"That's right, little woman," he said. "You've the true spirit of a Campbell in you. We must aye do the duty at hand and trust the Lord for the rest."

Jock was so impressed with the solemn talk of the evening that he wiped the dishes without being asked and went to bed of his own accord when the wag-at-the-wall clock struck eight. The Shepherd sat alone beside the fire until the children were in bed and asleep; then he sent Tam to the straw stack, wound the clock, and took his own turn at the tub. Last of all he covered the coals with ashes for the night and crept into bed beside Jock.



Chapter III
The Sabbath

The Sabbath morning dawned bright and clear, and the Campbells were all up early and had the chores done before seven o'clock. Then came breakfast, and after breakfast Jean ran "ben the room," and brought the Bible to her father. Then she and Jock sat with folded hands while he read a long chapter about the "begats." Jock thought there seemed to be a very large family of them. This was followed by a prayer as long as the chapter. The prayer was so long that True Tammas went sound asleep on the hearth and had a dream that must have been about the rabbit, for his ears twitched and he made little whiny noises and jerked his legs. It was so long that the kettle boiled clear away and made such alarming, crackling sounds that Jean couldn't help peeking through her fingers just once, because it was their only kettle, and if it should go and burst itself during



family prayers, whatever should they do! The moment the Shepherd said "Amen," Jean sprang so quickly to lift it from the fire that she stumbled over Tam and woke him up and almost burned her fingers besides. The kettle wasn't really spoiled, and while the water was heating in it for the dishes, Jean took up the little yellow book and said to Jock, "Come

here now, laddie, and see if you can say your catechism. Do you ken what is the chief end of man?"

"Dod, and I do," answered Jock. "You let me spier the questions."

"No," answered Jean firmly. "I'll spier them first myself."

"You're thinking I can't answer," said Jock. "I'll fool you."

He stood up as straight as a whole row of soldiers and fired off the answer all in one breath.

"The-chief-end-of-man-is-to-glorify-God-and-enjoy-Him-forever," he shouted.

Jean nodded approvingly. "You ken that one all right, but that is the first one in the book and everybody knows that one. Now I'm going to skip around."

"Don't skip," urged Jock. "Take them just the way they come. I can remember 'em better."

But Jean gave no quarter. "What is predestination?" she demanded.

This was a poser, but Jock tackled it bravely.

"Whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to-to-" he got so far and stuck.

"To what?" asked Jean.

"To be reformed," Jock hazarded, wallowing in difficulties.

"Conformed," corrected Jean. "You don't know that one at all! What is Saving Grace?"

Jock fell down entirely on saving grace. "It's a—It's a—" he began. Then he bit his lip and scowled, and looked up at the ham hanging from the rafters, and out of the windows, but as nothing more about saving grace occurred to him he said, "Aw, Jean, I know, but I can't think."

"If you knew, you wouldn't have to think," Jean retorted, and then she made him take the book and sit down on the stool by the window and learn both answers while she finished the dishes.

It was ten miles to the village and back, and there was no way to get there except by walking, but the Campbells would sooner have thought of going without their food than of staying away from the Kirk, and so by eight o'clock they were all dressed in their best clothes and ready to start. They left True Tammas sitting on the doorstep with his ears drooped and his eyes looking very sorrowful. He wanted to

go with them, but he knew well that he must stay at home to guard the sheep from stray dogs.

It was springtime, and the world was so lovely that the troubles the little family had faced the evening before seemed far away and impossible in the morning light. It was as if they had awakened from a bad dream. Who could help being happy on such a morning? The birds were flying about with straw and bits of wool in their bills to weave into their nests, and singing as if they would split their little throats. The river splashed and gurgled and sang as it dashed over its rocky bed on its way to the sea. From the village came the distant music of the church bells. The hawthorn was in bloom, and the riverbanks and roadsides were gay with dandelions and violets, daisies and buttercups. Far away the mountains lifted their blue summits to the sky, and on a nearer hill they could see the gray towers of the castle of the Laird of Glen Cairn.

The bell was ringing its final summons and all the people were pouring into the little vestibule as the Campbells reached the steps of the Kirk. Angus Niel pushed past them, looking as puffy as a turkey cock with its feathers

spread, and glaring at the twins so fiercely that Jock whispered to Jean, "If I poked my finger at him I believe he'd gobble," and made her almost laugh aloud. When they passed Mr. Craigie, who held the plate for people to drop their money in, Jean whispered to Jock, "He looks for all the world like a pair of tongs in his blacks, he's that tall and thin," and then Jock certainly would have laughed outright if he hadn't seen Mrs. Crumpet's eye on him.

The sermon was very long and the seats were hard and high, but the service did come to an end at last, although Jock was sure it was never going to, and afterward the children with their father stood about in the churchyard for a little while talking to their neighbors and friends.

The farm of Andrew Crumpet lay in the same direction as the home of the Campbells, so it was natural that they should walk along together and that the two men should talk about the thing that was uppermost in their minds. Mrs. Crumpet had gone on ahead with another neighbor, and Sandy Crumpet, who was twelve too, and had yellow hair, a snub nose, and freckles like Jock's own, walked with the twins behind the two fathers. As they turned into the

road, the children heard Andrew say, with a heavy sigh: "Aye, Robin, we must just make up our minds to it. The Auld Laird's bent on getting us out."

"Has Mr. Craigie given you notice, too?" asked the Shepherd.

"Aye, has he," Andrew answered with bitterness, "and short work he made of it. It means little to him telling a man to leave his home and go out in the world to seek new work at our time of life."

"He passes for a religious man," said the Shepherd.

"So did the Pharisee in the temple," said Andrew, "but 'by their fruits ye shall know them,' and we're not gathering any figs off of Mr. Craigie, nor grapes from that thorn of an Auld Laird that I can see!"

"Nor from Angus Niel, either," agreed Robin Campbell. "The Auld Laird's servants are of a piece with himself."

"Fine I ken that," answered Andrew.

"Well," sighed the Shepherd, "the toad under the harrow cannot be expected to praise the plowman, and we're just like the toad."

"Very true," said Andrew, "but the toad has the best of

it. We are being destroyed; not that someone may till the land, but that it may go to waste, and be kept out of use. We suffer that the rich may be richer and the poor poorer, that less food may be produced instead of more. I tell you, Robin, it is not justice."

"It may be so. It may be so," sighed the Shepherd, "but it is the law, and we must just submit."

The two men walked on in silence to the bridge, where the Crumpets turned, while the Campbells kept on beside the river. The children were silent, too, only calling out "Goodbye" to Sandy as they parted, Jock adding, "Come on by tomorrow if you can," and Sandy, waving his hand, calling back, "Aye, will I."

As the twins and their father neared the "wee bit hoosie," Tam came bounding down the brae to meet them, and in less time than it takes to tell it Jean had run into the house, taken off her Sabbath dress, and put on her old one, with her kitchen apron over it, had mended the fire and heated the broth, and the little family was seated about the table eating their frugal meal with appetites sharpened by their long walk.

The afternoon seemed endless to the children, for they spent it trying hard not to do any of the things they wanted to do. They studied the catechism while their father sat with his bonnet on his head nodding over the Bible, and the wag-at-the-wall clock ticked the hours solemnly away. Jock whispered to Jean that he didn't see why Sunday was so much longer than any other day, and didn't believe her when she said it wasn't really that it only seemed so.



Chapter IV
The New Boy

Usually Jean and Jock went to school in summer, for in winter the snow made the roads impassable, but at this time the Dominic was ill and until he should get well they had the long days to themselves. When breakfast was over the next morning and the Shepherd had gone with Tam to the hills, Jean decided to wash the clothes. Sandy Crumpet came early, and the two boys went off to play, leaving Jean standing on a stone in the middle of the burn, soaping the clothes and scrubbing them on the flat surface of a rock. The water was so cold it made her arms ache, and she soon decided to let the fast running stream do the washing for her. She soaped the garments well, weighted them down with stones, and then went to join the boys. She found them flat on their stomachs by the stream, gazing down into

a pool of clear water.

"What do you see?" she called out to them.

"Trout," answered Jock, his eyes shining with excitement.

"Let me take a keek," said Jean, flopping down beside them and craning her neck over the edge.

They were all three peering with breathless interest into the water when a strange voice behind them made them jump. For an instant they thought it might be Angus Niel.

"Hello!" said the voice.

The children whirled around, and there before them stood a boy not much older than themselves, but taller and thinner. He had a pale face with large black eyes and dark hair partly covered with a Glengarry bonnet set rakishly over one ear. He wore a suit of gray tweed with plaid-topped stockings, and carried a fishing rod over his shoulder.

"Hello!" said the stranger again.

"Hello, yourself!" responded Jock.

Jean and Sandy were so relieved to find it wasn't Angus Niel that for an instant they merely gazed at him without



speaking.

"What's there?" asked the new boy.

"Fish," said Jock.

"Fish!" cried the new boy, shifting his rod into position. "Where? Let me have a crack at 'em!"

"Na, na, don't be so hasty," cried Jock, heading him off. "You'll get yourself into trouble! Angus Niel would be after you in no time, and if he caught you, he'd cuff your lug for you, and drag you before the bailie for poaching!"

"Who's Angus Niel?" demanded the boy. "I'm not afraid of him."

"Not yet," answered Jock, "but just go on and you will be! He's gamekeeper to the Laird, and he'd rather do for you than not. Aye, he'd just like the feel of you in his

fingers, he would." Jock rubbed his ear. "It's but two days gone since he nearly pulled the lug off me because I was running after a rabbit that was eating up our garden. He's terrible suspicious, is Angus, and he's mad at us besides."

"What for?" asked the boy.

"I stepped on him by accident," explained Jock, "and butted him into the burn."

"No wonder he was mad," laughed the boy. "Come on, now. Surely a body can fish. There's no law against that!"

"Well," said Sandy, "law or no law, Angus is against it, and the Auld Laird is terrible particular. He's going to turn out all the farmers in this region and make it into a great game preserve. Nothing else. You're strange hereabouts, I doubt, or you'd ken all this yourself. Where are you from?"

"I'm from London," replied the boy. "I'm staying with Eppie McLean at the castle."

"Are you, now?" gasped Sandy. "Is Eppie your aunt, maybe? She'll be telling you about Angus herself."

"Eppie's not my aunt," said the boy. "She's a friend of my mother, and my mother got her to take me in because I've been sick, and she thought I'd get strong up here, and

I'm not going to have my summer spoiled by Angus Niel or any other old bogie man. Stand back now while I cast."

He swung his rod over his head, and the fly fell with a flop in the middle of the pool. He waited a breathless instant while Jock, Sandy, and Jean watched the fly with him, and then, as nothing happened, he cast again. When several such attempts brought no result, he said, "You're sure they're there?"

"They're lying at the bottom as soft as a baby in a cradle," said Jean. "I could catch them with a skimmer! Gin they don't bite, maybe I'll try it!"

Jock looked at Jean in amazement.

"You're a braw lassie, Jean Campbell," he said severely, "and you just telling about Angus Niel!"

"T'was yourself and Sandy here telling about Angus Niel," Jean answered. "I said nothing at all about him. I'm not afraid of him, either."

"Good for you!" said the new boy with admiration. "You can have a turn with my rod. Try it once before you get the skimmer!"

Jean sprang to her feet and took the rod, though she had

never had one like it in her hand before. She made a mighty sweep with it as she had seen the new boy do, but somehow the fly flew off in an unexpected direction and caught in a tree, while the line wound itself in a hopeless snarl around the tip. Jock and Sandy, who had stood by, green with envy, clapped their hands over their mouths and danced with mirth.

"It looks easy," said poor Jean mournfully, "but maybe I'd best stick to the skimmer when I fish."

"Oh, it always does that the first time," said the new boy comfortingly, as he rescued the fly and straightened out the line.

"When a girl tries to do it," added Jock witheringly.

The new boy held out the rod.

"You try it," he said to Jock, and Jock, full of confidence, did not wait for a second invitation.

"Look here, Jean," he said. "This is the way you do it."

He swung the rod with a mighty flourish over his head, bud alas, the fly surprised him too. It caught in Sandy's trousers and surprised Sandy as well. Not only that, it scratched him.

"Ow!" howled Sandy, leaping about like a monkey on the end of the string. "Leave go of me!"

There was a snarl even worse than Jean's, too, and between that and Sandy's jumping about it was some time before the line was disentangled and the hook freed so that Sandy was able to take his turn. Jean, meanwhile, said nothing at all, for Jock looked so crestfallen that she hadn't the heart. When Sandy tried it things were still worse, for the fly flew about so wildly that Jock and Jean fled before it and hid behind some bushes.



"Whoever could catch fish with such gewgaws as them anyway?" said Sandy scornfully, when a second attempt brought no better result. "The fish aren't used to it."

Jock rolled up his sleeves, crept to the side of the burn,

and looked over into the pool.

"Hold to me, Sandy," he said, and Sandy immediately sat down on his legs. Then Jock suddenly plunged his arms into the water and before the fish could whisk their tails he had caught one in his hand and thrown it on the grass.

Springing to his feet and upsetting Sandy, he jumped to a rock in the middle of the brook and caught two more. It was now the new boy's turn to be astonished. Apparently Jock had stirred up a whole school of trout, for Sandy, following Jock's lead, also leaped into the stream, and in a few moments six fine trout were flopping about the grass.

"Let's build a fire and cook them," urged the new boy, whose name they soon learned was Alan McRae. "And if old Angus Niel comes nosing around we'll offer him a bite! He can do nothing with four of us, anyway, unless he shoots us, and he'd hang for that. Come on!"

By this time they were all so thrilled with the sport and were having such fun that nobody thought any more about Angus anyway, so Jean ran for a pan, while Jock and Sandy cleaned the fish with Alan's knife, and Alan gathered dry twigs and bracken for the fire. Jean brought down some

scones, which she split and spread with butter while the fish were frying. When they were done to a golden brown she put a hot fish on each piece of scone and handed them out to the boys, and when they had eaten every scrap they buried the fish bones in case Angus should come that way.

After lunch Jean went to wring out the clothes and hang them on the bushes to dry, while Jock and Sandy examined Alan's wonderful book of flies and his reel, and even the creel in which he was to have put the fish, if he had caught any.

"Losh, man!" exclaimed Sandy, swaggering about with his hands in his pockets, "that's all very well. Aye, it's a good game, and you might go dandering along a stream all day playing with it, but if you really want fish, just go after 'em yourself! That's my way. Guddling for trout like you saw me and Jock do, that's the real sport!"

"I believe you," said Alan. "I'm going to try it myself. Come on. Let's go farther upstream and see if we can find another good fishing hole. I told Eppie I'd bring her a fish to her tea, and I'd hate to go back with nothing at all," and the three boys disappeared in the woods.



Jean finished her work by the brook and went to the house to make more scones, for the picnic had exhausted the supply and they used no other bread. She bustled about the kitchen, mixing, spreading them on the girdle over the fire, keeping the coals bright, and turning them out nicely browned on the mixing board. She was just finishing the sixth one, when there was a great thumping at the door, and she ran to see what was the matter. There on the doorstep stood the three boys, Alan dripping wet from head to heel, shivering with cold, and with mud and water running from him in streams. Jean threw up her hands.

"It's most michty," she cried, "if I can't ever bake scones

in this kitchen without some man body coming in half drowned to mess up my clean floor! However did you go and drop yourself in the burn, Alan McRae? 'Deed and I wonder that your mother lets you go out alone, you're that careless with yourself. And you not long out of a sick bed, too."

"He was guddling for trout," shouted Jock and Sandy in one breath; "and the hole was deep. There was no one sitting on him, and syne over he went!"

Jean seized Alan by the shoulder and drew him into the kitchen, and set him to drip on the hearth while she gave her orders.

"Jock, do you fill the basin with warm water, and you, Sandy, put more peat on the fire. He must have a rinse with hot water and something hot to drink."

"What'll he do for clothes?" cried Jock.

"Dinna fash yourself about clothes," said Jean, rummaging furiously in the "kist." "I'm laying out Father's old kilts he had when he was a boy. He can put them on till his own things are dry. Here's a towel for you," she added, tossing one to Alan. "Rub yourself down well, and when

you've dressed, just give a chap at the door, and I'll come in and get you a sup of tea."

Then she disappeared. You can imagine what the kitchen looked like when she came back again. Alan's wet clothes were spread out on her father's chair by the fire, and Alan, gorgeous in his plaid kiltie, was strutting back and forth giving an imitation of the bagpipes on his nose, with Jock and Sandy marching behind him singing "Do ye ken John Peel with his coat so gay" at the top of their lungs.

"Have you gone clean daft?" Jean shouted. "Sit down by the fire and get out of my way while I mop up after you!"

The boys each seized one of the kitchen stools without stopping the song and marched with it to the hearth, and when they came to "Peel's view halloo would awaken the dead," they gave a howl that nearly brought down the ham from the rafters as they banged them down on the hearthstones. Jean clapped her hands over her ears and ran for the mop, and in no time at all the puddles had disappeared and the boys were drinking tea by the fire.

Of course, Alan had no shoes to put on because his were soaking wet, and as it was now late in the afternoon it began



to be a question how he should get back to the castle. It was still cold for going barefoot, and he was not used to it besides, and his clothes certainly would not be fit to put on for a long time. They held a consultation. Alan thought he could go without shoes.

"You'll do nothing of the kind," said Jean firmly. "What sickness was it you had, anyway?"

"Measles," said Alan, looking ashamed of it.

"Measles!" shouted Sandy. "That's naught but a baby disease. My little sister had that. Sal, but I've had worse things the matter with me! I've had the fever, and once I cut my toe with the axe!"

"Hold your tongue, Sandy," said Jean, "and dinna boast! If Alan's had measles he can't go back to the castle barefoot; so you must just be stepping yourself, and stop by at the castle to tell Eppie McLean that Alan will bide here till his things are dry."

Sandy rose reluctantly and set down his empty mug.

"Well, then, if I must, I must," he said, and started off down the hill whistling.

Chapter V

Evening in the Wee Bit Hoosie

When he was out of sight, Jean brought in the washing and then it was time to get supper. Alan helped set the table and kept the fire bright under the pot, while Jock fed the hens and brought in the eggs; and when the Shepherd and Tam returned from the hills, you can imagine how surprised they were to find three children waiting for them instead of two. At supper the Shepherd had to be told all the adventures of the day and how it happened that Alan was wearing the kilts, and by the time it was over you would have thought they had known each other all their lives. While Jean cleared away the dishes, the Shepherd drew his chair to the fire and beckoned Alan to him.

"Come here, laddie," he said, "and give us a look at your plaidie. It's been lying there in the kist, and I've not seen a



sight of it since I was a lad. It's the Campbell plaid, ye ken, and I mind once when I was a lad I was on my way home from the kirk and a hare crossed my path. It's ill luck for a hare to cross your path, and fine I proved it. I clean forgot it was the Sabbath and louped the dyke after him. My kiltie

caught on a stone, and there I was hanging upside down. My father loosed me, but my kiltie was torn and I had to go to bed without my supper for breaking the Sabbath."

"Is the hole there yet?" asked Jean.

"Na, na," said the Shepherd. "You didn't think your grandmother was such a thriftless wifie as that! She mended the hole so that you could never find where it had



been."

He examined fold after fold carefully.

"There, now," he exclaimed at last, "if you want to see mending that would make you proud to wear it, look at that."

Jean and Jock stuck their heads over his shoulder, and Alan twisted himself nearly in two trying to see his own back.

"We have a plaid a good deal like this," said Alan, looking closely at the pattern. "My mother's name was McGregor, but she has relations named Campbell."

"Are you really a Scotch body, then?" cried Robin with new interest in Alan. "I thought you were an English boy."

"I live in London," Alan answered, "but my mother's people are all Scotch, and she loves Scotland. That's one reason why she sent me up here to be with Eppie McLean."

"Losh, mannie," cried the Shepherd, "if you have Campbell relatives and your mother's name was McGregor, it's likely you are a descendant from old Rob Roy himself, and if so, we're all kinsmen. Inversnaid, where Rob Roy's cave is, is but a few miles from here, and it was in this very

country that he hid himself among rocks and caves, giving to the poor with his left hand what he took from the rich with his right. Well, well, laddie, the old clans are scattered now, but blood is thicker than water still, and you're welcome to the fireside of your kinsman!"

"Is he really a relation?" cried Jean and Jock eagerly.

"Well," said the Scotchman cautiously, "I'm not saying he is precisely, but I'm not saying he is not, either. The Campbells and the McGregors have lived in these parts for better than two hundred years, and it's not likely that Alan could lay claim to both names and be no relation at all. If there were still clans, as there used to be in the old days, we'd all belong to the same one, and that I do not doubt."

"I'm sure I'd like that," said Alan, and Jock was so delighted with his new relative that he stood on his head in the middle of the floor to express his feelings. When the excitement had died down a bit, Alan drew his stool up beside the Shepherd's knee and said: "Won't you please tell us about Rob Roy, Cousin Campbell? If he's an ancestor of mine, I ought to know more about him."

"Oh, do, Father," echoed the twins, planting their stools

beside the other knee. Even Tam was interested. He sat on the hearth in front of the Shepherd, looking up into his face as if he understood every word.

The Shepherd gazed thoughtfully into the fire for a moment; then he said: "I can tell you what my grandsire told me, and he got it from his grandsire, so it must be true. In the beginning Rob Roy was as staunch a man as any, and held his own property like other gentlemen. Craig Royston was the name of his place, and fine and proud he was of it, too. He was a gey shrewd man in the cattle dealing, and his neighbor, the Duke of Montrose, thinking to benefit his own estate, lent Rob money to set him up in the trade. There was a pawky rascal named McDonald who was partner to Rob, and didn't he run away with the money, leaving Rob in debt to the Duke and nothing to pay him with? The Duke foreclosed on Rob at once, and took away Craig Royston and added it to his own estate. You can well believe that Rob was not the man to take such dealings with patience. If the Duke had not been so hasty, Rob would more than likely have got hold of McDonald and made him pay either out of his purse or out of his skin, but

he did neither the one nor the other. Instead he left his home and took his clan with him into the mountains and became the terror of the whole countryside."

"Wasn't he a good man?" asked Jean, gazing at her father with round eyes.

"Well," said the Shepherd, "not just what you'd call pious, maybe, and it cannot be said that he was aye regular at the kirk. It's true he never forgot an enemy, but he never forgot a kindness either and was loyal and true to them that were true to him."

"What did he do when they weren't true to him?" asked Jock.

"He made them wish they had been," replied the Shepherd mildly.

"But what made the Duke of Montrose take away Craig Royston?" asked Jock. "Didn't he have a great big place of his own?"

"Aye," answered Robin, "but what difference does that make? The more land he had, the more land he wanted, the same as other lairds. Be that as it may, Craig Royston was certainly taken away from Rob, and a bitter man it

made of him."

"Why, it's just like ourselves and the Auld Laird," cried Jean. "He's going to take away our home from us!"

"It's not just the same, little woman," said the Shepherd, laying his big brown hand on Jean's small one on his knee. "But the loss of it hurts just the same. Rob Roy loved Craig Royston no better than we love this wee bit hoosie."

"But why must you go, then?" asked Alan, his eyes shining with interest and sympathy.

"You see; lad," answered the Shepherd, "it's like the tale of the dog in the manger. The Auld Laird will neither use the land nor let us." He explained about the lease, and when he had finished, Alan said, "But what will you do when you leave this place?"

"I'm spiering the same question myself," answered the Shepherd. "As yet I dinna ken."

"I tell you what," shouted Jock, springing to his feet and knocking over his stool. "Why don't we live in the caves the way Rob Roy did? If the Crumpets and all the people who have to give up their homes should band together in a clan and hide themselves in the glen, the Auld Laird could

send all the Mr. Craigies and Angus Niels in the world after us and they'd never get us!"

The Shepherd smiled and shook his head. "The time for that has gone by," he said sadly. "Na, na, we must just submit. But one thing I do know, and that is, we'll not seek a place with the Laird of Kinross. They say he will let his land to none but members of the Established Church, and I'll not give up my religion for any man not if I'm forever walking the world!"

"But come, now," he went on, seeing them downcast, "you all have faces on you as long as a summer Sabbath. Cheer up, and I'll tell you a tale my grandfather told me of the water cow of Loch Leven. You mind the song says, 'The Campbells are coming from bonnie Loch Leven.' Well, it was around that loch that the Campbells pastured their cattle. One day when my grandsire was a young lad he was playing with some other children on the pastures near the shore, when all of a sudden what should they see among their own cows but a fine young dun-colored heifer without any horns. She was lying by herself on the green grass, chewing her cud and looking so gentle and pretty that the

children played around her without fear. They wound a wreath of daisies and put it on her neck, and then they got on her back. The cow stretched out longer and longer to make room for them until they were all on her back except my grandsire. Then all of a sudden the dun cow rose up, first on her hind legs, tipping the children all forward, and then on her forelegs tipping them all back ward, yet no one fell off at all, and when she was up on her feet, didn't she start straight away for the deep waters of the loch? The children screamed and tried to get off her back, but no matter how hard they tried, there they stuck. My grandsire ran screaming toward them, and put up his hand to pull them down, and his finger touched the dun cow's back! Now never believe me, if his finger didn't stick so he could not pull it away, and by that he knew the dun heifer for a water cow and that she had bewitched the children. He was being dragged along with them toward the water, when all of a sudden he slipped out his knife and with one blow chopped off his own finger and he was wanting that finger till the day of his death."

"What became of the others?" gasped Alan, his black

eyes glowing like coals.

"They went on the dun cow's back into the lake, and the water closed over them and they were never seen again," said the Shepherd, "and that's the end of the tale."

While the Shepherd talked, the twilight had deepened into darkness, the fire had died down, and the corners of the room were filled with mysterious tricky shadows that danced with the flickering flames on the hearth. Jean looked fearfully over her shoulder. There was a creepy feeling in the back of her neck, and Jock's eyes were as round as doorknobs. The Shepherd laughed at them.

"Good children have little to fear from the fairy folk," he said. "Come, now, your eyes are fair sticking out of your heads. I'll give you a skirl on the bagpipes if Jeanie'll bring them from the closet. Jock, stir up the fire, and Alan, give your clothes a turn and see if they are drying."

The children ran to do these errands, and in a moment the fire was flaming gayly up the chimney, chasing the murky shadows out of the corners and making the room bright and cheerful again, while the Shepherd, tucking the bag under his arm, stirred the echoes on old Ben Vane with

the wild strains of "Bonnie Doon" and "Over the Water to Charlie." At last he struck up the music of the Highland Fling, and the three children sprang to the middle of the floor and danced the wild Scotch dance together.

Just as the fun was at its height, and Alan, looking very handsome in his kilts, was doing the heel and toe with great energy, there came a loud rap at the door. Instantly everything stopped, just as short as Cinderella's ball did when the clock struck twelve, and the Shepherd, laying aside his bagpipes, opened the door. There stood a man with a bundle on his arm. "Eppie McLean sent these clothes to the lad," he said, handing the bundle to the Shepherd, "and he's to come back along with me." Alan took the bundle, thanked the man, and disappeared with Jock into "the room," where he changed his clothes, returning the kilts, with regret, to Jock. "I've had just a grand day," he said to Jean and the Shepherd as he shook hands and took leave of them in the kitchen afterward. "I'll be back tomorrow for my clothes."

"Come back and play then," said Jock.

When he was gone, Jean folded the kilts away in the

closet again. "He's a fine braw laddie," said the Shepherd.

"Aye," said Jock. "He had two suits of clothes, one as good as the other, but he was not proud."

"I wonder what his father's work is," said Jean.

"He never spoke of his father at all, just his mother," said Jock, and at that moment the wag-at-the-wall clock struck nine.

"Havers!" said Jean. "Look at the hour, Jock Campbell! Get you to your bed."



Chapter VI
Two Discoveries

That night Jock dreamed of water cows, and clans dressed in kilts, and when Sandy appeared the next morning, his head was still buzzing with wild schemes of adventure.

"Come awa', Sandy," he said, "let's explore. We'll go up the burn and see if we can't find out where it begins."

"What'll we do for lunch?" asked Sandy, who was practical. "I brought a scone with me—but it'll never be enough for two."

"Ho!" said Jock. "If Rob Roy and all his men could live in caves all the time and take care of themselves, I guess we can do it for one day. We can fish, and maybe we might find some birds' eggs. I'm not afraid."

"What about Alan?" asked Jean.



"If he comes to play, tell him to follow us right up the burn and keep whistling the pewit's call three times over, and if we don't see him, we'll hear him," said Jock. "There's no danger of not finding us if he follows the water," and he and Sandy set forth at once.

Jean had finished her work and was wondering what to do with the long day which stretched before her, when Alan came running up the hill and burst into the kitchen.

"Look here what I've got, Jean," he said, thumping a parcel down on the kitchen table and tearing it open. "Eppie put this up for me."

Jean looked and there was a whole pound of bacon, three big scones, and a dozen eggs. "Save us!" cried Jean, clasping her hands in admiration. "What will you do with it all?"

"I'll show you!" said Alan. "Where's Jock?"

"He and Sandy have gone up the burn, exploring," said Jean. "They said you were to follow, and if you didn't find them, keep whistling the pewit's call three times till they answered you."

"What is the pewit's call?" asked Alan.



"Michty me!" said Jean. "Think of not knowing that!" She pursed up her lips and whistled "Pee-wit, pee-wit, pee-wit."

"You see, we don't have them in London;" Alan apologetically explained, "unless it's in the Zoo; but I say, Jean, aren't you coming, too? You're as good as a boy any day. Come along!"

"All right," said Jean. "I wanted to dreadfully. I'll get a basket for the lunch." She went to the closet and brought out a basket which her father had made out of split willow twigs, packed the lunch in it, and off they started.

They passed the place where the fish bones were buried, and the spot where Alan had fallen into the water the day before, and then plunged into the deep pine forest which filled the glen and covered the mountainsides. The pine needles lay thick on the ground, and above them the pine boughs waved in the breeze, making a soft sighing sound, "like a giant breathing," Jean said. The silence deepened as they went farther and farther into the woods. There was only the purring of the water, the occasional snapping of a twig, or the lonely cry of a bird to break the stillness. It was dark, too, except where the sunshine, breaking through the thick branches overhead, made spots of golden light upon the pine needles.

"It's almost solemn; isn't it?" said Jean to Alan in a hushed voice. "I was never so far in the woods before."

"I wonder which side of the burn the boys went. If we should take the wrong side, we might not find them," said

Alan.

"Let's whistle," said Jean. She puckered her lips and gave the pewit call, but there was no answer.

"Perhaps they didn't hear it because the burn makes such a noise. It keeps growing louder and louder," said Alan.

Whistling and listening for an answer at every few steps, they climbed over rocks and fallen trees, keeping as close as possible to the stream, until suddenly they found themselves gazing up at a beautiful waterfall which came gushing from a pile of giant rocks reaching up among the topmost boughs of the pines.

"Oh, it's bonny! but how shall we get up?" cried Jean.

"We must just find a way," said Alan.

"It's a grand place for robbers and poachers," said Jean, looking fearsomely at the cliffs stretching far above them. "Angus Niel says the forests are full of them."

"I'd as soon meet a poacher as Angus Niel himself," said Alan, laughing, "but I'm not afraid as long as you're with me. It's Angus that's afraid of you, Jock says."

Jean laughed too. "I'm not afraid when I'm in my own

kitchen, but it's different in the woods," she said.

Alan had been nosing around among the rocks as they talked, getting nearer and nearer to the fall, and now he suddenly disappeared, and for a few moments Jean was quite alone in the woods. Soon Alan reappeared from behind the fall itself and beckoned her to follow him.

Jean was looking at the wall of rock which loomed above them. "Sal!" she remarked, "we'll be needing wings to get up there, or we'll smash all the eggs for sure."

For answer Alan popped out of sight again behind the fall, and Jean, following closely in his wake, was just in time to catch sight of his legs as he dived into a hole opening into the rocky wall. The cliff from which the water plunged overhung the rocks below in such a way that she could pass behind the veil of water without getting wet at all.

Into this mysterious opening behind the fall Jean followed her leader, and found herself climbing a narrow dry channel through which the stream had once forced its way. It was a hard, rough scramble up a narrow passage worn by the water and through holes almost too small to squeeze through, but at last she saw Alan's heels just

disappearing over the edge of a jutting rock and knew they were coming out into daylight again. An instant later Alan's head appeared in the opening, his hand reached down to help her up, and with one last effort she came out upon an open ledge and looked about her.

She could not help an exclamation of delight at what she saw. The rock was so high that they could look out over the treetops clear to the slope where the little gray house stood. The waterfall, plunging from a still higher level, made a barrier on one side of them, and on the other side the cliff rose, a sheer wall of rock. Between the wall of water and the wall of rock there was a cave extending into the solid rock for a distance of about twenty feet. There was absolutely no way of reaching this fastness except through the hidden stair, and one might wander for years through the forest and never see it at all.

"Oh," exclaimed Jean, "it's wonderful! How Jock will love this place! Don't you believe this very cave was used by Rob Roy and his men?" and Alan, swelling with pride to think he had found it all himself, said yes, he was sure of it.

"I tell you what we'll do," cried Alan, a minute later.

"We'll just leave the basket here in the cave, and when we've found the boys we'll come back and have our lunch here."

They tucked the basket away out of sight on a rocky shelf in the cave, and found their way down the steep rough stairway to the bed of the stream again and, making a wide detour, came out above the fall. They struggled on for nearly a mile farther still without finding any trace of the boys, and were beginning to be discouraged, when they saw a break in the trees with glimpses of blue sky beyond, and a few moments later came out upon the shores of a tiny mountain lake, shining like a beautiful blue jewel in the dark setting of the pine trees on its banks.

Beyond the lake the purple peaks of higher mountains made a ragged outline against the sky. The sun was now almost directly overhead; the waters of the lake were still, and its lovely shores were mirrored on the placid surface. A great eagle soared in stately circles in the deep blue sky. It was so beautiful and so still that the children stood a moment among the rocks where the tarn emptied itself into the mountain stream to look at it.

"It's just the place for a water cow, or a horse maybe," Jean whispered to Alan.

"Sh!" was Alan's only reply. He seized Jean's hand and dragged hear down behind a rock and pointed toward the south. There, coming out of the woods, was a beautiful stag. It poised its noble head, and sniffed the air, as if it suspected there might be human beings about, and then stepped daintily to the lakeshore and bent to drink. Its lips had scarcely touched the water when the children were startled by the loud report of a gun.

"Poachers," gasped Jean, hiding her face and wishing they had never come. "Oh, where are Jock and Sandy?" Her only thought was to make herself as small as possible and keep out of sight behind the rocks, but Alan peered through the screen of bushes which hid the rock and made violent gestures to Jean to make her look, too. Jean crawled on her hands and knees to Alan's side, and when she looked, what she saw made her so angry that she would have sprung to her feet if Alan had not held her down with a fierce grip. The stag was lying by the lakeshore, and a man with the muzzle of his gun still smoking was running toward it from

the woods. The man was Angus Niel!

Jean was so astonished that for an instant she could not believe her own eyes. The two children flattened themselves out on their stomachs and watched him pull a boat from its hiding place among some bushes on the shore, paddle quietly to the spot where the dead stag lay, and load it swiftly into the boat. Then he raced back to the woods again and reappeared, carrying a string of dead rabbits. These also he crowded into the boat, and then, taking up the oars, rowed across the lake to a landing place on the other side. The children watched him, scarcely breathing in their excitement, until he had unloaded his game from the boat and disappeared into the woods, dragging the body of the stag after him. In a few moments he came back for the rabbits and, having disposed of them in the same mysterious way, returned to the boat.

Then Jean exploded in a fierce whisper. "The old thief!" she said, shaking her fist after him. "He's the poacher himself! That's why he never brings anyone before the bailie, though he's always telling about catching them at it! And he making such a fuss because Jock chased the rabbit that



was eating up our garden! Oh, oh, oh!"

She clutched Alan and shook him in her boiling indignation. Alan laughed and shook her back. "I didn't do it, you little spitfire!" he whispered, and Jean moaned, "Oh, I know it, Alan, but I can't catch him and I'm so angry I've just got to do something to somebody."

"Do you know what that old thief does?" said Alan. "He sends that game down to the city—to Glasgow, or Edinburgh, or even London, maybe—and gets a lot of money for it! No wonder he tells big stories to make people afraid to go into the woods."

"I hope he won't meet the boys," moaned Jean. "Jock would be sure to let his tongue loose, and then maybe he'd shoot him too!"

"Listen," said Alan. He gave the pewit's call and waited. It was answered from a point so near that they were startled. They looked in every direction but saw nothing of the boys.

"Maybe it was a real pewit after all," whispered Jean, but just then a tiny pebble struck Alan's cap, and, looking around in the direction from which it came, he saw two freckled faces rise up from behind the rock on the opposite side of the spring.

"There they are," he said, punching Jean and pointing; "they came up the other side of the burn." Then, making a cup of his hands, he called across the stream, "Did you see him?" The boys nodded. "Slip back as fast as you can down that side of the burn," Alan said, "and we'll meet at the fall. Wait at the foot if you get there first. We've got something to show you. Whist, and be quick, for he'll be coming back before long, and this way like as not."

Jock and Sandy nodded and disappeared, and Alan and

Jean, springing from their hiding place, hurried as fast as they could down their side of the stream to the trysting place.

Chapter VII

The Clan

When Jean and Alan reached the waterfall, they found Jock and Sandy there before them. “Come over to our side,” Alan called. The two boys ran further downstream and crossed the brook on stones which stood out of the water, and in a moment more were back again at the foot of the fall.

“What have you got to show us?” demanded Jock. “I hope it’s something to eat.” Jock had bitterly regretted his morning decision to find his food in the forest. The scone which Sandy had brought from home had been divided and eaten long ago; and all four of the children were now so hungry that they could think of nothing else, not even of Angus Niel and their adventures by the lake.

Alan looked cautiously around in every direction.



"Follow me, and keep quiet tongues in your heads," he said. Then he disappeared under the fall, and Jean instantly followed him. For a moment Jock and Sandy were as mystified as Jean had been when Alan first found the secret stairway, but it was not long before they, too, saw the hole in the rock, plunged in and, following the winding passageway, came out upon the top of the rock.

"There," said Alan, beaming with pride, as he displayed

his wonderful lair, "doesn't this beat Robinson Crusoe all to pieces? If he had found a place like this on his desert island, he wouldn't have had to build a stockade or anything."

"It's one of the very caves where Rob Roy hid! I'm sure of it," Jock declared with conviction, and Sandy was so overcome with admiration that he turned a back somersault and almost upset Jean, who was coming out of the cave with the basket on her arm.

"You see," said Alan, "we could stay here a week if we had food enough, and never come down at all. All we'd have to do for water would be to hold a pan under the edge of the fall. There's no way of getting up here except by the secret stair, and that's not easy to find. There never was such a place for fun."

Sandy had righted himself by this time and was gazing ecstatically at the basket, which Jean had begun to unpack. "Losh!" he cried. "Look, Jock! Bacon and eggs and scones! Oh, my word!" Jock gave one look and whooped for joy.

"Keep still," said Alan. "Angus may be coming back this way, and he has a gun with him. We're safe enough up here, if we keep quiet, but if you go howling around like that, he'll

surely hunt for the noise."

For a moment they kept quiet and listened, but there was no sound except the noise of the falling waters. "Huh!" Sandy snorted, "he couldn't hear anything, anyway. The roar of the fall hides all the other noises."

"Oh, let's eat!" begged Jock, caressing his empty stomach and gazing longingly at the food.

"You can't eat now," said Jean; "the food must be cooked first, and what shall we do for a fire?"

"We could make one right here on the rock," said Alan, "if we had something to burn. I've got matches."

"We'll have to get twigs and dry pine needles and broken branches," said Jock, "and bring them up the secret stair, though it'll be hard work getting them through the narrow places. We ought to have a rope. We could pull a basketful up over the edge of the rock as easy as nothing."

"We'll bring a rope next time," said Alan. "Hurry! I'm starving!"

The three boys disappeared down the secret stair, and while they were gone, Jean found loose stones, with which she made a support for the frying pan around a space for

the fire. The boys were soon back with plenty of small fuel, and in a short time a bright fire was blazing on the rock and there was a wonderful smell of frying bacon in the air. The boys sat cross-legged around the fire, while Jean turned the bacon and broke the eggs into the sputtering fat.

"You look just exactly like Tam watching the rabbit hole," laughed Jean. "I wonder you don't paw the ground and bark!"

At last the scones were handed out, each one laden with a slice of bacon and a fried egg, and there was blissful silence for some moments.



"Oh, aren't you glad you didn't die of the measles and miss this?" Sandy said to Alan, rolling over on his back and waving his legs in the air as he finished his third egg. Alan's mouth was too full for a reply other than a cordial grunt.

"Why, Sandy Crumpet!" exclaimed Jean, reprovingly, "don't you believe heaven is nicer than Scotland?"

"Maybe it is," Sandy admitted, doubtfully, "but I like this better than sitting around playing on harps and trumpets the way the angels do."

"Sandy Crumpet played the trumpet," howled Jock in derision. "Indeed and indeed, Sandy, I like this better than having to hear you." Then, before Sandy could think of an answer a memory of the catechism crossed his mind, and he added as afterthought, "How do you ken you're one of the elect, anyway, Sandy Crumpet? If you're not, you'd not be playing on any trumpets, or harps either, but like as not frying in the hot place like that bacon there."

Sandy rushed to the defense of his character. "I'm just as elect as you are, Jock Campbell," he said.

This time Jock had no answer ready, and Jean reproved them both. "Shame on you!" she said. "You'll neither one

of you get so much as a taste of heaven, I doubt, and you talking like that."

"Where will Angus Niel be going, then, when he dies?" asked Jock. "I don't just mind whether there's a chance for thieves, but the Bible says drunkards and such-like stand no chance at all."

"It's not for us to judge," said Jean primly, "but I have my opinion."

Alan had been busily eating during this conversation, and now he joined in. "I say," he began, "I'm not worrying about what will become of Angus Niel after he's dead. I



want to know what's going to be done with him right now. We're the only ones that know about this. Are we just going to keep whist, or shall we tell on him?"

"Let's tell on him!" shouted Sandy.

"Who'll you be telling?" said Jean with some scorn.

"Why, the bailie, maybe, or the Auld Laird himself," said Sandy.

"Havers!" said Jean. "You're a braw lad to go hob-nobbing with the bailie. He'll not believe you, anyway; he's a friend of Angus himself, and, as for the Auld Laird, how would you get hold of him at all, and he far away in London?"

Sandy subsided, crushed, and then Jock had a bright idea. "I tell you what we'll do," he cried, springing to his feet. "Let's have a clan, like Rob Roy, and we'll just badger the life out of Angus Niel. We'll never let him know who we are, but keep him forever stepping and give him no rest. If he thinks somebody's following him up all the time, he'll not sleep easy o' nights!"

This suggestion was greeted with riotous applause. "He'd not sleep easy if he knew Jean was after him, I'll go

bail," laughed Alan.

"Hooray!" shouted Sandy, waving his legs frantically. "What shall we call it?"

"Let's call it the Rob Roy Clan," said Alan.

"Hooray!" roared Sandy again.

"If we're a Clan, we'll have to have a chief," said Jean, "and if the Chief bids us do anything, we'll just have to do it. That's the way it was in the real Rob Roy Clan. Father said so."

"Jock thought of it first. Let him be Chief," said Alan.

"No!" cried Jean promptly. "Are you thinking I'll put my head in a bag like that, and he my own brother? 'Deed, I'd never get a lick of work out of him on Saturday if I did! Na, na, lads! Whoever's Chief, it won't be Jock."

"Maybe you'd like to be the Chief yourself," retorted Jock, "but it's enough to be bossed by you at home! Besides, whoever heard of a girl being Chief, anyway?"

"Alan can be Chief," said Jean, and so the matter was settled.

"If I'm Chief," said Alan, "you'll all have to swear an oath of fealty to me."

"What's an oath of fealty?" Jock demanded suspiciously, and Jean added in a shocked voice, "Alan, you'd never be asking us to take the name of the Lord in vain!"

"It's not that kind of an oath," laughed Alan. "You just have to vow to obey the Chief in everything." Then an idea popped into his head. "In a real Clan they are all kinsmen, but here's Sandy, and he's neither Campbell nor McGregor. We'll have to make a blood brother of him before he can join."

"What's a blood brother? How do you make 'em?" asked Sandy.

"I'll show you," said Alan. He drew his knife from his pocket and while the other three watched him in breathless admiration, he made a little cut in his wrist and immediately passed the knife to Jock. "You do the same," he commanded.

Jock obeyed his Chief and passed the knife to Jean, who promptly followed his example.

"Now, Sandy," said Alan.

Sandy hated the sight of blood, and he was a little pale under his freckles as he shut his eyes and jabbed himself



gingerly with the point. Then Alan took a drop of blood from each wrist and mingled them with a drop from Sandy's.

"Now, Sandy," he said, as he stirred the compound into a gory paste, "you repeat after me, 'My foot is on my native heath, my name it is McGregor.'" Sandy obeyed with solemnity, and this important ceremony over, Alan



pronounced him a member of the Clan in good and regular standing.

Then, by the Chief's orders, Jean, Jock, and Sandy, each in turn placed their hands under Alan's hand, while they promised to obey him without question in all matters pertaining to the Clan.

"Only," said Jean, "you mustn't tell us to do anything wrong."

"I won't," promised Alan. And so the Rob Roy Clan came into being.

Alan took command at once. "We must have a sign," he said. "Just like Clan Alpine in 'The Lady of the Lake.' Go, my henchmen," he cried, striking a noble attitude, and waving his hand toward the forest, "bring hither sprays of the Evergreen Pine, and we'll stick 'em in our bonnets just like Roderick Dhu and his men. Roderick Vich Alpine Dhu, ho! iero!"

The two boys instantly disappeared down the hole in the rock on this errand, leaving Jean and Alan to guard the cave.



Chapter VIII
The Poachers

While all these things were happening, Angus Niel had returned from his errand across the little lake, and was making his way slowly toward home, following the course of the stream. As he came near the fall he stopped and sniffed. There was certainly a most appetizing smell of bacon in the air!

"It can't be!" he said aloud to himself. He sniffed again, and his face turned purple with rage. "Meat," he snorted, "as I live! The bold rascals! Poaching in broad daylight and cooking their game right under my nose!" It wasn't under his nose at all, of course, for the rock was far above him, and it wasn't game either.

"I'll soon cure them of that trick," he muttered, as he climbed silently over the rocks and gazed searchingly about.



It was not long before he caught sight of a thin curl of blue smoke rising from the top of the rock.

"Aha!" he growled under his breath, "I've got you now, my bold gentlemen! I'll teach you to flaunt your thefts in the face of the Laird's own gamekeeper, once I get my

hands on you!" At once he began nosing about the rocks in search of the path by which the poachers had climbed the cliff.

Meanwhile Sandy and Jock had found the sprays of the Evergreen Pine and were on their way back to the cave with them, when Jock suddenly seized Sandy by the arm and ducked down behind a boulder. There, not a hundred feet away, stood Angus Niel gazing up at the top of the rock! His back was toward them, and the noise of the waterfall had drowned out the sound of voices, or they surely would not have escaped his notice. As it was, they slipped behind the fall, whisked into the hole, and began climbing the secret stair like two frightened squirrels. An instant later they startled Alan and Jean, who were in the cave, by dashing in after them on all fours.

"What on earth is the matter?" cried Jean.

"Matter, indeed!" gasped Jock, out of breath. "Angus Niel is down there, and he's seen the smoke! He almost saw us, but we just gave him the slip and got by."

"Keep out of sight, all of you," commanded the Chief, "and leave him to me."

The obedient Clan flattened themselves against the back of the cave, while Alan crept to the edge of the rock on his stomach like a lizard, and, lying there, was able to peep through the thick screen of leaves and see what was going on below. The gamekeeper was still scrambling over the rocks and looking, as Alan said afterward, "for all the world like a dog who had lost the trail and was trying to find it again."

As the lookout was well screened, Alan soon allowed the rest of the Clan to join him, and Angus Niel little guessed, as he prowled about over the rocks, that every move was watched from above. Despairing of finding the path, he decided at last to get up a tree and make an observation. He selected a large pine which grew near the cave and began to climb.

So long as he stood on the ground, the children knew it was impossible for Angus to see them, but when he began to climb, they scuttled back into the cave as fast as they could go.

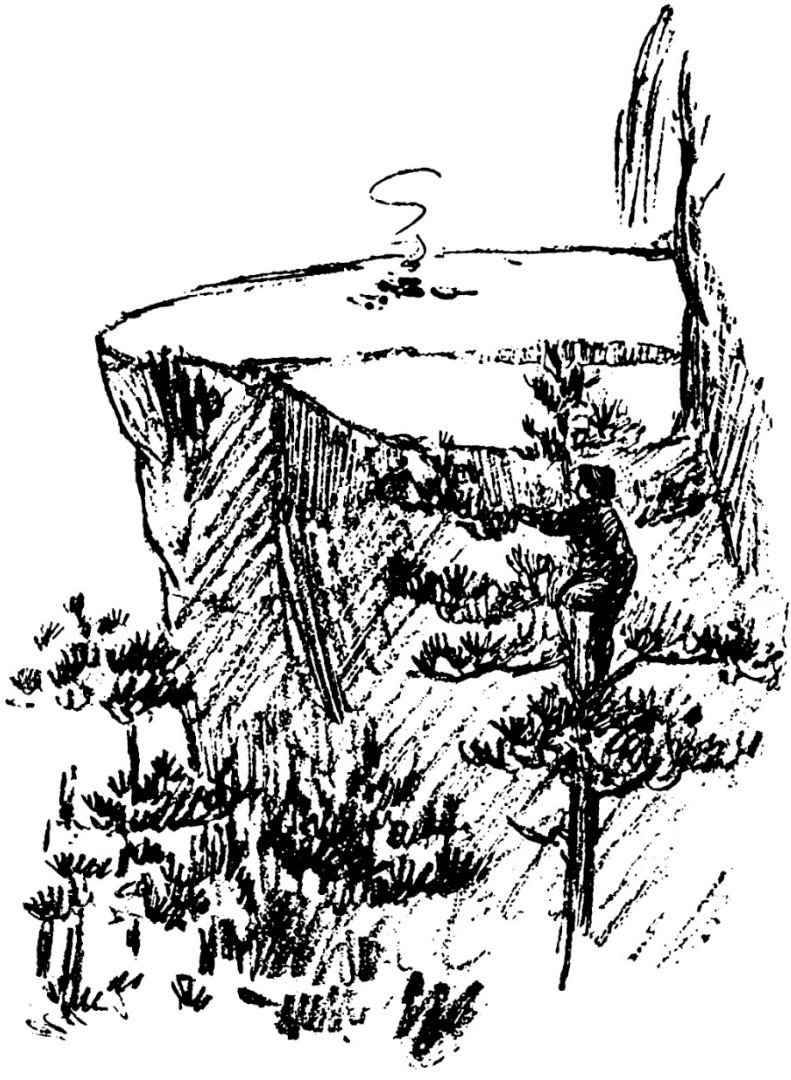
Climbing is hard work for a fat man, and the gamekeeper found himself covered with pitch before he had



gone more than halfway up, but he puffed on in spite of difficulties and at last reached a point from which he could look directly across the surface of the rock, but from which the cave was entirely hidden behind a projection in the wall of the cliff.

Angus saw what he supposed to be the whole shelf of

the rock, and he saw that there was no one there. He could see the fire and the frying pan, the egg shells lying about, and even the portion of bacon that Jean had not cooked. They were all in full view, but apparently the poachers had gone away into the woods, leaving their airy camp deserted.



There was no one there; of that he felt, certain.

"I'll just give'em a surprise," thought the gamekeeper to himself. "If they found a way up, I can, too. I'll help myself to a snack of that bacon, and if they come back and find me—well, I have my gun with me and I don't like being interrupted at my meals."

He backed down the tree like a fat cat, and made a desperate search for the path, and this time he actually succeeded in finding it. He chuckled to himself as he plunged into the passage and began to climb. He had gone about a third of the way up, when he reached the narrowest point of the channel and tried to force himself through, but the space was so small that no matter how much he tried, he could not get by. His gun was in his way too, but he could not leave it below, as that would be putting it into the hands of the poachers if they should return too soon.

In vain he twisted and squirmed, he could get no farther, and moreover he was afraid the gun might go off by accident in his struggles. When he found that he could not possibly go up, he decided to go down; but he found, to his horror, that he couldn't do that either. There he stuck, and

an angrier man than Angus Niel it would have been hard to find. A projecting rock punched him in the stomach, and when he pressed back against the rock behind him, to free himself, he scraped the skin off his back. Casting prudence to the winds, he howled with pain and rage, and the sound, carried up through the narrow passage, echoed in the cave like the roar of a lion.

The children, meanwhile, had kept in hiding, and when they heard these bloodcurdling sounds, they at first did not know what caused them, because, of course, they could not see what was happening below, but they knew very soon that they were not made by a wild animal because wild animals do not swear.

"It's Angus, stuck in the secret stairway," Alan said, smothering his laughter. "He's too fat to get through!" He crept to the edge and peeped down the hole. There, far below, he could see the top of Angus's head and the muzzle of his gun.

The Chief was a boy of great presence of mind. He backed hastily away from the hole and ran to the fall, snatching up the pan as he passed. This he filled with water



and, rushing back, he instantly sent a small deluge down upon the head of the hapless Angus.

The gamekeeper was dumbfounded by this new attack. Had he not with his own eyes seen that the rocky shelf was empty? How, then, could this thing be? He rolled his eyes upward, but there was no one in sight. He had heard all his life tales of witches and water cows, of spells cast upon people by fairies, of their being borne away by them into mountain caverns and held as prisoners for years and years; and he made up his mind that such a fate had now befallen him.

Firmly convinced that he was the victim of enchantment, he became palsied with terror, arid began to plead

with the unseen tormentors who he believed held him in thrall. "Only leave me loose, dear good little people," he howled, "and I'll never, never trouble you more!"

At this point Alan, shaking with mirth, sent down another panful of water, and Angus, redoubling his efforts, wrenched himself free, scraping off quantities of skin as he did so. They could hear him scuttling down the secret stair as fast as his legs would carry him, and when he emerged below, they watched him hurry away through the forest, casting fearful glances over his shoulder as he ran. Alan made a hollow of his two hands and sent after him a wild note, like the wailing of a banshee.

"Angus Niel, Angus Niel," rose the piercing note, "bring back my beautiful stag, my stag that lived by the tarn!"

As the sound reached his ears, Angus redoubled his speed, and they could hear him crashing through the underbrush as if the devil himself were really at his heels.

When the sounds died away in the distance, the Rob Roy Clan rolled on the floor of the cave with laughter.

"There!" said Alan, as he sat up and wiped his eyes. "That'll fix Angus Niel! We've scared him out of a year's

growth, and he'll never dare meddle with this place again. Come on, now. It's time to go home, but tomorrow we'll come back and fix this place up in a way that would make Robinson Crusoe green with envy."

They carefully put water on the ashes of their fire, stuck the sprigs of Evergreen Pine in their bonnets, and sped down the secret stairway and home.



Chapter IX

A Rainy Day

The next morning, as she was finishing the beds, Jean heard the pewit call and at once knew that the Clan was abroad. She ran to the door, and the three boys came in together, Jock from the garden, where he had been pulling weeds in the potato patch, and Sandy and Alan from the road. They were carrying a large basket, and Sandy was laden down with a coil of rope in addition.

"What have you got there?" demanded Jean.

"Stores for the Cave," said Alan, "and a rope to let down from the rock. Come on; let's go as soon as we can, for it looks like rain and we've got a lot to do to get the cave ready for wet weather."

"Where did you get 'em?" asked Jock, eyeing the basket with interest and wondering what was inside.

"Oh," said Alan, "I just asked Eppie. She lets me have

anything I want. My mother told her to stuff me while I'm here, and if I take the food off to the woods with me she doesn't have to cook it at home, so she's suited, and I am, too."

Jean hastily gathered together a few cooking utensils, and a few minutes later the four set forth, carrying the provisions and wearing proudly in their bonnets the sprig of pine, the insignia of the Clan. The sky was downcast and the woods seemed dark and gloomy as they made their way toward the waterfall.

"What'll we do if it rains?" cried Sandy. "It's no such fine thing just sitting still in a cave."

"I've a plan in my head," said the Chief. "Wait and see."

As they reached the fall, Alan sent Sandy and Jock to gather wood, while Jean guarded the basket at the foot of the rock and he himself darted up the secret stairway with the rope. From the top he let down the rope and Jean fastened it through the handles of the basket. Alan then drew it up, emptied the contents, and sent back the basket for the wood which Sandy and Jock had by that time collected.

They all worked as swiftly as possible, for the woods were growing darker and darker every minute and they could now hear the roll of thunder above the noise of the waterfall. They had gathered and sent up six basketfuls, when the rain came splashing down in earnest, and the Clan scrambled up the secret stair and into the cave for shelter. Alan had piled the wood in the cave as fast as he had pulled it up, and there was now a fine pile of dry fuel.

"Sandy, you build the fire," commanded the Chief, seating himself on the woodpile.

"The rain will put it out," said Sandy.

"Make it in the cave," said Alan.

"Then the smoke will put us out," cried Jean.

"Try it and see," said Alan. "We can't have lunch without a fire, for I've brought mealy puddings."

"Mealy puddings!" cried Sandy, licking his lips, and he went to work with a will. Fortunately the wind blew from the east, so they were not absolutely choked by the smoke, and soon the fire was burning briskly; making a spot of flaming color against the dark background of the cave. Jock ran to the fall and filled the pan with water, and soon the

mealy puddings were bobbing merrily about in the boiling water, while the boys, snug and safe in the shelter of the cave, watched the boughs of the pine trees swaying in the wind and waited for Jean to tell them that dinner was ready. She could cook but one thing at a time over the fire, but it was not long before the feast was spread, and they fell to with appetites that caused the food to disappear like dew before the morning sun.

"Losh!" said Sandy, rolling over with his feet to the fire, when he could eat no more, "I thought you said you had a rainy day plan, Chief."

"So I have," said Alan, drawing a little book from his pocket. "I'm going to read to you."

Sandy glanced at the book. "Not poetry, Chief!" he said with alarm. "Surely you don't mean that!"

"It isn't just poetry," said Alan. "It's a story about Roderick Dhu and Clan Alpine, and hunting deer in these very mountains. You'll like it, I know."

Sandy groaned and laid his head on his arm. "Go ahead," he said with resignation. "You're the Chief and I can't help myself."



"I'll be washing up the dishes while you read," said Jean.

"Blaze away," said Jock, who loved books as much as he disliked work.

"It's 'The Lady of the Lake,'" Alan began.

"Oh!" snorted Sandy, to whom Walter Scott was scarcely more than a name, "I thought it was about fighting and robbers, and things like that, and here it's about a lady! and it's about love too, I doubt! I wonder at you, Alan McRae!"

Alan made no reply but began to read. When he

reached a line about "Beauty's matchless eye," Sandy snored insultingly and was promptly kicked by Jock. But when Alan reached the lines

> "The stag at eve had drunk his fill
> Where danced the moon on Monan's rill,"

Sandy sat up and began to think the despised poem might amount to something after all. Jean had finished the dishes by this time and sat cross legged with her chin in her hand, staring into the fire, as Alan read how the splendid stag pursued by hunters,

> "Like crested leader proud and high
> Tossed his beamed frontlet to the sky;
> A moment gazed adown the dale,
> A moment snuffed the tainted gale,"

Then she cried out, "Michty me! It's just exactly like the stag we saw Angus Niel shoot by the tarn; isn't it, now, Alan?"

"And Benvoirlich is the very mountain we can see far away to the south from our house," interrupted Jock, when Alan reached that part of the poem.

"Did the hunters get the stag?" demanded Sandy, and "Go on with the tale," shouted all three. Alan read on and on by the flickering light of the fire, and so absorbed were they all in the story of the region they knew and loved so dearly that a shaft of sunlight from the west shot across the cave, lighting up the gloomy corners, before they realized that the day was far gone and the rain had stopped.

"It's time to go home," said Jean. "The sun is low in the west, and Father and Tam will be coming back wet and hungry from the hills, and no broth hot."

They packed the remainder of their supper carefully away in the basket and left it in the corner of the cave behind the woodpile, put out every spark of the fire, and picked their way carefully down the wet chasm to the ground.

"Hark," said Jock, as they started home. Faraway in the distance there was the frantic barking of a dog. They stopped and listened.

"It's Tam," said Jean, with conviction, "and he's after something. It's either the rabbit or else he's found a weasel hole," and instantly all the children were off at a bound, tearing through the woods in the direction of the sound. They had been having such a good time they had not once thought of Angus Niel, but as they reached the edge of the forest, there he was, standing behind a tree with his gun pointing toward the little gray house! They stopped short in their wild race and instantly hid themselves among the trees. They could see Tam barking and pawing the ground with the greatest excitement in the open field which lay between the forest and the garden patch.

"Tam's after the rabbit as sure as sure," Jock whispered to Alan, who had crept with him underneath a spreading pine. "That's the very place where he went after him before. If that old thief kills Tam, I'll—I'll—" Jock could think of no fit punishment for such a crime, and in his rage and excitement would have run right out into the open, after the dog if Alan had not held him by his jacket. "Let go—let go!" said Jock, struggling to get away. "I tell you, if he shoots that dog."

Just then a brown flash appeared from the garden wall, and Tam was after it at a bound, barking like mad. "It's the rabbit, and he's got him—he's got him!" murmured Jock, bouncing up and down with excitement with Alan still clinging to his coat. "Good old dog! good old Tam!" He was watching the dog so intently that he did not see Angus take careful aim, but the moment Tam reached the rabbit, seized it in his teeth, and shook it, a shot rang out; and the dog, with a howl of pain, dropped the rabbit and ran yelping toward the house on three legs, holding the fourth one in the air.

Angus immediately ran out from his hiding place, leaped the brook, and, dashing up the slope toward the house, picked up the dead rabbit and ran with it back into the woods. The children watched him as he fled, and, the moment he was out of sight, they burst from the shelter of the woods and tore up the hillside to the little gray house.

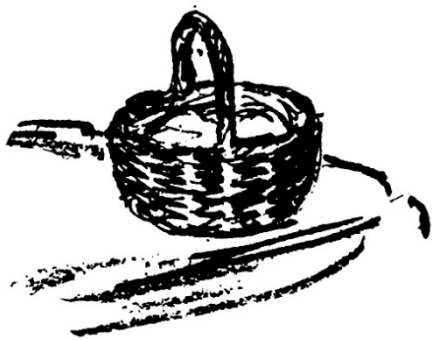
They found Tam sitting on the doorstep licking his paw and howling. He was instantly surrounded by four amateur doctors all anxious to relieve his pain. Jock ran for water to wash his leg, the flesh of which had been cruelly torn open

by the bullet. Jean ransacked the kist for bandages, and Alan held up the injured paw and tried to see if any bones were broken, while Sandy helplessly stroked Tam's tail, murmuring, "Good dog! good old Tam!" as he did so. By dint of their combined efforts the wound was cleansed and carefully bound with a rag, and by the time the Shepherd got home, Tam was lying on the hearth beside the fire, with Alan on his knees before him feeding him broth from a pan.

The Shepherd listened with a darkening brow to the story of Tam's injury. He had heard an account of the stag



the day before, so the new revelation of Angus's character did not surprise him, but when Alan rose from his knees and said, "Tomorrow the Rob Roy Clan will begin to make Angus Niel wish he'd never been born," Robin Campbell's comment was, "Give him rope enough and he'll hang himself, laddie," and Alan, his black eyes flashing with understanding, answered, "We'll see to it that he gets the rope."





Chapter X

On the Trail

Alan and Sandy left the little gray house in the late afternoon and walked together down the river road toward the village. At the bridge which spanned the stream they parted company, and Alan gave Sandy final instructions as to his duties on the next day. He was to watch Angus Niel's house, which lay some distance north of the village, and see what direction he took as he started upon his daily tour in the forests.

The estate of Glencairn covered a territory so large that Angus could not by any possibility make his rounds in one day or even in one week. The Clan knew well where he had spent his time for the two preceding days, and they thought he would be likely to start in a different direction on the morrow. They did not dare count upon his doing so,



however, and so Sandy was detailed to give a positive report as to his movements. The next morning, therefore, found Sandy sitting on a stone dyke not a great way from Angus's house, apparently absorbed in whittling and whistling, but in reality keeping a sharp lookout for any sign of life in the Niel household. He had not long to wait before he saw Angus leave the house and wander away into the forest with his gun on his shoulder. As they had surmised, he took

a direction entirely different from his route of the two days before.

Sandy waited until he was out of sight, and then hurried back to the bridge, where he met Alan by appointment, and the two walked briskly on to the little gray house together. When they reached it, the wag-at-the-wall clock was just striking nine, and Jean, her morning work done, was "caning" the hearth with blue chalk as a final touch of elegance to her clean kitchen.

"Come on," said Alan. "I've a plan in my head, and we'll have to start directly if we're going to carry it out. Let me have some of that blue chalk, Jean; we may need it. I've got plenty of food with me, so don't wait to put up anything."

"I'm with you," said Jean, giving a final flourish with the blue chalk before she clapped on her bonnet, and in another minute the Rob Roy Clan was afoot, leaving Tam nursing his wounded paw on the doorstep and gazing after them with pathetic eyes.

They left their luncheon in the cave and hurried on at Alan's command to the little mountain tarn where Angus had killed the stag, and there the Clan gathered about him

to hear his plan.

"I've been thinking about this," Alan began, "and I'm sure of two things. Angus must have a place where he puts the game he kills, and he must have somebody to help him. The other man comes along and carries it down the mountain to some point where he can ship it to the city. I say, let's find out where that hiding place is."

"What will we do with it when we find it?" asked Jean.

"That's where the blue chalk comes in," said Alan. "We'll let him know we've been there!"

"You'll never be writing your name there?" asked Sandy anxiously. "He'd be shooting us next!"

"Oh! Sandy, you're a daft body," said Jean, and Jock added: "Mind the Chief, you dunderhead, and keep your tongue behind your teeth. He's none so addled as you think!"

Sandy subsided a little sulkily, and Alan went on.

"When Angus crossed the lake with the stag he landed right over there by that dead pine tree, for I watched him to see, and the place where he hid the stag can't be far from there, because he came back so soon. We'll just take his

boat and see if we can't find it."

"Oh!" gasped Jean, who had never been in a boat in her life, "do you know how to make it go?"

"I can row and I can swim," said Alan, "but I tell you if anyone goes bouncing around in the boat, it will be just as bad as being bewitched by the water cow, you'll go to the bottom!"

"I can row, too," said Sandy.

Jean wished she hadn't come, but she was bound she would not show it before the boys, so she said, "Sal! who's afraid?" and when they found the boat, she was the first one in it.

Angus was so sure that no one would find his boat, which was carefully screened by the bushes, that he had not even hidden the oars. So it was soon afloat with Jock at the tiller, Sandy on the bottom, Jean in the prow holding to the sides of the boat, scarcely daring to speak for fear of upsetting it, and Alan at the oars. The lake was smooth, and they reached the opposite shore without mishap, except that twice Alan "caught a crab" and splashed water all over Jock, and Sandy filled both shoes as he jumped out

of the boat. They pulled it up under the shelter of the dead pine, anchored it by a stone, and cautiously made their way into the woods.

They were now in a very wild section of the mountains, where it seemed as if no one had ever been since the beginning of the world.

"Just hear the stillness," whispered Jean, keeping close to Jock. There was a sort of trail leading back into the woods, which looked as if it might have been made by wild animals going to the lake for a drink. This they followed for some distance until it became indistinct, and then Alan called the Clan together for counsel.

"We'll go just a little farther," he said, "and then, if we don't see any sign of the place, it may be best to go back, for it is easy to get lost in these woods. We are going east now and luckily the sun is shining. When we do turn back, we must keep the sun behind us and we can't help coming out somewhere on the lake. Remember the pewit call if we lose sight of each other."

They resumed their stealthy walk through the woods, and a few rods farther on came to a wide open space which

sloped eastward for some distance down the mountainside. Here they paused.

"We're getting a good way from the boat," said Jean.

"Yes," said Alan, "and I am just wondering whether we'd better go any farther. We don't want to cross this open space, and I see no sign of Angus's storehouse. I hate to give up, though, for we must be very near it." He searched in every direction with his eyes, and suddenly exclaimed under his breath, "Look there!"

"Where?" breathed the Clan, rigid with excitement.

"Do you see that pile of rocks?" said Alan, pointing into the woods beyond the clearing.

"Yes," said Jock, "but there are rocks all around. I don't see that they're any different from others."

"Maybe not," said Alan, "but I see something that looks like the corner of a hunter's shelter sticking out behind that big boulder, and I say, let's skirt around this open place and see."

"Do you want us all to go?" asked Sandy, hoping the Chief would say no.

"You stay here," Alan answered, to his great relief, "and

Jean, you come a little farther with us. Then you and Sandy can keep out of sight and watch. If you see a man, keep still in your places and give the pewit call. Jock and I will go on around the clearing and get a better look at those rocks."

Sandy crouched down in the bracken, and two or three hundred feet farther on Jean stopped also, while Alan and Jock cautiously crept on toward their goal, and, by making a wide detour, approached the rocks from the north instead of the west. As they neared them, it was plain that Alan was right. There really was a shelter built against an overhanging rock and almost concealed from view by pine boughs which formed a screen before it. Little by little the boys crept nearer and nearer, stopping every few steps to be sure there was no sign of life about the place. At last they were within a few feet of the rude camp. The shelter was scarcely more than a hole under the rocks, but there was a blackened spot where there had been a fire, a few pans were standing about, and in one corner a pile of evergreen boughs was covered with well-cured deerskins. A fresh hide ready to cure was spread out on the rocks nearby.

"This is the place," whispered Jock. "There is the skin of



the stag. Now what are you going to do?" For answer Alan slipped from behind the rocks, crept stealthily into the camp, and on the underside of the rock wrote in big letters with blue chalk

ANGUS NIEL

POACHER

Your sin has found you out!

R. R. C.

Then he crawled swiftly back out of sight and, followed

by Jock, made his way as fast as he could toward Jean's hiding place. To Jean the time that they were gone seemed hours long. The place was lonely, and she was afraid, not only of their finding the man at home in his wild lodge, but even of brownies and elves.

A rabbit stuck his ears up over a nearby log and scuttled away when he saw her. The leaves made a lonely sound as they rustled over her head, and when at last she saw a black object moving about among the trees at some distance beyond the rock pile, it is not surprising that she immediately gave the pewit call, loud and clear.

The boys heard it and instantly vanished behind some bushes. The dark object moving among the trees seemed to hear it too and, springing forward, came bounding toward the rocks, barking as it came. Jean was not much less anxious when she knew for certain that it was a dog, for a watch dog in that lonely place might be quite as dangerous as a wolf. Moreover, she soon saw, a little distance behind the dog, a man with a gun on his shoulder. She saw the dog reach the camp and go sniffing about on the rocks, and her heart almost stood still as it gave a deep howl and started

away as if it scented game.

"He's on the trail of Alan and Jock," thought Jean, wringing her hands. "Oh, what shall I do? The man will surely follow, for he'll think the dog is after game." She sprang to her feet and ran back to Sandy.

"Come quick," she said in a low voice. "The dog smells them; we must get into the boat and have it ready for the boys to jump into. There is not a moment to lose." She sped past him as she spoke, and Sandy came galloping after.

Alan and Jock, who had seen and heard all that Jean had, were now tearing at top speed through the woods and knew from answering whistles that Jean and Sandy were on the way to the boat.

The man had by this time reached the camp and was staring at the blue chalk-marks on the rock, as if unable to believe his own eyes. He did not stop there long. He saw at once that an enemy had found his hiding place, and that the dog was on his trail. Leaping down the rocks, he started across the clearing on a run toward the lake, his gun in his hand. Jock and Alan realized that they could hardly reach the landing place before the dog did, so they changed their

course and veered a little to the north, thinking that in this way they stood more chance of concealment and that they could signal the boat and get aboard in a less conspicuous place.

By this dodge the dog lost the scent of the boys and, nosing the ground, found the trail of Sandy and Jean. Baying frightfully he came bounding through the underbrush and arrived at the landing just in time to see Sandy push the boat from the shore with Jean in the bow. Furious at being cheated of his prey, the dog ran back and forth on the shore, making mad leaps in the direction of the boat and barking as if possessed.

"Oh, where are the boys?" cried the distracted Jean. They lingered in an agony of suspense, not daring to leave until they saw that Jock and Alan were safe, and then from a little distance up the shore came the pewit call. Sandy rose to the emergency and, pulling frantically at the oars, succeeded in reaching the point from which the call seemed to come. The scared faces of Jock and Alan rose from the bracken, and in another moment they had leaped into the boat, nearly upsetting it as they did so. Alan seized an oar,



and he and Sandy together got the boat out of sight behind a bend in the shore. Here they hid among the bushes on the bank until they saw the man appear at the landing place, scan the lake carefully, and then go back into the woods, calling the dog to go with him. Even then they were afraid to stir for they did not know whether he had gone back to camp or was stalking about among the trees searching for them.

They waited for what seemed a week but saw nothing further of the man, and when at last they heard the report

of a gun and the barking of a dog far away down the mountain, they felt safe. He was evidently looking in another direction for the intruders, and at once Alan gave the word to go back to their own side of the lake. They skirted the shores, keeping a sharp lookout all the while, and at length reached the landing place. The weary members of the Clan breathed a sigh of relief as they found themselves safe on their own ground again, arid their spirits rose.

Jock told what Alan had written on the rock, and Alan was so much impressed by that achievement that he took out the blue chalk and on a rock by the tarn wrote "Here Angus Niel, gamekeeper and poacher, shot a stag"; and on the stone where the boat had been, he put the mystic initials "R. R. C."

"There," said Alan, pausing to admire his handiwork, "that'll keep him guessing, and scared too."

"What can we do next?"

"Take away his boat," said Jean promptly.

"Good idea!" cried Alan.

"Where can we hide it?" asked Jock.

"I'm mortal hungry," said Sandy. "Couldn't we eat first?"

"No food until this job is done," said the Chief firmly. "We'll never have another chance when we know where the other man and Angus both are. It's now or never!"

"But where shall we hide it?" demanded Jock again.

"I'll tell you," cried Jean, her eyes dancing with mischief. "We can carry it to the burn and float it down to the cave!"

This was a stroke of genius, no less, and every member of the Clan looked upon Jean with respect bordering upon awe. At the point where the lake emptied into the burn there were loose rocks, about which the water rushed in a swift cataract, but, below, the current flowed more gently toward the fall. It was deep only in spots where the trout loved to hide, but it was not a stream anywhere in its course upon which one would launch a boat for pleasure. The rocks were so near the surface that the weight of even one person might ground it, but afloat and empty it might be carried clear to the rocks above the cave. The Clan considered the plan carefully, standing upon the rocky banks.

"How would we guide it?" asked Sandy doubtfully.

"There's a rope on the end of the boat," said Jean

promptly, "and we could push it off with sticks if it got stuck."

"Come on," cried Alan, and the four plotters rushed back to the lake and pulled the boat out of the water. Alan took the prow and Jock took the stern, while Sandy and Jean supported it on each side, and in this way, after many struggles, they succeeded in carrying it to a place below the



rapids where they dared launch it.

"I'll hold the rope," said Alan, "and you, Sandy, take an oar and go down the other side of the stream, so you can push it off if it gets stuck on that side."

"How'll I get across?" asked Sandy.

This was a poser at first, but Alan found a way.

"Get into the boat," he said, "and we'll push it across where there aren't any stones sticking up. You can pole it across with your oar, and I'll keep hold of the rope."

Sandy jumped in at once, and the boat, in spite of some swirling, was finally near enough to the opposite bank so he could jump out. This he did, taking the oar with him. It was an exciting journey downstream, for the boat bumped against rocks and caught on fallen trees, and it was a good hour before the children, tired out but triumphant, finally dragged it out of the water just above the falls.

"If we had our rope, we could drag it to the edge of the cliff and let it down in front of the cave," cried Jean in another flash of inspiration, and Sandy instantly rushed down the rock, made the necessary detour, and climbed the secret stair to the cave. He then whistled, and three heads

appeared over the top of the cliff.

"I'll throw up the rope and when you let the boat down, I'll steady it," said Sandy.

"Heave away," cried Alan, and after a few trials the rope came flying up on the cliff and was soon looped around the boat. Then the three braced their feet against the rocks and slowly lowered the boat by the rope fastened to the prow, and by their own rope, while Sandy steadied it below. They threw down the rope-end after it, and a few moments later the rapturous Clan hauled the boat into the cave! They sat in it to eat their luncheon and were so lost in admiration of their enterprise and their booty that they did not start home until the level rays of the sun warned them that it was late.





Chapter XI

Angus Niel and the Canny Clan

The days that followed were days of stirring adventure to the Rob Roy Clan, and days of continuous and surprising misery to Angus Niel. Never in his history as gamekeeper of Glen Cairn had he had such experiences. The very trees in the woods seemed to be bewitched. Wherever he went he was followed by some mysterious power that seemed to know his every movement. If he killed any game, the fact was advertised and the place marked by signs in blue chalk. Not only that, but the very path of his approach to the spot was marked by pointing arrows and some such legend as "This way to the glen where Angus Niel killed a deer" would decorate a neighboring rock. On other rocks appeared pertinent questions addressed to him. "How much did you get for the stag?" was one of them, and there

were also queries as to where he found the best market for game. He was kept so busy searching the forest for these incriminating signs and rubbing them out, that he could not follow his regular rounds. Even this did not avail, for if he erased them on one day, it was but a matter of time before the letters appeared again as fresh and blue as ever. Nor was this all. He was haunted by a wailing voice which reached him even in the remote fastnesses of the forest. He was sure to hear it if he ventured into the neighborhood of the waterfall, and he usually avoided that region as if it harbored a pestilence.

Once late in the afternoon he shot two hares and hid them under some rocks, intending to carry them across the lake in the morning, but when he went for them, they had disappeared altogether, and above the place where they had been was written in blue chalk, "Sacred to the memory of two hares, killed and hidden here by Angus Niel on June 12th."

When he saw this epitaph, Angus's hair really stood on end with fright, and on the day he found that the boat was gone, leaving no trace, he became absolutely terror-



stricken. He sought for it behind every rock and in every likely nook about the lake, consuming days in the quest, and was appalled on his next trip thither to find all the incidents of his search faithfully recorded on the rocks, each one signed with the mystic initials R. R. C.

It took ingenuity, persistence, and some degree of danger on the part of the clan to accomplish these things, but one could depend upon finding these qualities in any

Campbell or McGregor, and Sandy, having been made a blood brother, faithfully lived up to the duties it entailed. He became an expert detective and sleuth hound, discovering and reporting Angus's movements each day to the enterprising Clan and its resourceful Chief.

At Alan's suggestion, the Clan took for its motto "We must be canny," and canny they certainly were. They even changed their programme from day to day, and in this way just when Angus felt he was about to discover his tormentors and know if they were human and not witches, they found some new method of annoyance and he was all at sea again.

Once they gave him a respite of nearly a week and Angus, having erased many signs and finding no new ones, was beginning to think his troubles were over, when suddenly arrows bearing bits of paper inviting him to visit the fall would suddenly drop at his feet. It had taken the Clan nearly all their spare time for the week to make the bows and arrows, by which this wonder was accomplished. Meanwhile they had lived like lords, feasting upon trout and the generous store of provisions with which Alan

continued to supply the cave. They even began to see how it was possible for Rob Roy and his men to live upon forest fare, for the pool below the fall was a wonderful fishing hole, and small game was plentiful if they had cared to become poachers themselves.

On one red-letter day, they roasted the two hares which Angus had killed, and cooked potatoes in the ashes. Each day was filled with fresh adventures, and the wild outdoor life agreed with Alan so well that his thin cheeks began to fill out and glow with healthy color and it was not long before he looked as sturdy and strong as Jock himself.

It was curious that what Alan gained in flesh and spirits, Angus Niel at the same time seemed to lose. He was so worried by these strange visitations that his round eyes took on a haunted expression, and Sandy observed that he kept looking over his shoulder as if he thought someone were following him, even when he walked the village streets.

He dared not stay away from the forest lest others should discover the dreadful blue signs before he did, and at the same time he was afraid to go in. He swung like a pendulum between these two difficulties and grew daily

more nervous and unhappy. By the end of June he had lost ten pounds of flesh as well as the money he might have made out of poaching and selling the game. By the middle of July he was so haggard that people began to remark on his appearance. There seemed no way out of his troubles but to lie about them, and soon wild stories were circulated through the village about the haunted forest and its dangers.

Women were warned not to let the children stray into the woods lest they be carried away by witches or water cows, and it was also reported that a gang of poachers of a particularly bloodthirsty character infested the region, carrying off game and property and leaving no trace. Angus had been watching this band of desperadoes for some time, he said, and knew there were at least twenty of them who would stop at nothing.

With Angus's tale of the mysterious loss of his boat, the excitement reached a climax, and there was talk of organizing an armed band of men from the village to protect the woods and rid the neighborhood of the bandits. The people were surprised that Angus himself should

oppose this plan, but as he was gamekeeper and in authority, the matter was dropped. To Angus's horror, however, these rumors and events were all faithfully recorded on rocks not far from his own home soon after, and he realized that to the very doors of his own house he was pursued by the same mysterious and vigilant power. It was then that he lost his appetite, and if the Clan could have followed him into his home and seen him look under his bed before he got into it at night, their joy would have been full.

The wild stories he told had the effect of keeping everyone else out of the forest and made the Clan more than ever free to stalk their prey without fear of discovery. In this occupation several exciting weeks passed by, and then there came an unhappy surprise to the Clan, and it was not Angus Niel who sprang it upon them either.

One morning in late July, Alan came up the road toward the little gray house, where he was now so much at home, looking very glum indeed. Sandy was with him, wearing a face as solemn as a funeral procession. Jock and Jean saw them coming and hailed them with a shout, and Tam, who

had not quite recovered from his injury, came dashing down the brae on three legs to greet them. Even Tam's joyful bark did not lift the shadow from their faces.

Jean cried out from the top of the brae, "Whatever can be the matter with you? You're looking as miserable as two hens in a rainstorm!"

"Trouble enough," answered Sandy, and Jean and Jock at once came hurrying down the slope to hear the bad news. They met at the riverside, and Sandy, who was bursting to tell it, cried out, "What do you think? Alan's got to go home! His mother's sent for him!" One look at Alan's melancholy face confirmed this dreadful statement and the gloom instantly became general.

The Clan sat down on the ground in a depressed circle to discuss the matter and its bearing on their plans.

"Don't you think your mother would let you stay if you should ask her?" suggested Jock.

"No," said Alan, with sad conviction. "She said I was to come at once, and I'll have to start this very afternoon. I'm to drive down to the boat and get to Glasgow by water; I'll spend the night there and go on to London in the

morning."

"Sal, but you'll be seeing a lot of the world," said Jock. "I wish I were going with you."

"I wish you all were," said Alan.

"We'll likely be having more traveling than we want," said Jean, "when we have to give up the wee bit hoosie and go out and walk the world." She looked up at the little gray house as she spoke, and her eyes filled with tears.

"It's the end of the Clan; that's what it is," said Sandy with deepening despondency.

"Oh, come now!" said Alan. "It's not so bad as all that, and I'm surely coming back next summer. I know my mother'll let me, for she'll see how much good it's done me to be here. Just look at that," he added, baring his arm and knotting his biceps. "Climbing around the cave and chasing after Angus Niel have made me as tough as a knot. She won't know me when she sees me."

"I wonder if we shall know you the next time we see you, if we ever do," said Jean.

"Ho!" said Alan, trying to smile gayly, "of course you will! I'll have a sprig of the evergreen pine and give the

pewit call, and then you'll be sure."

"What good will your coming back next summer do us?" said Jock. "We shan't be here to see you! Our leases run out in October, and nobody knows where we'll go after that! We've got to move out, so the Auld Laird can have more space to raise game for Angus Niel to kill," he finished bitterly.

There seemed no way of brightening this sad prospect, and the Clan sat for a few moments in mournful silence. Alan tried hard to think of something comforting to say.

"I'll tell you what," he exclaimed at length. "We can still be a Clan, whether we see each other or not. We'll remember we're all blood brothers just the same."

"And that you are our Chief," added Jean, trying to look cheerful.

"Can't we go back to the cave just once more?" said Sandy.

"I've got to be at the bridge at one o'clock," said Alan. "I've said goodbye to Eppie, and she is packing my things, and putting up a lunch, so I don't have to do anything but step into the carriage when I get there. What time is it

now?"

Jean flew up the slope to the house and called back from the door, "It's ten o'clock."

"Come on, then, my merry men!" cried Alan, and the four started off at a brisk trot, looking anything but merry as they went.

"We shan't want to come here anymore," said Jock, when they reached the cave. "So we may as well take everything away."

"Oh," said Alan, "something might happen to keep you in the Glen Easig. You never can tell. You'd better take back the pots and pans, but leave the wood, and then if we are here next summer, it will be all ready for cooking a jolly old mess of trout."

"Whatever shall we do with the boat?" asked Jean. This was a conundrum, but the Chief, as usual, was equal to the occasion.

"There's only one thing we can do," he said. "It will just dry up and fall to pieces up here; we'll let it down over the rock by the ropes and leave it in the pool. Then when Angus finds it, he'll be perfectly sure he was bewitched and

be more afraid of the falls than ever!"

They worked hurriedly, for the time was short, and in another hour the boat was floating in the fishing pool, securely tied to a pine tree on the bank. They packed pots and pans in the basket and lowered it over the rock by the rope, and when everything was done, Alan took the blue chalk and drew a sprig of pine on the wall of the cave with the initials R. R. C. beside it. The four children then scrambled down the secret stairway, feeling as if they had said goodbye forever to a dear friend. When they reached the little gray house, they left the basket in the kitchen, and the entire Clan walked with Alan back to the bridge, where they found the carriage waiting.

Alan made short work of his goodbyes. He shook hands all round and sprang quickly into the carriage, and as it rattled away with him down the road, he stood up, waving his bonnet with the spray of evergreen pine in it and whistling the pewit call.

"Dagon't," said Sandy, when the carriage passed out of sight around a bend in the road. "Dagon't, we'll never find another like the Chief." If Jean and Jock had felt able to say

anything, they would have echoed the statement. As it was, Sandy drew his kilmarnock bonnet over his eyes, thrust his hands into his pockets, and started dejectedly toward his own house, leaving Jean and Jock, equally miserable, to return alone to the wee bit hoosie on the brae.



Chapter XII

News

The rest of the week seemed at least a month long to the lonely twins. Sandy came to see them, to be sure, but with the passing of the Chief, the flavor seemed gone from the play, and the Clan made no further expeditions after Angus Niel.

"He can just kill all the game he wants to," said Jean. "It's the worse for the Auld Laird, I doubt, but who cares for that, so long as he leaves Tam alone and keeps away from here? It's nothing to me."

Their father had been so taken up with his work and with turning over in his mind plans for the future, when they should be "walking the world," that he paid little attention to their punishment of Angus Niel, about which he knew little and cared less. He was absorbed in planning the best market for his sheep and in getting as much from

his garden as he could, hoping to sell what he was unable to use himself, when the time came to leave. His usually cheerful face had grown more and more troubled as the summer wore on, and it was seldom now that his bagpipes woke the mountain echoes, and whenever he did while away a rainy evening with music, the melodies were as wild and mournful as his own sad thoughts.

Angus Niel's barometer now rose again. Finding himself no longer pursued by his unseen foes, his waning self-confidence returned, and it was only a week or two after Alan's departure that wonderful stories began to go about the village concerning his prowess in ridding the woods of thieves and marauders single-handed.

"I've even found my boat," he announced one evening to a group of men lounging about the village store, "and it was no human hands that put it where I found it either! It was below the falls, if you'll believe me, safe and sound and tight as ever. Any man that is easily scared would better not be walking the woods in that direction, I'm telling you, or likely he'd be whisked away by the little people and shut up in some cave in the hills. I felt the drawing myself once, but



I knew how to manage. I was just gey firm with them, and they knew I wasna fearful and let me go. It's none so easy being a gamekeeper. It takes a bold man, and a canny one, and well the poacher gang knew that. They're gone and good riddance. It's taken me all summer to bring it about."

"Oh," murmured Jock to Jean, when this was repeated to them by Sandy the following Sabbath, "wouldn't Alan

like to hear that?" It was on that very Sabbath, too, that they learned the Dominie had recovered and that school was to reopen on the following day. This was good news to the twins, for like all Scotch children they longed for an education, and the next morning, bright and early, they were on the road to the village, carrying some scones and hard boiled eggs for their luncheon, in a little tin pail.

The days passed swiftly after that, for, with the house to care for, lessons to get, and the walk of five miles to school and back, there was little time for moping or even dreading the day when they must leave their highland home.

It was late August when they came rushing home one afternoon, bursting with a great piece of news, which they had learned in the village. Never had they covered the five miles of the homeward journey more quickly, but when they reached the little gray house, their father had not yet returned from the pastures, though it was after his time. The two children ran back of the house to the cow byre, and there in the distance they saw him coming across the barren moor. He was walking slowly, with his head bent as though he were tired and discouraged, and Tam, limping

along beside him, looked discouraged too. The twins gave a wild whoop and raced across the moor to meet them. Jock got there first, but was too out of breath to speak for an instant.

"Dear, dear! What can the matter be?" said their father, looking from one excited face to the other.

"Oh, Father," gasped Jean, finding her tongue first, "you never can guess, so I'll tell you. The Auld Laird's dead."

The Shepherd stood still in his tracks, too stunned for



words.

"Aye!" cried Jock, wishing to share in the glory of such an exciting revelation. "He's as dead as a salt herring."

"Oh, Father!" cried Jean, "aren't you glad? Now we won't have to leave the wee bit hoosie and the Glen."

"I'm none so sure of that," said the Shepherd slowly, when he had recovered from the first shock of surprise. "The new Laird may be worse than the old. Be that as it may, I'm not one to rejoice at the death of any man. Death is a solemn thing, my dawtie, but the Lord's will be done, and I'm not pretending to mourn."

"We went to the village," cried Jean, "to get a bit of meat for the pot, and there was a whole crowd of people around the post office door. 'Twas the post-master gave us the news, and Mr. Craigie and Angus Niel have put weeds on their hats and look as mournful as Tam when he's scolded. We saw them out of the schoolhouse window not two hours gone."

"They have reason to mourn," said the Shepherd grimly, "not for the Auld Laird's death only, but for their own lives as well. Aye, that's a subject for grief." He shook his head

dubiously, and, seeming to feel it was an occasion for a moral lesson, he added, "'Mark the perfect man and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.'"

"What has that to do with the Auld Laird?" asked Jock, much mystified.

"Nothing at all, maybe," answered the Shepherd, "but it's a wise word to remember against our own time."

"I wish Angus Niel would remember it," exclaimed Jean.

"And Mr. Craigie no less," added Jock.

"Well, well," said the Shepherd, "heard ye anything more in the village?"

"Aye, that we did," said Jean, who loved to prolong the excitement of news.

"Let me tell that," said Jock. "You told about the Auld Laird. Well, then, Father, there's all kinds of tales about the new Laird. It's said he's a wee bit of a laddie, not more than four years old, and not the son of the Auld Laird at all, but a cousin or something. It's said he's weak and sickly-like and not long for this world."

"Sandy's mother was in the village and walked with us to the bridge," interrupted Jean, "and she heard that the

heir is a young man living in Edinburgh, and not even known to the Auld Laird, who had no near kin. She had it from the minister's wife, so it must be true."

"Didn't Mr. Craigie say anything? He ought to know more about it than anyone. He's the Auld Laird's factor to carry out his will while he was living. It's likely he'd know more than any other about his will, now he's dead," said the Shepherd.

"Mrs. Crumpet says he goes about with his mouth shut up as tight as an egg, as though he knew a great deal more than other folk, being so intimate-like with the Laird," said Jean.

"Aye!" added Jock, "but she said she believed there was a muckle he did not know at all, and he was keeping his mouth shut to make folks think he knew but wasna telling."

Jean now took up the tale. "Mrs. Crumpet had all the news in town," she said, "and she told us that Angus Niel said he hoped the new Laird was fond of the hunting and would appreciate his work in preserving the game and driving poachers from the forests of Glen Cairn. He said he had done the work of ten men, and it was well that people

should know it and be able to tell the new Laird, when he comes into his own!"

Even the Shepherd couldn't help smiling at that, and as for Jean and Jock, they shouted with laughter. In spite of themselves, the children and their father felt such relief from anxiety that they walked back to the little gray house with lighter hearts than they had felt for some time. Whoever the new Laird might be, it would take time to settle the estate and find out the will of its new owner, and meanwhile they could live on in their old home. Beyond that, they could even hope that they might not have to go at all.

That night Jean cooked the first of their early potatoes from the garden for supper and a bit of ham to eat with them, by way of celebrating their reprieve, and after supper the Shepherd got out his bagpipes and played "The Blue Bells of Scotland" until the rafters rang again. Jean stepped busily about the kitchen in tune to the music, humming the words to herself.

> "Oh where, tell me where is your
> Highland laddie gone?
> He's gone with streaming banners

where noble deeds are done,
And it's oh! in my heart, I wish him safe at home."

And she thought of Alan as she sang. Afterward, when Jock and Jean were safely stowed away for the night, the Shepherd went over and brought from the table in the room his well-worn copy of Robert Burns's "Poems," and the last view Jean had of him before she went to sleep, he was reading "The Cotter's Saturday Night" aloud to himself by the light of a flickering candle.





Chapter XIII
The New Laird

It was Friday when news of the Auld Laird's death reached the village, and on the following Sabbath there was not an empty seat in the kirk, for everyone was anxious to hear the latest gossip about the event which meant so much to everyone in the region. There was no newspaper in the village, and the news of the week was passed about by word of mouth in the kirkyard after service, or on week days was retailed over the counter at the village post office, which was post office and general store in one.

The Campbells were early in their pew, and the twins watched the other worshipers as they came slowly up the aisle and took their places before time for the service to begin. Sandy winked at them most indecorously across the church, but his mother poked him to remind him of his

duty, and he sent no more silent messages to the other members of the Clan.

There was an air of expectation, which seemed to affect everyone in the kirk. Even the minister looked as if he had something special on his mind, and as for Mr. Craigie, he was as solemnly important, Sandy said afterwards, "as though he were the corpse himself," while Angus Niel acted like nothing less than the chief mourner.

In the kirkyard he let it be known that he was entirely familiar with the details of the Auld Laird's funeral, which had occurred in London the day before, though how the particulars reached him in so short a time must forever remain a mystery.

It was Mr. Craigie, however, who gave out the important news which everyone had felt must be coming. On the steps after service he said to Mr. Crumpet, "It's likely, Andrew, that you may have more time about your lease. I've had news that the new Laird is coming soon to the castle with his lawyers and some other people to look over the estate and take possession. Eppie McLean is to get ready for quite a party of the gentry."

Mrs. Crumpet was standing near her husband, and she was a bold woman who would have asked a question of the Auld Laird himself, if she had had occasion. "Then it's the sickly bit laddie who's the heir?" she said, "and not the Edinburgh man?"

Mr. Craigie looked majestic and waved her aside, merely saying, as he went down the steps, "It isna an Edinburgh body," but giving no hint as to whether it was man, woman, or child. The people who had gathered about him thinking to hear something definite looked resentfully at his back as he walked away, and Mrs. Crumpet openly expressed her opinion that he knew nothing more about it himself. "If he did, he couldn't help letting it dribble out by degrees, like a leaky kirn, being too stingy to tell it out free, like any other body," she said.

Mrs. Crumpet was a woman of rare penetration. Even Sandy didn't often get ahead of his mother.

For another week the village waited in suspense for further news, and then on Saturday the report spread like wildfire through the town that the new Laird with his party had arrived at the castle the night before.



It was Sandy who brought the news to the little gray house. "And they say there were three carriage loads of them and they never got to Glen Cairn until dark," he cried; "and the tale is that the castle ovens have never been cool since the word came a week ago! Mother says Eppie McLean has been laying in provisions as if she looked for seven lean years like Joseph in Egypt."

"Losh!" interrupted Jock, "I wish Alan was here. Wouldn't we get some of those good things for the cave, though."

"But that isn't all the news," cried Sandy, who had come three miles to tell it and was not going to let it burst from him too suddenly. "There's more."

"What is it, Sandy?" cried Jean, dancing with impatience. "Hurry, lad; let out what's bottled up in you or you'll blow the cork!"

"Well," exploded Sandy, "you'll get some of the good things without Alan, I'm telling you, for there's to be a grand feast at the castle, and everybody is asked to come! There's a sign up in the village, and it's to be Monday at five o'clock. They say Eppie McLean has fowls waiting by the dozen and a barrel of tatties ready for the pot. Losh! I don't see how the new Laird can stay weakly with so much to fill him up."

"Sal!" cried Jean, "if he's such a wee laddie as they say, it's likely his mother will be the one to say what's to be done in Glen Cairn, and it's not likely she'll be wanting to go rampaging over the country shooting game like the Auld

Laird."

"Ye can never tell," said Sandy, with a worldly air. "Some say ladies is worse than men."

"Never believe that," said Jean, promptly, and then she added a little wistfully, "especially if they are mothers."

At church the next day the congregation was in such a state of excitement it was with the greatest difficulty that the proper Sabbath decorum was observed. Sandy Crumpet brazenly looked over his shoulder every time anyone passed up the aisle, thinking that perhaps the new Laird and his mother might come in at any moment, and even the grown people looked sidewise, but no new faces appeared and fear was expressed afterwards that the mother of the heir was of the Established Church. Mrs. Crumpet said she had always heard that among the gentry the women were fiercer in their religion than the men. The Shepherd remembered the Laird of Kinross, but said nothing.

On the way home from church Jean and Jock noticed that smoke was issuing from all the castle chimneys. It was now early autumn, and, as Jean said, the castle must be damp from, standing so long empty, and they had the right

to warm it up for the wee Laird, him being so sickly.

The suspense of the long weeks of summer had now become acute. If the Auld Laird's wish to turn the tenants out of their holdings to make Glen Cairn into a large game preserve was to be carried out, the time for doing it was near, and the people looked forward to the supper at the castle with both hope and dread.

Everyone was to be there, and on Monday a wonderful amount of preparation was going forward in every cottage and farmhouse on the estate. Jean had her father's blacks on the line and thoroughly brushed early in the morning, and the Sabbath clothes for all three of them laid out on the chairs in "the room" by noon. At four o'clock they were on their way to the castle. Jock had wanted to start at three, but Jean was firm.

"It isna genteel to be going so early," she said. "T'will look greedy, and you'll not get fed the sooner."

Anyone would have said Jean looked pretty that day, for she was not wearing her "Saturday face," and the little curls had crept around her head unbeknownst and were blowing in bright tendrils about her forehead under the edge of her

bonnet with its sprig of pine. Her cheeks were pink and her eyes bright with health and excitement, and Robert Campbell, looking with pride at his sturdy son and daughter, said to himself, "It's a sonsie lassie and braw lad. I wish their mother could see them."

They walked down the river road, where the autumn colors were beginning to appear, and at the bridge met the Crumpet family all dressed in their best, also on their way to the castle. Sandy had scrubbed himself till his face was shining like a glass bottle, and the sprig of pine waved proudly from his bonnet, too. At every branch road they were joined by others, and when they neared the castle gates there was already quite a large group of people from the village as well. Everyone was in a state of tense excitement, for the fate of all hung in the balance. Since the tenure of their homes was at the mercy of the new Laird, his ideas and disposition were of vital importance in their lives, and they were keen to see him and find out for themselves what manner of person he might be. Mr. Crumpet was looking very glum. He took a morose view of life at best, and the present circumstances certainly

warranted apprehension.

"If it's a wee bit of a laddie, as we are led to expect," he said to the Shepherd, "he'll have no judgment of his own, and be dependent on them as has him in charge. Mr. Craigie will not be loosening his hold, and with only a weak woman and a sickly boy to deal with, he'll wind 'em around his finger like a wisp o' wool. It's my opinion we'll have Mr. Craigie to deal with more than ever."

"Well," said Mrs. Crumpet philosophically, "and if we jump at all 't will be but from the fire back to the frying pan again, I'm thinking."

Various other opinions were expressed by one and another as the tenants of Glen Cairn followed the wide drive which led to the castle doors. Most of them had never before been inside the walls of the park, and they looked about them with interest at the unkempt and overgrown drive and at the bracken and heather spreading even over the lawns. It was evident that the place had been left to take care of itself for many years.

It was a warm day in late September, and though there was a touch of red in the ivy which draped the gray castle

walls, the air was mellow with the haze of autumn and musical with the buzzing of bees.

Mr. Craigie, looking more like a pair of tongs than ever, stood on the terrace with the minister and his wife, while Angus Niel, swelling with importance, ranged round the outskirts of the crowd as they approached the castle, gradually herding them toward the entrance. When they were all gathered in front of the terrace, the minister came forward to the steps and lifted his hand. A hush instantly fell upon the waiting people, and the minister spoke.

"Her ladyship has asked me to say to you that she and the new Laird will meet you here," he said, "and afterward conduct you to the banqueting hall, where supper will be served. It is their desire to know you all personally, and I will be here to present you as you come up the steps."

There was a surprised look on every face as the minister finished speaking. What manner of landlord could this be, who made a point of knowing his tenants as men and women the moment he came to the estate? It was a breathless moment when at last the great castle doors swung open, revealing a group of people standing in the

entrance. There was an instant's pause, and then a tall strong looking woman stepped forward upon the terrace, with her hand resting lightly on the shoulder of a sturdy black-haired boy nearly as tall as herself. The boy was dressed in kilts, with the Campbell plaid flung over his shoulder and a spray of evergreen pine nodding gayly from his Glengarry bonnet.

"Michty me! It's Alan!" exclaimed Jock, so stunned by surprise that his knees nearly gave way under him, while Jean, her eyes shining like stars, clutched her father's hand, too stunned to realize at first that Alan and the new Laird of Glen Cairn were one and the same person. In fact, nobody realized it at once, for many of the tenants had come to know and like Alan during the summer, simply as "the boy who was staying with Eppie McLean."

They were still gazing at the castle door and wondering why the "puny wee laddie, who was not long for this world" did not appear, when the gracious lady, who still stood with her hand resting proudly on Alan's shoulder, began to speak.

"Many of you already know the new Laird of Glen Cairn

as Alan McCrae," she said, smiling kindly down into their blank upturned faces. "He has been among you all summer and has learned to love our Highland country without dreaming that he himself would one day inherit this beautiful estate. He is next of kin to the Auld Laird, though not a near relative, and had no idea that I had any purpose beyond the improvement of his health in sending him here for the summer. I knew that which he did not, that he was likely soon to be called to take the Auld Laird's place here, and I wanted him to know you first, not as tenants, but as friends merely. He has come to love this region for its own sake, and comes among you like a true Scotchman, meaning to make this his home and the interests of this community his own interests. He is not yet of age, as you see, but his purposes and plans are clearly formed, and I will leave him to explain them to you himself."

She stopped speaking, and the people, overwhelmed with surprise and joy, burst into a hearty and prolonged cheer, as Alan stepped forward to make his speech. He was only a boy, and a very much embarrassed one at that, but he knew what he wanted to say and he got to the point at

once.

"I just want you to know," he said, "that nobody's going to be turned out if he doesn't want to be. I know all about the lease, and that it's going to run out this fall, but anyone who wants to stay on the land and improve it is going to have the chance to do it. My mother knows a lot about such things, and we're going to collect the rents ourselves, and we think, maybe, when I'm of age, there'll be some way by which people who really want to use the land may own it instead of being obliged to rent. Mother says they are beginning to do it in Ireland, and in England too in some places.

"I've found out that people are more important than rabbits and deer, and they are going to have first chance at the land of Glen Cairn as long as I'm Laird." This was greeted with such a roar of cheers that for a moment it was quite impossible for Alan to proceed. He smiled bashfully at his mother and then held up his hand for silence.

"I just want to say, too," he went on, biting his lips to keep from laughing, "that after this there won't be any gamekeeper on Glen Cairn. If the rabbits spoil your crops



you're welcome to catch them if you can! I've ranged these woods myself all summer, and I have found out that gamekeepers are no safeguard against poachers." A gasp of astonishment greeted this statement, and Angus Niel was observed to turn ashy pale.

"In fact, I know that sometimes gamekeepers turn poachers themselves and make money selling what they

have killed," he went on. Here Angus Niel, looking suddenly deflated, like a burst balloon, began quietly to slink out of sight, and Alan, brimful of mischief, raised his voice so it would be sure to reach him and said, "I've seen it done myself, and if Angus Niel wants to know any more about that gang of twenty blood-thirsty villains which has scared the life out of him all summer, he can come to me and I'll tell him. I'm the Chief of that gang, and there are three others just like me, and that's all!" He winked rapturously at the three other members of the Clan, who were gazing up at him in a stupor of astonishment, and fired his last shot at the fleeing Angus, while the audience, catching his meaning, burst into howls of derisive laughter.

"Don't hurry, Angus," he called. "I want to tell you about your boat and about the water witch that haunted you. I'm the water witch too!" But Angus was already out of hearing and scuttling as fast as his trembling legs could carry him to get out of sight, as well. When the roars of laughter had subsided, Alan said, with a boyish grin, "It's too bad he couldn't stay to supper. And now come up, everybody, and meet my mother."

It was then that the Shepherd of Glen Easig astonished himself and everyone else by shouting at the top of his lungs, "Three cheers for the young Laird!" and when they had been given with such energy that the hills rang with the echoes, he called for three more for her ladyship, and Alan waved his cap in acknowledgment for them both.

Then the people, surprised out of their usual Scotch reserve by laughter and by the joy of good news, came swarming up the steps and were introduced to Alan's mother by Alan himself when he knew them, and by the minister when he did not.

The Shepherd, with the bashful Clan in his wake, came last of all, and the twins heard him say to her ladyship, "God bless the laddie! It was a rare day for the Glen when he fell into the burn and came to dry himself by our fireside."

"It was a rare day for me, too, Cousin Campbell," said Alan, and then; catching sight of Sandy and the twins hanging back behind their father, what did he do but pucker up his lips and whistle the pewit call? The Clan was too overcome then even to attempt a pucker, and Alan, springing forward, tried to grasp three hands at once and

introduced them to his mother as his Rob Roy Clan.

The twins and Sandy were not a bit like the bold buccaneers of the cave when the great lady of Glen Cairn smiled on them kindly.

"I told you I'd wear the sprig of evergreen pine and whistle the call of the Clan the next time you saw me," cried Alan, as they fell in behind the others, who were now entering the banquet hall. "Why didn't you answer?"

"Oh, but," said Jean, a little sadly and blushing like a poppy, "we never thought you'd be coming back so grand like. You'll never be playing with the Clan any more in Glen Easig, surely, now that you're a great Laird!"

"And why not, I'd like to know?" cried the great Laird, looking hurt. "I'm still Alan McRae, Chief of the Clan, the same as before, and as true to my friends as Rob Roy himself was before me. We'll have many a good day in the woods yet before snow flies; and listen, I've a plan in my head!"

"There speaks the Chief," cried Jock, forgetting to be afraid of him. "He was ever having plans in his head. Out with it, man."

"It's this," said Alan, "I'm going to have a tutor here at

the castle, and you're all to have your lessons here with me, and no end of larks!" Here Sandy, who had so far merely gazed at his Chief with speechless devotion, suddenly burst into words.

"Aye, Chief," he cried, "that was a true word you spoke about no gamekeeper being needed in Glen Cairn. I'm none so keen for the learning, but if there should be poachers hanging about, they'll have Sandy Crumpet to deal with; let them take warning of that!"

Alan laughed and clapped Sandy on the back. "I'd rather have you than forty Angus Niels," he said, and then they were swept along, without a chance for further words, into the great hall, where they found long tables spread and Eppie McLean with a dozen helpers bringing in such stores of food that all Sandy had said about the preparations at the castle was justified at a glance.

Most of the people had already found places at the tables when the young Laird and his mother, followed by the minister and his wife and the castle guests, came into the hall. The twins and Sandy hung back behind all the other guests, but Alan found places for them opposite his

own, and then he handed his mother to the seat of honor at the head of the table. The minister and the guests from the city ranged themselves on either side, and everyone stood with bowed head while the minister asked a blessing upon the food, upon the new Laird and his mother, and upon all the people of Glen Cairn.

There was a great scraping of chairs, and then everyone sat down and fell upon the good things like an army of locusts upon a harvest field. The great hall, so long silent, echoed with happy voices and the clatter, of knives and forks, and Jean, looking across the table at the new Laird, in all his glory, wondered if it could be possible that it was the very Alan whom she had shaken when Angus shot the stag, or who had helped her set the table in the kitchen of the little gray house, while his wet clothes were drying by the cottage fire. She ate her supper like one in a dream, and though she kept a watchful eye on Jock's table manners and warned Sandy's elbows off the table several times in her own efficient way, she could scarcely believe such wonderful things were really happening to her.

At last the wonderful day drew to a close, and the people



of Glen Cairn, happier than they had been in a long time, said goodbye to the gracious lady of the castle and to the already beloved young Laird, and started home in the deepening twilight of the autumn evening.

The Clan, lingering behind their parents, looked back at the group on the castle terrace before the trees hid them from sight, and Jock sent the pewit call shrilling through

the dusk. It was answered instantly from the terrace.

"He is just like Prince Charlie, I'm thinking," said Sandy, and Jock, to ease his feelings, whistled "Charlie is my darling" all the way to the gate of the park.

The evening star was shining brightly over the dark outline of old Ben Vane as the Campbells reached the little gray house on the brae, now safely their home forever, and Tam came bounding down the path to meet them. Jean kissed her hand to the star and murmured to herself,

"Star light, star bright,
I have the wish I wished tonight."

Glossary

Auld, old.
Aye (pronounced i), yes.
Aye (pronounced a), ever, always.

Bailie, an officer of the law.
Bairn, a child.
Ben. See But and ben.
Besom, a broom.
Bide, stay.
Bittock, a little bit.
Blatherskite, a babbling person, a good-for-nothing.
Blethering, talking nonsense.
Bonny, pretty, beautiful, charming.
Bracken, brake, a species of tall fern.
Brae (pronounced bray), a hillside.
Braw, fine, handsome.
Burn, a brook.
But and ben, outside and in.
But the house means out of the house. But is also applied to the kitchen; going but is going from the best room to the kitchen, and going ben is going into the best room.
Byre, a cow-shed.

Canny, shrewd.
Chap, a knock.

Daft, silly, foolish.
Dandering, wandering.
Dawtie, darling, pet.
Dinna, do not.
Dod, an exclamation.
Doubt, suspect.
Dyke, a low fence or wall of turf or stone.



Fash, disturb.
Fine, finely, well.

Gey, very.
Gin (g as in give), if.
Girdle, a griddle.
Glengarry bonnet, a small cap without visor.
Greet, weep.
Guddling, catching fish with the hands.

Havers (a as in hay), nonsense (an exclamation).

Isna, is not.

Keek, a peep.
Ken, know.
Kilmarnock bonnet, a tam-o'-shanter.
Kirk, church.
Biro, a churn.
Kist, a chest.

Laird, a lord, a landed proprietor.
Laverock, the lark.
Limmer, a mischievous person.
Losh, an exclamation.
Loup, to leap.
Lug, ear.

Mealy pudding, a Scotch dish made of oatmeal and suet, in form something like a sausage.
Michty (pronounced michty, with the gutteral ch as in the German word ich), mighty, large, powerful.
Michty me, an exclamation.

Na, no, not.

Pawky, sly.
Pewit, the lapwing, a species of plover.
Plaidie (pronounced pladie), diminutive of plaid. Each clan had its own especial pattern which was worn by all members.

Redding up, putting in order.

Sal, an exclamation.
Scone, a flat cake, unsweetened, baked on a griddle.
Skirl, a shrill sound, especially that characteristic of the bagpipes.
Slippit awa', slipped away, died.
Sousie (both s's as in so), agreeable, attractive, comely, pleasant.
Spier (pronounced spear), ask.
Sync, afterward, since.

Tarn, a small mountain lake.
Tatties, potatoes.
Tid, a pet name for a child.
Tirley-wirley, a disturbance.

Wasna, was not.
Wee bit hoosie, little house.
Whaup, the curlew, a large bird of the Sandpiper Family.
Wifie, an endearing term for a woman.

Our Little Celtic Cousin of Long Ago

Evaleen Stein

Illustrated by John Goss


FERDIAD

Preface

To the Boys and Girls

Ages and ages ago, so far back that the world has almost forgotten about it, the Celtic people had a great empire spreading over a large part of Europe. Then, after a long while, something happened to break up this empire; nobody knows exactly what, but most probably they fought among themselves or with other people, or both, or perhaps some stronger race swept into their country and thrust them out. At any rate, by and by it came about that all that was left of the empire of the Celts was that part of it which we now call France and the British Isles; they called them Gaul and Britain and Ireland.

Meantime the great city of Rome had been growing more and more powerful and sending her conquering armies everywhere till at last she brought most of Europe

under her sway. And the Celtic people, whose proudest boast had been that once upon a time they had captured the great city, now found themselves under her dominion and soon beginning to have Roman ideas about things. For no nation could be ruled by Rome and be just the same as before. There was one part of the Celtic lands, however, that did not change, and this was Ireland. Far off to the west, for some reason she was never visited by the Roman soldiers and so managed to keep her affairs all to herself.

Thus several centuries passed; and then, as you perhaps know from your histories, Rome herself, with all her pride and splendor, was conquered and overwhelmed by the wild tribes to the north of her, and Europe, which had been growing more and more civilized, sank back into ignorance and barbarism which it took hundreds of years to shake off.

But all the while Ireland, off there in the western ocean, kept to herself. Just as she was not conquered by Rome, neither was she overwhelmed by the barbarians when Rome fell, but kept right on living her Celtic life and doing things in her own Celtic way clear down to the time when the rest of Europe began to rouse up and learn things again.

Indeed, the Celtic people did much to help wake up Europe; for though they had not been conquered by the Romans, nevertheless the Celtic scholars had been wise enough to study the best books written by them and by the Greeks, and these, together with much other knowledge which they gained for themselves, they kept from being forgotten by the world.

Though it is true that a hundred years after the time of our story the Norman race invaded Ireland and in the centuries that followed her people have gradually changed in many ways from the Celts of long ago, yet still the Celtic blood and the Celtic spirit so lives in Ireland that when today we speak of the Celts we most often mean the Irish rather than those other descendants of the old race who still are scattered through many parts of Europe and even Asia.

Now the Celts have always been an interesting people, and those of long ago left many things for us to admire and treasure. Though they did not build great and beautiful temples and palaces whose ruins still speak of past glory, as did other races of the old world, yet in the more delicate

handicrafts no one ever did finer work, as is proved by the innumerable beautiful objects of gold and silver and enamel still to be seen in Irish museums. The lovely chalice of Ardagh, the Tara brooch, the cross of Cong and the bell shrine of St. Patrick, these are famous beyond Ireland; while as for the painted books made by the old-time Celtic artists, of the many of surpassing beauty one was so marvelous—but, no, I must not tell you about it now, for it is part of our story!

But besides these things which we of today can see and touch, the Celts of long ago left a great deal more. They left to the world an inheritance of beautiful myths and romantic stories and poems and fairy tales, some of which you have perhaps already read as you surely will read more of them by and by. These belong to everyone; but to their own children and ever-so-great-great grandchildren, down through the centuries, the Celts of long ago left an inheritance of delight in beauty, of joy in the loveliness of the lovely world about us, in the blue sky and the green earth, joy in bright and beautiful colors, a love of poetry and fairy stories, and, best of all, a way of losing themselves in

wonderful dreams, dreams sometimes tinged with a wistful sadness, perhaps, yet always beautiful. It is this inheritance that so marks the Celtic people today, wherever they may chance to live, that when we know someone who specially loves all these things, we say he must have in his veins a strain of Celtic blood; and very likely he has.

But it is high time to get to our story, which has been waiting all this while. Our little Celtic cousin, Ferdiad, is ready to meet you in the first chapter and take you back to the long ago, and I hope you and he may become very good friends.

Evaleen Stein.

Pronunciation of Proper Names and Some Other Words

Aibell (ee' bell)
Ardagh (ar' dah)
Armagh (armah')
An' gus
Bo-aire'
Bri' an Bo ru'
Celt (selt)
Cion tarf'
Col' um kille'
Con' co bar'
Cuculain (koo koo' lin)
Curragh (kur' ach)
Dec' ter a
De Dan' aans
Dun (doon)
Eileen (i leen')
Fer' di ad
Fianna (feean'na)
Fir' bolg
Green' an
Killaloe (kilalo')
Kin kor' a

Lugh (loo)
Mun' ster
Meath (meeth)
Ol' lave
Se tan'ta
Taill' tenn
Torque (tork)

CHAPTER I
The Tailltenn Fair

The August sun was shining brightly over the Irish meadows skirting a narrow river that glittered with such a silvery light you would never have thought its name was the Blackwater. Neither would you have supposed the place on its bank in front of which were moored scores of oddly built boats was really the very tiny old village of Tailltenn. No, you would have declared that it was a gay though rather queer looking city, and could scarcely have believed that in a week's time all its noise and bustle would vanish and only the few wattled houses of the little village be left.

For Tailltenn in August, when its great fair was held, and Tailltenn the rest of the year were two very different places.

But never mind about Tailltenn the rest of the year, for our story begins right in the middle of the fair, which was

surprisingly like our fairs of today. And this seems strange, considering that it was almost exactly nine hundred years ago; that is to say, it was August of the year 1013.

But people nine hundred years ago liked to show and buy things and enjoyed racing and games and entertainment of all kinds just as well as we do, and anyone who could amuse was sure to have plenty of folks looking on. So it was that the Celtic boy, Ferdiad, who had stopped to watch a specially skillful juggler, soon found himself squeezed into a crowded circle of people and presently a red-headed lad of about his own age was pushed close beside him.

Both smiled good naturedly, and, "Look!" cried Ferdiad, bending his eyes on the juggler, "I have counted, and he has nine swords and nine little silver shields and nine balls, and he keeps them all up in the air at once and hasn't let one fall!"

"He's the best I ever saw!" said the other boy gazing admiringly at the man, who was dressed in a loose tunic of saffron colored linen with a wide girdle of scarlet. On his legs were long tight fitting trousers of the same material and

his shoes were of thick leather without heels and laced with red cords. A short scarlet cape with a pointed hood lay on the ground where he had thrown it when he began his performance.

Suddenly, with a few dexterous movements, he caught one by one the balls and swords and shields he had been tossing about, and snatching up one of the latter began passing it among the crowd.

A few small silver coins were dropped into it and two or three little silver rings which often passed instead of coins. People used but little regular money and generally paid for things by exchanging something else for them, as perhaps a measure of wheat or honey, which everyone liked; or, if the thing bought was valuable, often a cow or two did for money.

As now the juggler was coming their way with his shield, the two boys strolled off together; for though each had a few silver rings tucked into his girdle for spending money, they had other plans for disposing of these.

When they had gone a short distance they stopped and looked each other over. Both were tall and straight and well

grown for their age, which was about twelve years; and their bare heads shone in the sunlight, Ferdiad's as yellow as the other boy's was red. Ferdiad wore a tight scarlet jacket with sleeves striped with green and a kilted skirt reaching just above his bare knees; below them were leggings of soft leather laced with cords tipped with silver as were also his moccasin-like shoes. He had a short cape made of strips of brown and green cloth sewn together, but as the day was warm this hung over one shoulder and was only loosely fastened by a silver brooch. The other boy, who had come from a little different part of the country, was dressed in the fashion of his own home. His jacket was much like Ferdiad's except that it was yellow, and instead of kilts he wore long tight fitting trousers of gray; his cape also was gray figured with black.

Presently he said to Ferdiad, with a frank smile, "My name is Conn and my home is in the kingdom of Munster where my father is a bo-aire. I guess yours must be a flaith from the colors of your clothes. My foster father is a bo-aire, too, and we came to the fair this morning in our chariot and I drove all the way from near Kinkora where we live. What

is your name?"

"Ferdiad O'Neill," answered Ferdiad; but seeing Conn look bewildered, "O'Neill," he explained, "means my father's name is Neill; you know 'O' stands for son of."

"Yes," said Conn in surprise, "but why do you have two names?"

"Well," replied Ferdiad, "my father says that the high king, Brian Boru, wants people to start having two names instead of just one. You see, if each family settles on a second name that they can add to their first, then you can tell better who folks are and who are their kin. My father, who is a flaith as you guessed, don't want to put anything after his own name for everyone in the kingdom of Meath, where my home is, knows him as Neill. But he says I may as well begin with the two names. I suppose everybody will have family names afterwhile."

"I suppose so," said Conn, who had been listening with interest. "I hadn't heard about it before, but if you can start a family name by adding 'O' to your father's, then I would be Conn O'Keefe!" and he laughed at the odd new fashion. "But," he went on, "who is your foster father?"

"He is Angus the poet," answered Ferdiad with a touch of pride. "We live beyond Kells on the Blackwater, and we all came to the fair yesterday. We rowed down the river in our curragh."

Now do not suppose that these two boys were orphans because they talked about their foster fathers. Far from it! In fact, most Celtic boys, and many girls too, were extra well supplied with parents; for they usually had not only their own real fathers and mothers but also the foster fathers and mothers with whom they lived from the time they were seven, or even younger, until they were seventeen. This custom of putting children to be trained in the home of someone else seems strange to us, but the Celtic people of those days thought it the best way to bring them up. Sometimes their foster parents were close friends of their own fathers and mothers and took the children for the sake of the affection they felt for one another; and sometimes people placed their children with someone they thought specially fitted to train them, and then they paid a certain sum of money for it, or, more likely, a number of cows.

For the Celtic people then had no large cities and few towns even, but lived mostly in the country and the more cows they had the better off they considered themselves. They were divided into tribes or clans with chiefs of different degrees of rank. A bo-aire, as was Conn's father, though a respectable chief, owned no land but was obliged to rent it of some higher chief, or flaith, such as Ferdiad's father; but a bo-aire always had plenty of cattle of his own. So probably Conn's foster father received enough fat cows to pay for the support of the boy.

Indeed, the Celtic laws decided just what must be paid for feeding and clothing foster children, and decided also, according to their rank, what they should eat and wear; and everyone paid a great deal of attention to the laws. It was because of these that Conn had barley porridge with a lump of salty butter on it for breakfast while Ferdiad ate oatmeal with saltless butter which was considered finer; if either had been a king's son he would have had honey on his porridge. And because of these same laws Conn and Ferdiad at once knew each other's rank; for sons of flaiths might wear red, green and brown clothes, while the colors for boys of bo-

aires were yellow, black and gray.

But while we have been talking about them, the boys have not been standing still. They had decided at once to be friends, and "My foster father said I was to go around and find what I wanted to look at," said Conn, "but I think it would be more fun seeing the fair together."

"So do I!" answered Ferdiad. "Let's look around and see what's going on."

CHAPTER II

Ferdiad and Conn See the Sights

The boys were just starting off together when a sudden shouting arose.

"O, look over there!" cried Ferdiad, "I believe they are beginning to course the hounds!"

Both lads ran across a space of green grass to where a low wattled fence enclosed a large oval race course. People were gathered about it talking excitedly as they watched the lively capers of a dozen or more large wolf hounds that several men held in leash by long leather thongs. The dogs were straining impatiently at their collars, and the moment the signal was given and they were unleashed, " Br-rh-rh-rh-rh-rh!!" off they darted, their noses pointing straight ahead and their long legs and powerful bodies bounding past so swiftly that neither Ferdiad nor Conn could make out one from another.

But in a few moments the fastest began to sweep ahead, and Conn cried out excitedly, "Look! Look! That big light brown one I picked out is leading!"

"Not now!" called back Ferdiad, as they hurried along the fence following the racing dogs with their eyes. "No! now it's the one with the white tip to his tail!"

"Whew!" shouted Conn, as "Br-rh-rh-rh-rh-rh!" with a deep roar the baying pack swept past again, "If there isn't that bright blue one that was 'way behind leading them all now!" And, sure enough, when the panting hounds came around the last quarter of the track it was the bright blue that leaped first across the streak of white lime that marked the goal. There was a great shouting and clapping of hands by the bystanders as the tired dogs were led off.

"Whose hound was it that won? Do you know?" asked Conn of Ferdiad.

"I heard a man say he belonged to Prince Cormac of Cromarty," answered Ferdiad. "They say the prize is an enameled dog collar and a leather leash trimmed with silver. I wonder when the high king will give it to him?"

"Not till the end of the fair, boy," said a tall man

standing near. "The high king isn't here yet but is coming tomorrow, and there will be games and chariot races yet, and, last of all, the poets' and storytellers' contest."

"Well," said Conn as the boys turned away, "that hound race was good—but I never thought the blue one would win! He was such a handsome color I suppose Prince Cormac must have had him specially dyed for the fair."

"I dare say," said Ferdiad, "but I have a green hound at home that is just as handsome, and my foster mother says when she colors the next wool she spins maybe she will have enough red left to dye another one."

For the Celts thought oddly colored animals very pretty, and women when they dyed the yarn which they all spun for themselves often emptied what was left in their dye pots over the family pets. So a purple cat or blue or red dog was no uncommon sight.

But the boys had wandered off from the race track and had come to an open space where were a number of booths covered with green boughs. Here merchants were selling all sorts of things; there were bows and arrows, swords, shields and spears, bronze horns and trumpets and harps,

homespun woolen and linen cloth, and fine silks from beyond the sea, and there were wonderful bracelets and necklaces and torques, a kind of twisted collar, and brooches, all of finely wrought gold and silver; for the Celts, both men and women, loved to wear quantities of golden ornaments and nowhere in all the world were more skillful goldsmiths than theirs.

In one of the better built booths covered with a thatched roof several scribes were busy. Each held in his lap a thin board with a sheet of vellum on which he wrote, dipping his swan-feather pen into ink held in the tip of a cow's horn fastened to the arm of his chair. Some were writing letters for people who had no ink or vellum of their own or perhaps could not write themselves; while others were copying from books beside them, all of which were for sale. No one had dreamed yet of printing books on presses, so copying them by hand was the only way to make them. Some of the books had initial letters painted in gold and colors, and as the boys passed they looked critically at these.

"They are not so well done as some at the Kinkora monastery where I go to school," said Conn. For the most

beautiful books were made by the patient hands of the Celtic monks.

"No," said Ferdiad, "I dare say not. And they can't compare with the books at the monastery of Kells near where we live.

"Oh," he went on eagerly, "you just ought to see the Great Gospel of Saint Columkille that is kept at Kells! The monks there say there's nothing like it in the whole world!"

"I've heard something of that book," said Conn, "but I don't know much about it. What is it?"

"Well," answered Ferdiad, "it's hundreds of years old and painted with the most wonderful borders and initials and pictures that anybody ever made! The patterns are so fine and the lines lace in and out so perfectly that they say if your eyes are sharp enough you can count hundreds of loops and ornaments on a spot no wider than your finger!"

"I don't see how anybody ever painted patterns like that!" said Conn. "Who made it?"

"Nobody knows for sure," answered Ferdiad. "Some say Saint Columkille had it made and some say he did it himself. But everybody declares that whoever painted it, an

angel must have guided his hand, for nobody could have done it without help from Heaven. And then the book has the most wonderful gold case you ever saw!" For most handsome books then each had its own box-like case of gold or silver or carved wood or ivory.

Just then a horse's whinney caught the boys' attention and they went over to the pens where horses and sheep and cows were for sale, and enormous wolfhounds some of them as large as calves. Around these hounds especially was always a crowd of interested buyers, for the Celts delighted in racing them; also these powerful dogs were useful in protecting their homes at night and in chasing off the packs of wolves that roamed through the great wild forests that covered so much of the land. Presently both boys began to sniff hungrily as they came to that part of the fair where food was being sold.

"Let's get something to eat!" said Conn, "Aren't you hungry?"

"Yes," said Ferdiad, looking up at the sun, "it's past midday!" And they made their way toward the nearest booth. Beside it was an open fire and over this hung a great

bronze kettle in which pieces of meat were boiling. A man in cook's cap and apron stood by with a long hook of bronze.

"We would like some of your meat, sir," said Ferdiad, and at once the man hooked out some pieces which he placed on an earthen platter; this he set on a low wooden table on the grass beside him, and the boys sitting down on the ground began eating with their fingers as people did then. They finished with some milk served in cups hollowed out of yew wood and some wheaten cakes which the cook's wife had kneaded up with honey and baked on a flat hot stone in front of the fire.

When the boys had eaten, "You be my guest, Conn," said Ferdiad as he paid the man with one of the small silver rings he took from his girdle.

By this time the crowd seemed to be moving toward the grassy space within the race track, so of course Ferdiad and Conn went along. When they reached the place a wrestling match had already begun and after that was running and jumping and quoit throwing and fencing contests, and all the while there was a blaring of trumpets and blowing of

great horns or else somebody was twanging on a harp or shaking castanets of bone, keeping up a noise and excitement for all the world like fairs of today.

When the sports were over the afternoon was almost spent and Ferdiad and Conn fairly tired of sightseeing. "Come on," said Ferdiad, "let's go find our curragh and take a row on the river before you go back to your foster father."

"All right!" said Conn, and off they went toward the river. Near its bank was another grassy space and scattered through it a number of houses, all of them round; for that was the shape most Celtic people preferred. Each was built of poles placed upright in the ground forming a circle; long rods of hazel from which the bark had been peeled were woven between the poles, making a wattled wall, and the cone-shaped roof was thatched with rushes. These houses, which belonged to the fair and had been built long before for the use of the highborn people attending it, had been freshened up with coats of lime, some glistening, dazzling white in the sunlight, and others decorated with bright stripes in different colors.

Several gayly dressed ladies were walking about and

there was a sound of harp strings in the air. "Are those queens?" asked Conn of Ferdiad, for it was his first visit to the fair and he had found Ferdiad had been there before.

"Yes," said Ferdiad, "and my foster mother is one of the ladies attending the Queen of Meath, so she and my foster sister, Eileen, stay in that striped house under the big quicken tree. These houses are for the queens and their ladies and those yonder are for the kings."

For you must know that Ireland was a land not only of many kinds of parents but also of quantities of kings and queens. The country was divided into ever so many little kingdoms belonging to different tribes or clans, and, as I have told you, in these tribes were many chiefs or flaiths of different degrees of rank, but over them all in each kingdom was the king. Some of the kingdoms were larger and stronger than others, so the kings varied in power; but none of them was so important as the high king who ruled them all just as each of them ruled the chiefs under him. But though the high king was called the King of Ireland, the smaller kings fought and quarreled so much among themselves, and so many bold chiefs from countries nearby

were always trying to gain a foothold in Ireland that the high king seldom really governed the whole land. However, the one who came nearest to doing it was the great Brian Boru, who hadn't come to the fair yet but was expected the next day. Ferdiad pointed out to Conn a long wooden house built on top of a grassy mound in the middle of the fair where the high king would stay, and close beside it another large building where he would give a great feast in the evening.

Meantime all the other fifteen or twenty kings with their queens and followers were having the best kind of a time and behaving in the politest way to each other; for no matter how much they fought at other times, no one dared to start a quarrel at any of the great Celtic fairs, for everybody knew perfectly well that the punishment was death.

But Ferdiad and Conn had come to the water's edge and were just looking for the right boat when a little girl with flying yellow curls came racing toward them, her blue mantle fluttering and her little sandaled feet twinkling as she ran. "O, Ferdiad," she called out, "I was just wishing



"They picked out the boat in which they had come."

you would come! Mother says I may go for a little ride on the river if you will take me!"

Then seeing Conn, whom she had not noticed in her eagerness, she drew back with a touch of bashfulness.

"This is my new friend Conn, from Munster," explained Ferdiad, "and he is going with us. Conn," he added turning to the boy who was staring shyly at the little girl, "this is my foster sister, Eileen."

At this Eileen, with a friendly smile for the new friend, took Ferdiad's hand as he helped her clamber down the bank and they picked out the boat in which they had come to the fair. It was the kind the Celts called a "curragh" and was made of wickerwork covered with tanned cowhides which had been stained a dark red. When Eileen had stepped daintily in and seated herself and the boys followed, "Let's go across the river and see how the fair looks from the other side," she said, "and then let's go around the bend and back!"

And Ferdiad and Conn taking up the long oars of hickory did exactly as Eileen commanded.

CHAPTER III

The High King Comes to the Fair

"Father, Father!" called Eileen the morning after the boat ride, as she ran out of the round wattled house where she and her mother had slept.

She had caught sight of a tall man coming swiftly toward her, and in a moment he stooped and kissing her rosy cheek three times lifted her in his arms so she could nestle her golden head on his bosom in the pretty Celtic fashion of greeting those one loved.

"O, Father," she said, as hand in hand they went to meet her mother, Fianna, who had just stepped out into the sunshine, "isn't this the day you sing your song before the high king?"

"Yes, child," answered her father smiling, "but do not be too sure I shall win the prize. There are many fine poets here and everybody thinks the prize will not be the jeweled

ring only, but that Brian Boru will choose the winner for his chief poet in place of Niall who is dead. You know I told you Niall was a great master of his art, so the high king will not be easy to please."

Eileen laughed confidently, "So are you a master!" she declared. Then, "Where is Ferdiad?" she asked.

"He will be along in a minute," answered her father; "the poets' house was so crowded last night he went off and slept in the tent with his friend Conn and his foster father."

As the three stood waiting for Ferdiad, you would have thought them a handsome family. Eileen's yellow curls, white skin and oval face were like her mother's, and she was dressed in much the same fashion only that her close-fitting tunic and narrow clinging skirt of figured green and white linen were not so long as her mother's yellow and white ones, and her bratt (which was the Celtic name for the loose mantle almost everyone wore), was blue instead of green striped. Her head was bare while her mother's was partly covered with folds of fine filmy linen; but both had the same kind of sandals on their feet.

Angus, Eileen's father, was tall and straight; his long

light hair was parted and hung over his shoulders in carefully twisted strands while his beard also was parted and curled in fork shape, a very fashionable way. He wore a crimson jacket, olive green trousers, and shoes of brown leather embroidered in gold; round his jacket was a saffron colored girdle, his cape was of checkered turquoise blue and black, fastened with a large silver brooch, and on his head was a saffron-yellow pointed cap with a very narrow brim. Now if you have counted the colors in his clothes you will know there were six; and any Celt could have told you that meant that poets were thought so much of that they ranked next to kings; for no one else was allowed to wear six colors at once. To do so was considered a great honor, for everybody delighted in the brightest colors; but people who were neither kings nor poets had to be satisfied with five or less, according to their rank, down to the poor slaves who could wear only a single coarse garment of gray.

Eileen's father carried in his hand a small quaintly shaped harp with strings of bronze; though he was not playing on it, yet as he walked along there was always a sweet tinkling sound. That was because fastened to his

pointed cap was a musical branch such as all Celtic poets wore. It was curving like a little bough from a tree, only it was made of silver and in place of leaves was hung with tiny silver bells. This meant that Angus ranked as an ollave, or master poet, and had studied his art for seven years. If he had been a poet less skillful his musical branch would have been bronze, while, on the other hand, the chief poet of the high king wore one of pure gold.

But Ferdiad had already come up and been kissed three times by Angus and Fianna, and then they began planning the day, for next morning they were to return home.

"Eileen," said her mother, "you and I will go to the merchants' booths. I want to buy some things before we go home, and perhaps I will get a new necklace and bracelets for you; then we must see the embroidering women, for the queen's ladies say they make beautiful things."

Eileen had half wanted to go along with Ferdiad and Conn, but her eyes sparkled at the prospect of buying some new finery, so she was quite satisfied with her mother's plan.

"Then you boys can put in the morning together," said

Angus, "and I will be free to practice my new song for the contest."

"O, Father," cried Eileen, "can't we hear it?"

"No," answered Angus, "that is to be in the Hall of Feasting this evening, and only the chief grown folks will be there. But then," he added, seeing the disappointment in her face, "there are to be storytellers on the fair green this afternoon, and you children can go there."

So presently off they scattered, Angus strolling down to a quiet place on the riverbank, Eileen tripping along beside her mother, while Ferdiad hurried over to the race course where he was to meet Conn.

"Well," said the latter, who was eagerly watching for him, "you are just in time for the morning races. They are to be with horses and chariots today instead of hounds."

Sure enough, there was a tremendous squeaking of axles as a number of two-wheeled chariots were being driven toward the track. All were made of wicker strength-ened by a framework of wood, and their seven-spoked wheels were rimmed with bronze. Some were quite open and others gayly canopied, and each held two persons; one who

merely rode, and the charioteer who sat nearest the front and drove the horses.

As chariot after chariot came along, the boys looked at them with interest. "Just see that one!" Ferdiad said, "how fine the wickerwork is and what handsome bridle reins all covered with red enamel!"

"Yes," said Conn, "and there comes another just as fine with a blue canopy and silver trimmed reins."

All the while the crowd was becoming larger and larger and presently an extra loud squeaking arose.

"My!" exclaimed Ferdiad, "that must be somebody important coming! Do hear what a noise his chariot makes!" For Celtic people thought it very fine to attract attention as they drove along and the more noise their wheels made the better they liked it.

By this time everybody was looking in the same direction and as the chariot came nearer, "I should think it is somebody important!" said Conn. "Why, that is the high king! I've often seen him at Kinkora; you know his palace is there."

It was Brian Boru, who had just come to the fair. In front

of him walked four stalwart soldiers each carrying a battle ax. His chariot was of the finest wicker with a purple canopy embroidered in gold, and the two horses drawing it were snow white with ears dyed scarlet while their long manes and tails were royal purple and their harness was richly decorated with gold.

The chariot stopped at a wooden pavilion overlooking the race course, and the high king alighted and took his place on a seat piled with deerskin cushions.

The boys had been staring hard at everything. "I didn't remember Brian Boru was so old!" whispered Ferdiad, who had only glimpsed the high king at the fair the year before. "But he's handsome yet!"

"Yes," said Conn, "he's far past eighty but he's mighty good-looking." Indeed, most Celtic kings were; for the simple reason that they were not allowed to reign if they bore the slightest blemish on face or body.

The high king was of course dressed in six colors and his mantle of purple silk fringed with gold was fastened with a wonderful brooch so large that it reached from shoulder to shoulder. His long beard was parted, fork shape and from

beneath his crown, which covered his head like a golden hat, his hair fell in twisted strands ornamented with hollow golden balls, which were thought very stylish. Around his neck was a handsome golden torque and many rich bracelets covered his arms.

When the high king had seated himself a group of men who had followed his chariot ranged themselves behind him, while the soldiers stood at each side as guard.

"Who do you suppose all those people are around the high king?" said Conn. "There are ten, not counting the soldiers."

"Well," said Ferdiad, "my foster father told me that at important places like this at least ten people always go around with the high king. Let me see, one must be a bishop—"

"Yes," interrupted Conn, "he must be the one with the top of his head shaved and the little gold box hanging to his necklace. You know bishops carry bits of parchment with verses from the Bible written on them in those boxes."

"Then," went on Ferdiad, "one must be a chief, maybe it's that one with the red and green spotted bratt and the

fine torque. And there's always a poet, but, of course, since Niall's dead and the high king hasn't chosen a new one yet, I guess that must be another chief standing where the poet belongs."

"And that one with the harp and trumpets anybody knows is a musician," put in Conn, "and it's easy enough, too, to tell that the tall man with the leather herb bag at his girdle is a doctor, but who are those two standing beside him?"

"I don't know which is which," said Ferdiad looking perplexed, "but they must be the historian and lawyer, for you can see from their looks and the colors of their clothes that those other three are servants."

By this time a number of other kings and their followers had seated themselves in the pavilion, while in another one nearby were various queens and their ladies all in the brightest colors and with many flashing ornaments of gold.

Presently the high king's musician began blowing one of his great trumpets and the races began. There was a sudden thud of bronze-shod hoofs swiftly printing the ground, a glimpse of flying manes and tails, of panting nostrils and

taut glittering reins, of rushing chariots and charioteers straining forward with long whips in their hands, and, above all, the excited shouting of the crowd; all of which proves, as I have told you, that the Celtic people of long ago liked racing and managed it at their fairs surprisingly the same as we do.

Of course Ferdiad and Conn stayed till the last race; then they got something to eat and went over to the fair green where they were to meet Eileen and hear the story teller. On their way they saw the high king's chariot going toward the mound where stood the great Hall of Feasting.

"Why," said Conn, "I thought the feast wasn't to be till this evening?"

"It isn't, boy," said a man wearing a soldier's helmet and tunic with a short sword stuck into his girdle; one arm was thrust through the leather holder of a small round shield, though he carried these things only because it was the custom of soldiers, not that he expected to fight at the fair, for that, you know, was forbidden. "The high king is going to the meeting of all the kings and chiefs which they have every year in the Hall over there. They hold the meeting to

talk over the affairs of Ireland—and there's enough to talk about now, youngsters!" went on the soldier. "The way those pirate Danes are coming over here in their long ships and fighting and robbing and burning folks' houses has got to be stopped some way," and the soldier's eyes flashed as he fiercely shook his round shield.

"That's what my foster father thinks!" cried Ferdiad. "He says they have been growing bolder and bolder ever since they captured the fort at the Ford of the Hurdles." (This fort was on the river Liffey where the city of Dublin now stands.) "He says, too, he wouldn't be surprised any day to see them come up the Blackwater in their long boats and raid *us!*"

"Why don't your king drive them off?" asked Conn.

"Well," said Ferdiad, "I guess our king of Meath is as brave as anybody. But my foster father says it will take more than one king's army to drive off those Danes!"

"That's a true word, son!" said the soldier. "It's work for our best Celtic fighters, and I guess that is what the high king will tell them. And I hope the battle will soon be on!" And the soldier strode off looking very fierce and warlike.

CHAPTER IV

The Story of the DeDanaans

When the boys came to the fair green a large circle of people had already gathered to listen to the storytellers, for they liked these almost better than the racing. Several men in gay mantles stood in the midst of the circle tuning the small harps they carried; for usually parts of the stories were in poetry and this they always chanted to the music of their harps. Ferdiad and Conn, however, did not stop here but passed beyond where was a smaller group made up of the boys and girls who had come to the fair and who had a storyteller especially for them. All were seated on the grass and the two lads soon found a place by Eileen who was watching for them.

"Did you have a good time this morning?" asked Ferdiad.

"Yes," declared Eileen, beaming; "see this lovely torque

mother bought me, and she got some wonderful silk of the merchants from Gaul,"—here she paused—"Hush!" she whispered. "See! they are going to shake the chain of silence!"

A tall man had arisen shaking in his hand a short chain of bronze hung with silver bells, and at this signal everyone stopped talking, and Fergus, the storyteller, stood up ready to begin. Those for the grown folks circle were already asking their hearers if they would rather listen to stories of battles, of cattle raids, courtships, fairies, or histories of Ireland; for to be a storyteller in those days was no simple matter; one must study for years and was expected to have hundreds of different stories in his mind ready to tell at a moment's notice. It was by listening to these that the great mass of people got not only entertainment but education.

But while the grown folks were choosing, the children's storyteller had decided to tell something of the people who had lived in Ireland before the coming of the Celts.

"Long, long ago," he began, "our beautiful land was the home of many different people. One after another they came, the newcomers fighting and driving out the others,

till at last a race called the Firbolgs held sway. After they had been here for some time, one day away up somewhere to the north of us a strange rose colored cloud floated over the seashore, and when it melted away the Firbolgs found that a great number of strangers had landed from boats which they themselves at once burned, showing that they meant to stay."

"They were the DeDanaans!" cried some of the children, "and they live now in the fairy mounds!" for everyone had heard of these marvelous strangers the memory of whom is still cherished in Ireland.

"Yes," went on Fergus, "they were the DeDanaans; but though wise in all magic arts, they lived above ground and had not yet become fairies. They were a beautiful god-like people with fair skins and blue eyes and hair as yellow as cowslips."

"Where did they come from, sir?" asked Conn, who had been listening attentively.

"From the 'Land of the Ever Young,'" answered Fergus.

"And where is that, sir?" ventured Conn once more.

"Well, boy," said Fergus, a bit severely, "it is called also

the 'Land of the Ever Living,' which is the same as the 'Land of the Dead,'" and Conn said no more.

"The Firbolgs," continued Fergus, "talked to the DeDanaans and at first thought they would not fight them. Then they began saying among themselves how slim and light were the spears of the strangers, who were a slender people, while their own were big and heavy like they were. So deciding they were much stronger and better armed, they went back and attacked the DeDanaans. But they were terribly fooled in the strangers, who threw their light sharp spears much faster and farther than the clumsy ones of the Firbolgs. So the golden-haired DeDanaans won the battle, though they did not drive the Firbolgs from Ireland but let them still keep a certain part for theirs.

"Now the DeDanaans were a wonderful people, full of wisdom and skilled in the arts of magic and in the making of beautiful things. They had come from four of the chief fairy cities in the 'Land of the Ever Young,' and from each they brought a precious gift; there was an invincible sword, a magic spear, an enchanted cauldron from which hosts of men might be fed and it would never be empty, but most

wonderful of all was the Stone of Destiny, and on this all the high kings of Ireland, for hundreds of years, stood when they were crowned."

"My foster father said it always roared when the crown was set on the king's head!" broke in Ferdiad.

"Yes, indeed, boy," said Fergus, "it roared like a lion; but only if the king was lawful. If he had no right to the crown then the stone was silent, and you may be sure there was trouble ahead for the false king."

"Where is the stone now?" asked another boy.

"Well," said Fergus, "for a long time it was kept at Tara, the ancient Celtic capital—" Here another boy broke in, "When we came to the fair, about ten miles from here we passed a great big mound with an earth rampart around it and old looking ruins that my father said was Tara. What happened to it?"

Fergus took all these interruptions in good part, for the boys' and girls' storyteller always expected them to ask many questions.

"Tara," he said, "was for ages the famous capital of all Ireland and the high king had his palace, built of smooth

boards carved and painted, on top of the mound you saw protected by the rampart of earth. It was all very splendid, but long, long ago, one day Saint Ruadan became angry at the high king and laid a curse on Tara, and since then no one has dared to live there. But you know I was talking about the Stone of Destiny that the DeDanaans brought and which was first kept at Tara. Now about the time the curse was laid on the place the king of Scotland sent and begged his brother, who was high king of Ireland, for the loan of the stone for a year. The Scottish king wanted to stand on it when he was crowned. The stone was loaned to him but never again has Ireland got it back!"

Nor has it come back to Ireland to this day; for more than two hundred years after our story, the English king, Edward I, took this magic stone from Scotland to London. It is now the famous Coronation Stone which is part of the throne on which the English kings sit when they have been crowned in Westminster Abbey; and perhaps someday you may see it there.

Meantime Fergus went on with the story of the DeDanaans. "After they had ruled in Ireland for a long

while," he said, "another people, this time our own Celtic race, led by their king Miled, sailed to Ireland from somewhere away off to the east. When the DeDanaans saw them coming, by their magic arts they raised a terrible storm hoping in this way to keep the boats from landing. But though many of the boats were destroyed, there were such hosts of Celts that they managed in spite of the storm to land enough men to attack the DeDanaans, who were obliged to retreat before them till they came right here to the Blackwater where Tailltenn is now. Here they made a stand and a great battle was fought, and the Celts won. But the DeDanaans were not driven out of Ireland, you know."

"Yes," said some of the children eagerly, "we know. They are fairies now!"

"That is right," said Fergus; "the DeDanaans cast a spell over themselves making them invisible; and this spell they can put on or off as they please, and even now they rule unseen over part of Ireland. Where we can see only green mounds and ruined walls, as at Tara, and under all the pleasant hills, there rise their fairy palaces where they live in continual sunshine and feast on magic meat and ale that

keeps them everlastingly young and beautiful."

"I saw a DeDanaan fairy once!" spoke up one little boy.

"So did I!" declared another, and then the children all fell to discussing and disputing about how many they had seen till Fergus had to stop them by telling them to scamper off for he was through for the afternoon.

But the boys and girls were quite sure of what they said, and, no doubt, they were right, for everybody knows that to this day there are said to be more fairies in Ireland than in almost any other land.

CHAPTER V
The Hall of Feasting

When the storytelling was over and Eileen had gone back to her mother, Ferdiad and Conn hurried up the mound where stood the Hall of Feasting. The high king was to give a dinner there later on and the boys wanted to see what they could.

At big open fires near the Hall cooks were busy turning spits, made of peeled hazel rods, on which venison and hares and wild birds were roasting. Others were tending huge cauldrons filled with boiling beef and sheep and little pigs. Potatoes, which we now call Irish but which are really American born, had not yet come to Ireland, because of course you know Columbus did not find America till more than four hundred years after our story; but there were cabbages and onions and beans, and there were puddings and red apples and hazelnuts for dessert.

"See, Conn," said Ferdiad, "the door of the Hall is open; let's go in and look around."

"All right!" said Conn, so they went in and watched as servants spread linen cloths on a number of tables standing close to the walls of the long room. There were seats for these only on the side next the wall; for nobody was expected to have his back to the center of the room where the poets always sang their pieces after dinner.

"These must be the tables for the kings and flaiths," said Ferdiad as they strolled along the room, "for see, there are the hooks in the wall for their shields."

"Yes," said Conn, "and look up a little higher and you can tell exactly each king's place, for there are the king's candles all ready to light," and he pointed to a number of bronze brackets holding very large candles of beeswax with great bushy wicks. "And that enormous one, bigger around than I am, is where the high king will sit. It's just like the one that burns at the door of his palace at Kinkora when Brian Boru is there, and my foster father says that when he goes to war a big candle like that always burns at the door of his tent at night."

"I suppose where those other handsome cloths are is where the queens and their ladies will sit," said Ferdiad, "and down at the end of the Hall where they are spreading the tables with deerskin must be for the servants."

At every place was laid a napkin, a platter, a cup for mead and a knife for cutting up the food, all of which was eaten with the fingers. In front of each was also a small dish of honey, of which everyone was immensely fond and in which they liked to dip almost everything, even meat and fish.

Soon the dinner was ready and servants began bringing in great dishes of meat which later would be carefully carved and distributed according to the rank of the guests. Thus, a certain part of the roast ox was always given to kings and poets, another special part to queens, another to flaiths, and so on till all were served. There was one other part, however, that was always the choicest of all; and of this Conn whispered to Ferdiad, "Who do you suppose will get the hero's morsel?" For this tidbit was the portion of the man who was thought by everybody to have performed the bravest or most heroic exploit.

"I don't know," answered Ferdiad, "of course there are lots of kings and chiefs here at the fair, but I don't know who has done the bravest thing. I dare say it will be the one who has fought and beaten the most Danes."

Just then "Clear out now, youngsters!" said an official looking man, who with two others had come into the Hall and taken their places close by the open door.

As the boys slipped out, "I guess it's time for the feast," whispered Ferdiad, "but let's wait outside and see the folks come."

Here one of the men at the door, lifting a large trumpet he carried, blew a loud blast and immediately a number of squires, who had been waiting nearby holding the shields of their masters, marched up and handed them to the second of the three men who knew every shield and the rank of its owner. At a second blast from the trumpet the shields were taken into the Hall and hung on the hooks Ferdiad had noticed in the wall over the tables. It was a gay sight when all were placed; most of them were small and round, some made of wicker covered with leather and coated with lime which shone dazzling white, others painted in different

colors, while many were ornamented with beautiful bands and bosses of gold and silver. When all were arranged the trumpeter blew a third blast, and at this the feasters began to arrive.

"There comes the high king!" said Ferdiad, as the aged monarch, wrapped in a rich purple mantle and attended by his followers, reached the door of the Hall. As he was giving the feast, he stood near the entrance and greeted each guest before turning them over to the third of the three men at the door whose business it was to seat each man under his own shield and to lead the ladies to the tables spread for them.

"Don't they look fine!" said Conn, as he gazed at the gayly dressed throng coming up the mound.

"Yes, indeed!" echoed Ferdiad, "and oh, there's my foster father!"

Angus was with a group of kings and poets who came directly after the high king, and there was a sweet tinkling of musical branches as they passed.

"I wish my foster father could go to the feast, too!" said Conn wistfully, flushing slightly at the thought that he was

not of high enough rank to be one of the guests.

"Never mind," said Ferdiad quickly, "I'm sure he is a brave man from what you have told me about him, and I don't wonder you think so much of him. I think he was mighty good to take me into your tent to sleep, and I know my foster father would like to meet him."

Conn looked pleased, and as he was not of an envious disposition, he said he hoped Angus would get the prize and that the high king would choose him for chief poet. "And oh," went on the boy, "if he does you will all come to live at Kinkora where Brian Boru's palace is and you know our home is near there and most likely you will go to the same monastery school where I go!"

"That would be fine!" exclaimed Ferdiad, "and do tell me more about Kinkora." And talking of this the two boys wandered off together through the long twilight.

Meantime within the Hall the feasting went merrily on; by and by the dark fell and all the kings' candles were lighted, and then, when the feast was over, the chain of silence was shaken and the poets one by one stood out and sang their songs. But we have not time in this story to tell

of what they sang nor of how beautifully they played on their harps, for they were very skillful musicians as well as makers of songs. Many fine poems were thus given, but, of course, Angus won the prize of the jeweled ring and was chosen by the high king to be his chief poet, while over his shoulders was hung the wonderful mantle of feathers, which was worn only by chief poets, and his silver musical branch was replaced by one of pure gold.

I say of course this happened to Angus, because Eileen was quite sure it would, and so was Ferdiad, and so was I when he came into this story which must move now for a while to Kinkora; for Angus and his family would be expected to live in the poet's house by the palace of Brian Boru.

But before we go to Kinkora I must tell you how Ferdiad went with his foster parents and Eileen back to their home near Kells where Angus wished to arrange his affairs before quitting it for the court of the high king.

CHAPTER VI
Kells Is Raided

The curragh in which they had come to the fair was pointed up the Blackwater which it parted in long ripples of silver as Ferdiad and Angus pulled at the oars. They were all very proud and happy over the honor Angus had won the night before, and Eileen had hugged and kissed him and begged to hear all about it.

"There, child," said her father, "I will tell you by and by. We must hurry now to reach Kells, for you know we want to stop there to see the new high cross they have been putting up, and we must be home by dark, for we cannot sleep in the curragh neither can we camp in the forests; there are too many bears!"

Indeed, for much of their way after leaving Tailltenn the great trees came close to the water's edge and in their deep shadows prowled many dangerous beasts; for a large part of

Ireland was still wild and unsettled. Now and then they passed open bog lands with perhaps a glimpse of blue mountain tops in the distance; and sometimes the river led through meadows where cows and sheep were grazing near the homes of their owners. As I have told you, most of the Celtic people lived in the country and their homes, which they called "raths" were much alike. There was always a round or oblong house in the middle of a piece of ground enclosed by a circular wall of earth often planted on top with a prickly hedge to better protect the place from the attack of enemies or wild beasts.

Even the palaces of the kings were built much the same, only larger and finer, and they were called "duns" instead of raths.

But the curragh on the Blackwater had been making good progress and before long they could glimpse through the trees the stone walls of Kells, while clustering about rose the thatched roofs of the round wattled huts where lived the young students.

For Kells was not a town but a monastery where a number of monks lived and studied and taught, and in their

spare time made beautiful painted books. There were many such places in Ireland and the Celtic monks had become so famous for their learning that people not only from their own country but even from Britain and Gaul (which we now call England and France), sent their sons to be educated by them. Much of Europe was then very heathenish and ignorant, and had it not been for those Celtic monks, many of whom went as missionaries and started schools in other countries, the world would not be nearly so wise as it is today.

As they now drew near Kells, "Shall we go to the monastery landing?" asked Ferdiad.

"No," said Angus, "I see the monks working at the new high cross on the hill yonder. We will land there and go up and look at it."

In a few minutes they had all climbed to the hill top where the new stone cross had just been put in place. It was very large, more than twice as high as a tall man, and wonderfully carved with scenes from the Bible as it was meant to tell its story to people who had no books of their own. There are today more than fifty of these great Celtic

crosses standing on the hills of Ireland and artists from many countries copy them because of their beauty.

"Oh, Father, isn't it fine!" cried Eileen.

"Yes, indeed!" said Angus; "it is one of the finest I have seen. Who of you made it?" he asked, turning to the monks who were standing by.

One of them was about to answer him when suddenly there came a sharp jangle of bells from a tall round tower of stone near the monastery.

"Hark!" cried the monk, and as they all paused a moment, there came another wild peal of the bells, and crashing through the woods beyond Kells they could see a score or more people from the country round about running frantically for the tower. Some were carrying children in their arms and others driving before them a few cows or sheep, while from the door of the monastery the brown-robed monks were already pouring out, their arms filled with precious books and such sacred things of gold and silver as they had been able to snatch from the altar of the monastery church. For everywhere the young students were running about shouting "The Danes! The Danes!" and

everybody knew that those fierce pirate raiders from across the northern sea were heathens who thought no more of stripping a Christian altar than of driving off a herd of cattle and killing their helpless owner.

"Can you see them coming yet?" asked Angus anxiously of the monks.

"No," they said, "they are probably burning the raths they have raided, but they will be here quickly! We must hurry to reach the tower!" For the monks were no fighters, and, moreover, they all knew they would be far outnumbered by the raiders.

Angus at once snatched up Eileen, who was screaming from fright, and bidding Fianna and Ferdiad to follow, they all ran like deer down the hill.

By this time the country folk had given up hope of saving their cattle and sheep and were trying only to save themselves as both they and the monks and their pupils crowded to the foot of the tower and scrambled as fast as they could up a wooden ladder which led to a door high above the ground. For the tower was not only a belfry for the monastery church but also a place of refuge from just

such sudden attacks as the Danes were now making. And how often these places of refuge were needed in those wild warring times is proven by the many ancient towers, solitary and deserted, which still rise from innumerable Irish hills and valleys. And very good strongholds they were when everyone was inside, the ladder drawn up and the great door barred. If the raiders tried to come too close they were apt to get their heads cracked by a few of the big stones of which there was always a good supply to be dropped from the high windows.

As Angus and the rest now joined the others at the foot of the ladder, Angus saw that Fianna and Eileen got safely in and then telling Ferdiad to climb up too, turned to see if he could help the others. But Ferdiad waited to pick up a child that was lost from its parents and running about crying helplessly. He handed it up to safety, and just then a group of belated country people came screaming that the Danes were at their heels!

At this there was a wild rush for the ladder by those who were still outside. Angus, who supposed Ferdiad had gone in long before, climbed in with the last of the monks he had

been helping, and in the struggle to gain the door no one noticed that Ferdiad was pushed off the ladder by a burly countryman wild with terror, and that the lad fell some distance to the ground.

For a few moments he lay stunned, and when he came to himself the ladder was drawn up as out of the forest came rushing a troop of wild Danes. Some wore chain armor and helmets with cows' horns fastened in front making them look like demons, while others were clad in tunics made from the shaggy skins of beasts; but all carried shields and spears and short swords and were shouting in loud fierce voices.

Ferdiad's heart quaked and he crouched back at the foot of the tower where he had fallen and where, luckily, some bushes made a fairly good screen.

When the raiders came nearer and found there was nobody to fight, part of them began swarming into the monastery and church and huts of the pupils looking for anything on which they might lay hands, while others started driving off the flocks of the country folks, and still others quarreled among themselves over the booty they had

brought from the raths they had afterward destroyed.

Ferdiad, who had all the while been looking sharply about, all at once fairly held his breath as his gaze fell on a sheltered nook in the monastery wall. The Danes being for the time busy elsewhere none of them saw as did Ferdiad that a monk, clutching his robe as if trying to hide something beneath it, had seemingly crawled out of the wall and was creeping through the bushes in the direction of the tower. Ferdiad guessed at once that he had come out of the underground chambers; and sure enough, the tangle of bushes hid a hole in the wall just big enough for a man's body. This hole was the opening of a secret passage leading from the beehive shaped stone chambers such as were built under most monasteries and important houses as a place to hide valuables or the people themselves if attacked too suddenly for them to reach the nearest round tower.

Now this monk of Kells, Brother Giles, had been with the last of those fleeing from the monastery when all at once he had remembered the most precious thing in all Kells and which no one else had thought to try to save. This was the marvelous angel book of Saint Columkille of which

Ferdiad had told Conn the monks said there was no other like it in all the world! That it could for a moment have been forgotten would seem unbelievable were it not that everyone knows that when people are frightened and must pick out what they most care for, as at a fire, they often bring away very silly things and leave the best of all behind.

At any rate, the moment the monk thought of the book he rushed back and snatched it from the drawer where it was kept, then, finding the Danes were already coming toward the door of the monastery, he hurried down the winding stair to the underground chambers, hoping to hide there. But in a few moments the Danes discovered the stair and he could hear them groping their way down, for it was very dark there. At this he began stealthily to feel his way to the secret passage, and because of the darkness he managed to escape from the raiders who were poking in corners for what plunder they could find. The monk, hiding the precious book in its golden case, had just come out of the passage when Ferdiad saw him.

As the boy looked, suddenly Brother Giles straightened up and made a dash for the tower hoping to reach it before

the Danes saw him.

Forgetting his own danger, Ferdiad tried to call to him that the ladder was up, but could not make him hear. But the poor monk had scarcely run halfway till with a fierce shout one of the raiders started in pursuit. Ferdiad's eyes grew wide with horror as the monk sprang forward desperately only to sink lifeless on the ground beneath the sharp thrust of a Danish sword. As the man paused a moment Ferdiad could see his wild cruel face and red-scarred forehead, then suddenly as the dead monk's robe fell apart the Dane caught the gleam of the golden case which held the painted book, and snatching it up greedily ran off with it before Ferdiad's strained gaze could make out just what the object was.

In a little while the other raiders came out of the monastery, having stripped it of every bit of gold and silver they could find, and as they could not set fire to the stone buildings they had to content themselves with burning the thatched huts of the students. While these were still smoldering they took themselves off toward the seacoast, driving before them the sheep and cows they had stolen



"Ferdiad's eyes grew wide with horror."

from the country folk.

As soon as they were sure it was all over, the people one by one crept down from the tower, the country folk going sadly back to try patiently to rebuild their desolate homes while the monks began to set things in order about Kells.

Everybody was amazed and delighted to find Ferdiad had escaped with his life, though of course no one had known he was not safe in the tower. The body of Brother Giles was borne sorrowfully into the monastery; and then, when they began to bring back the gold and silver things they had saved and to take stock of what the Danes had stolen, first of all the Abbot discovered that Saint Columkille's book was gone. He was filled with dismay and remorse that he had forgotten it, and kept muttering despairingly, "The angel book of the blessed Saint Columkille! May all the saints forgive me!"

The monks, too, looked at each other white and terrified, fearing a curse upon Kells because of their unbelievable carelessness. For none of them knew that Brother Giles had given his life in the vain effort to save the beautiful book, and they felt sure that the Celtic people

would blame them when it was known the precious volume was lost, for it was even then famous in Ireland.

As Ferdiad heard them lamenting, presently an idea occurred to him. "Reverend Father," he said to the Abbot, "perhaps it was Saint Columkille's book that Brother Giles was carrying when the Dane struck him. I saw the man take something from his robe as he lay on the ground, but could only get a flash of gold. I couldn't see just what it was, as the Dane turned from me when he picked it up and he ran off right away."

The Abbot listened gravely, but only said, "Perhaps, boy. But it might have been a golden candlestick you saw; we had many such. And even if it was the book, the Dane will care for nothing but the gold of its case and will surely destroy it when he rejoins his people and looks at it; they have burned countless precious volumes before this!" and the Abbot sighed bitterly.

But, somehow, Ferdiad got it into his head that the book the angels had made would not be destroyed, and he wished more than anything else that someday he might find it.

Meantime, Angus, seeing there was really nothing he

could do to help restore order at the monastery, had brought down the curragh and he and Ferdiad had moored it at their landing. Fortunately their rath, being on the other side of the river from Kells, had escaped harm.

CHAPTER VII

The New Home at Kinkora

Angus had disposed of his home rath to a bo-aire who had given in exchange many bags of wheat and silver rings and gold torques and necklaces. Then, loading in an ox-cart such things as they wished to take with them to Kinkora, they had set out for the river Shannon; for as Brian Boru's palace was on the bank of that river it was easier to make the main journey by boat.

Eileen and her mother and Ferdiad rode in the cart with the driver, but Angus came beside them on a horse, which was considered the only proper way for a poet to ride; his horse had a single bridle and he guided and urged it on, not by a whip, but a small rod of carved yew wood having a curved end with a goad.

They all greatly enjoyed the journey both by land and water, and slept soundly every night at some comfortable

brewy, which was the Celtic name for an inn; though, unlike our inns, they were places of free entertainment. Indeed, there were no other kind among the Celts, who thought so highly of hospitality that at every place where four important roads met they built a brewy. It was thought a great honor to be a brewy master and it was usually given to a man who had served his country well. He was given also a large piece of public farm land and many sheep and cows and was expected always to have food and beds ready for travelers. And lest anyone should miss his way, a servant stood always at the crossroads to point out the brewy.

In this way they made the journey to Kinkora and were soon settled in their new home.

The second morning after their arrival, Ferdiad was in a meadow nearby knocking about a leather ball with a bronze tipped stick when suddenly he threw it down, crying delightedly, "Well, Conn! We have been here two days and I wondered why you didn't come!" and he ran to meet his friend whose red head had just flamed in sight.

Conn laughed with pleasure. "I came the first chance I had," he panted, "and I ran the last half mile. My foster

father has been sick and I had to tend the cows and sheep so I couldn't get away before. How do you like it here?" he added, looking eagerly around. Then, seeing the ball and stick, "Oh," he cried, "why didn't I bring my stick and we could have had a game of hurley!"

"Never mind," said Ferdiad, "come and see where we live now."

"It's inside the high king's dun, isn't it?" asked Conn, looking toward the great earthen wall faced with stone and cement that rose nearby enclosing the palace of Brian Boru.

"Yes," answered Ferdiad, "you know the king's poet and doctor and lawyer and the rest of the folks that always attend him have houses inside the dun."

"I know," said Conn, "and these scattered around through the fields are for the millers and farmers and cloth makers and everybody who does things for the palace folks."

By this time the boys had come opposite the doorway in the great circular wall and had begun to weave their way among a number of tall upright stones, each as large as a man and placed as irregularly as if a lot of people running

toward the dun had suddenly been petrified. It was like playing hide and seek for the boys to try to keep together.

"Well," said Ferdiad, as at last they stood before the open door of heavy oaken beams, "the king of Meath has stones before the wall of his dun, only not half so many as these!"

"They're a wonderful protection," said Conn, "and if any army tried to attack Brian Boru's palace they would have a mighty hard time getting inside the dun, for, of course, they would have to make their way between the stones a few at a time, just like we did."

Here the boys stepped inside the enclosure. They did not need to use the small log knocker which lay in a niche in a stone pillar beside the door, as the latter stood open with the keeper blinking in the sun. They crossed a wooden bridge over a moat and this brought them to the door of a second wall of earth thickly planted on top with hazel bushes. Passing through this they came to the very large green space in the center of which was a low mound where stood the wooden palace of Brian Boru. Dotted around near the earthen rampart were a number of round wattled

houses where, as Ferdiad had said, the chief attendants of the high king lived.

"I've been here before," said Conn, who had often brought things from the farm of his foster father, "and I've peeped inside the palace once or twice when the high king was away, but I haven't been in any of the chiefs' houses. Which is yours?"—"Oh, I see!" he added, laughing, as Eileen, catching sight of him, came running from an open doorway.

"Come in, Conn!" she cried, seizing both his hands. "Isn't our house pretty? It has stripes just like the queen's house at the fair!" and she pointed to the red and blue and green bands painted on the plaster that overlaid the wattled walls. "And see how nice it is inside!" she went on, leading Conn within.

"Yes," said Conn, "it is very pretty," and he gazed admiringly around. In the center of the house was a carved pole supporting the thatched roof, in which was a hole to let out the smoke when it was cold enough to build a fire on the earthen floor now strewn with rushes. There were several low tables and seats cushioned with white fleeces,

and around the wall behind partitions of wickerwork stood the beds with posts fixed in the ground.

"I helped weave the coverlids!" said Eileen with pride as they peeped into these tiny bedrooms, "My loom is in our greenan," and she led the way to a separate little house shining white in the sun and covered with vines. For no Celtic home was considered complete without such a little bower, or greenan as they called it, for the mistress and her friends, and it was always placed in the pleasantest and sunniest spot.

Here Ferdiad called, "Come on, Conn, let's go and take a look in the palace and around the dun. The high king and most of the flaiths have gone deer hunting and father Angus is practicing a new poem, so we'll poke around awhile and then after dinner maybe we can find somebody to tell us a story."

As the boys ran off together, "Be sure and show Conn the queen's greenan all thatched with bird wings!" called Eileen, and Conn smiled, for he had often seen the greenan with its wonderful roof of feathers which were arranged in glistening stripes of white and many colors. So, too, he had

seen the great banquet hall of Brian Boru, though he looked in again to please Ferdiad. It was built much in the style of the Hall of Feasting at the Tailltenn fair, only handsomer and more gayly painted, and the heavy door of carved yew wood and the posts on either side were elaborately ornamented with gold and silver and bronze. As they looked inside, "There is where father Angus sits when there is a feast," said Ferdiad, pointing to a seat at one of the long tables next to the high king's throne-like chair.

Back of the banquet hall was a kitchen with open fires and spits for roasting and cauldrons for boiling. There was also on the mound another large wooden house with living rooms and curtained beds, although all the more important folks had each a little round sleeping house all to himself.

Outside the main dun were several smaller circular enclosures protected by ramparts, and in these were stables for the horses and chariots, sheds for cows and sheep and pigs, granaries for wheat and barley, and kennels for the great fierce wolfhounds that were loosed every night to guard the dun from unwelcome visitors.

By the time the boys had seen everything dinner was

ready and afterward Ferdiad begged Angus to tell them a story. "It needn't be a long one," he said, "but Conn and I have been looking at the big wolfhounds of the high king and we wish you would tell us about how Cuculain got his name."

Angus smiled, for he knew the boys had heard many times of the exploits of Cuculain (whose name means "the Hound of Culain"), the most famous of all the Celtic heroes, but he knew also that made no matter for the boys loved to hear the same stories over and over. So they went out under a quicken tree near the house where Angus sat on a bench while Ferdiad and Conn stretched out on the grass at his feet.

CHAPTER VIII

How Cuculain Got His Name

"You know," began Angus, "it was in the brave days of the Red Branch Knights, hundreds and hundreds of years ago. Every summer these famous warriors used to go to the dun of Concobar Mac Nessa, king of Ulster, which is in the northern part of Ireland, and while there they would practice drills and hold contests of strength and go through all sorts of feats of arms.

"One summer when they were thus visiting King Concobar, on a certain day a great flock of birds alighted on the wheat fields and began to eat the ripe grain. The king and a party of his knights went out with slings and stones to drive them off. But the birds kept flying farther and farther away till at last when it grew dark they had lured King Concobar and the rest to where a fairy mound rose from the banks of the river Boyne.

"When they looked about for somewhere to sleep, they could find only a tumbledown hut, and with this they had to content themselves; that is, all but one of the knights who went exploring further till he saw an opening in the fairy mound and entering it he came to a beautiful house and was met at the door by a handsome young man who told him his name was Lugh of the Strong Arm. In a little while the young man's wife came in and the knight stared with surprise for he recognized her as Dectera, a lovely girl who with fifty of her maidens had disappeared from the court of King Concobar a whole year before.

"When the knight went back to the hut where the others were and told what he had seen, King Concobar at once sent for Dectera to return to the court with him. She refused, but next morning they found in the hut her beautiful baby boy whom she had sent as a gift to the people of Ulster, for the Druids had made wonderful prophecies about what a great hero he should be."

"Who were the Druids?" asked Conn.

"Why," said Angus, "they were the priests of long ago, before the blessed Saint Patrick came and taught our Celtic

people about Christ and started the Christian religion in Ireland.

"But everybody in King Concobar's time believed what the Druids said," went on Angus, "so the Red Branch Knights took the baby back with them and found a nurse for him, and the king gave him a large piece of land and a rath for his inheritance and he was named Setanta. By and by, when he was seven years old, he was sent to be brought up in the court and be a foster son of King Concobar. He was a fine strong boy and soon excelled all the other boys at court in running and leaping and riding horseback and shooting with bow and arrow and in hurling the spear, and all the things you boys now are being taught.

"Now one summer, when Setanta was about ten, King Concobar and some of the knights who had come again for the yearly practice in arms, decided to pay a two days' visit to their friend a flaith named Culain who lived a number of miles from the king's palace. When they were ready to start they asked Setanta to go with them, but he was busy playing a game of hurley and wanted to finish it; so he said he would come later in the afternoon.

"The king's party went on, and Culain welcomed them and spread a great feast and by the time they had finished it was quite late in the evening, and they had forgotten all about Setanta. Then all at once they heard a most ferocious baying outside."

"Yes," cried Ferdiad, for the boys were very fond of this story, "it was the hound of Culain that had been let loose to guard the rath for the night, and it was as big and fierce as that lion beast that lives across the sea somewhere and everybody is so afraid of! One of the merchants from the south of Gaul told us about it at the fair."

"I have heard of the lion," said Angus, "and they say it is very terrible, but I believe I would as soon meet it as one of our Celtic wolfhounds on guard. As the folks in Culain's rath listened the noise grew louder as if the hound was fighting fiercely. At this they rushed out—"

"And there stood Setanta with his foot on the dead hound!" broke in Conn excitedly.

"Yes," said Angus, "when it sprang on him he had seized it by the throat and killed it all by himself. The king and knights were amazed and they carried Setanta into the

house and declared he would be a great hero. But while they were all exclaiming about Setanta's feat, Culain stood apart, sad and silent; for he thought a great deal of his hound that had guarded his rath faithfully for years.

"As soon as Setanta noticed this, he said courteously to Culain that he was sorry he had been obliged to kill his hound, but that if he would give him a young dog he would train it so well that in a few years it would be as brave and faithful as the hound he had lost. And he said that meantime, if Culain would give him a spear and shield, he himself would stay and guard the rath from all harm."

"Wasn't that splendid of Setanta!" exclaimed Ferdiad.

"Yes, indeed!" answered Angus, "and from that time on he was called 'Cuculain,' and everyone who knows the stories of our Celtic heroes knows that his is the most famous name of all. But that will do for today," and Angus rose to go into the house.

"I must go, too," said Conn, and as the boys strolled together to the door of the dun, he added, "Next week school begins in the monastery over on the hill. I'll see you there, won't I?"

"Yes," said Ferdiad, "father Angus says that is where I am to go, so goodbye till then."

CHAPTER IX

On the March

Ferdiad found the Kinkora school very interesting. Every day when the weather was pleasant the boys gathered in the cloister courtyard where the monks taught them out of doors. If it was cold or rainy they went inside to a schoolroom where the vellum books were kept in leather satchels hanging from wooden pegs ranged round the walls. The boys all had long narrow tablets of wood coated with wax, and with a slender rod of metal they wrote on these the things they must specially remember. They learned grammar, a little geography in rime, some Latin and various bits of wisdom called "oghams," and every school year they must memorize at least ten new poems and stories; for these were thought a very important part of school work. Ferdiad and Conn sat side by side and told the stories over and over to each other, and were always delighted to get a new one.

Meantime, Eileen was taught at home, where besides her lessons she learned to spin and weave and sew and embroider. There were several other girls and boys whose foster parents were among the attendants of the high king and queen, and with these they had many merry times. Conn came often to see them, and as the autumn wore away the boys went nutting and hunting and fishing together.

When winter came it was not very cold, but fires were lighted and in the evenings they played chess and checkers and listened to stories and poems and music; for Brain Boru loved such things and always did his best to encourage scholars and poets and artists.

But though life passed happily enough for the boys and girls, the faces of the older people began to grow more and more anxious as the weeks went on. Now and again Ferdiad and Eileen would hear talk of some fresh raid by the Danes, who were all the while growing bolder and bolder.

Sometimes Conn came with tales he had heard, and one day he said to Ferdiad: "My foster father says there's bound to be a fight before long, or those Danes will just settle

themselves here in Ireland and we never can drive them out!"

"That's what father Angus thinks, too," said Ferdiad. "He says as soon as spring comes Brian Boru will get all the Celtic kings together and start out after the Danes and there will be a big battle somewhere."

And sure enough, as the winter passed, more and more messengers came and went from Kinkora as the high King completed his plans; and everyone around the palace talked of the Danes and how they must be conquered.

"Do you know, Ferdiad," said Conn excitedly one day, "folks say the banshee Aibell has been seen by the O'Brien of Killaloe, and she has given him a magic cloak that will make him invisible as he fights in the battle?"

"Who is Aibell?" asked Ferdiad.

"Oh, I forgot," said Conn, "you haven't lived here long enough to know. She is the fairy queen who specially guards the flaith O'Brien. He's a great champion and lives at Killaloe, not far from here. Aibell is famous around here and her palace is under the rock of Craglea in a glen near the O'Brien's home."

"Well," said Ferdiad, "I hadn't heard about Aibell, but I did hear that a flock of roysten crows flew eastward last night, and some say the battle witches often take the shape of crows and fly ahead when war is coming."

The next day the two boys had still more exciting things to talk about. "Oh, Conn!" cried Ferdiad, "what do you think? We are going, too! The high King will take along quite a number of the boys from here to run errands, and father Angus says that you can go with the group from the palace because you and I are such friends!"

"Oh, good!" cried Conn, his eyes dancing. "My foster father and my own father both are going with the soldiers and I suppose quite an army will start from here."

"Yes," said Ferdiad, "some of the Celtic kings and their soldiers will come here to start with Brian Boru and the rest will meet him in the kingdom of Meath, near where the river Liffey empties into the sea, and I am sure my own father, too, will be with the Meath army. They say a lot of the Danes have been camping all winter at the Ford of the Hurdles, and the high King means to attack them somewhere near there."

So the preparations went on; and by and by, when April came and the hawthorn trees began to bloom and the fields were full of buttercups, the Celtic kings with their poets and attendants began to arrive in chariots, while their soldiers followed on foot. The more important folks were entertained inside the dun, and the common soldiers pitched their tents in the fields without.

In a few days more Eileen and her mother waved a tearful goodbye to Angus and Ferdiad and Conn as they took their places in the great host that wound out of the dun and across the fields to the east. At the head went Brian Boru and after him the kings and flaiths riding in chariots, while the poets cantered along on horseback, their musical branches tinkling and their heads full of the battle songs they would chant when the time came. There were also musicians and story tellers and jugglers to provide entertainment when they camped at night, and doctors and priests to attend those who would be wounded and dying in the fight. The soldiers trudged along on foot and the baggage followed in ox-carts. Ferdiad and Conn and the other boys marched along with the rest and whenever they

were wanted to carry message or do any service the buglers called them, and when they got tired marching they could climb in the ox-carts and ride for a while.

"How long will it take us to get to the seacoast? Do you know?" asked Conn of Ferdiad.

"Father Angus said it would be over a week," said Ferdiad, "but I don't care how long it takes. I think it will be lots of fun, especially when we camp at night!"

And Ferdiad was right. The boys greatly enjoyed the march, and, best of all, the evenings when the tents were pitched, the protecting wall of earth thrown up around the camp, the fires made and supper being cooked. Later on, when the great king's candle was lighted at the door of Brian Boru's tent, storytelling and singing and all sorts of fun went on.

At last they drew near the mouth of the river Liffey and began to smell the salt air of the sea; and on a plain near its shore they made their camp. Close behind rose the Hill of Howth, and not far off the sea glittered and gleamed as the ebbing waves laid bare a wide strand of boulders covered with long green water weeds. By and by, when the tide

would come sweeping in, the great foaming breakers would roar and rumble over the stones like a herd of angry, bellowing bulls, and for this reason the Celtic people called the seashore there "Clontarf," which means in their language the "Lawn of the Bulls," a name which it bears to this day.

Ferdiad and Conn, who had not before seen the ocean, delighted in watching the curling green breakers and wading out as far as they dared. But they did not have much time to play, as the next day, which was Palm Sunday, they had many errands to do.

On that morning all the other Celtic kings joined Brian Boru's army, bringing with them their hosts of fighting men dressed, as were all the rest of the Celtic soldiers, in tunics of yellow linen; they had no armor because they thought it cowardly to wear it and protected only their heads with leather helmets and the front of their legs from the knee down with pieces of brown leather. The kings and flaiths did not wear even these, but were arrayed in silk and gay linen bratts and tunics and gold chains and bracelets quite as if they were going to a feast instead of a fight.

Ferdiad and Conn were very busy for the next three or four days, and finally, Thursday evening, Ferdiad said, "I believe they will fight soon now. I wouldn't wonder if it would be tomorrow!"

"Why," said Conn, "that's Good Friday! I shouldn't think Brian Boru would pick such a holy day to fight. You know he is so religious."

"He is," said Ferdiad, "but I heard the soldiers talking about a prophecy of a Dane soothsayer. I don't know how they found out about it, but the prophecy says if the battle is on Good Friday our Celts will win, though the high king will be killed. Of course nobody wants Brian Boru killed, but the soldiers say they want to fight tomorrow on account of the first part of the prophecy and that they can ward off the last part easy enough as they are sure the high king won't be in the fight because of the day and they will keep an extra strong guard around him besides."

"What does Brian Boru say?" asked Conn. "Did you hear?"

"They say he has the battle all planned and is willing for it to be tomorrow, though, as the soldiers thought, he

himself won't touch weapons on Good Friday because it's against his religion. It seems to me he is too old to fight anyway!"

"Don't you think it!" said Conn. "He is mighty brave and a good fighter yet, if he is way past eighty!"

That night there were no poets' songs nor story telling nor jugglers' tricks, for everybody was on the alert for the coming battle. The two boys curled up side by side in one of the ox-carts and, like all the rest of the Celtic host on this night, they did not take off their clothes. Far off in the distance they could see the watch fires of the Danes at the Ford of the Hurdles, and they went to sleep talking excitedly of the morrow.

CHAPTER X
The Battle of Clontarf

Sure enough, at daybreak the next morning there rose the sound of wild war cries as the Celts rushed out from their camp toward the Ford of the Hurdles. The full tide was roaring and bellowing across the Lawn of the Bulls, but its noise was quite drowned as with fierce cries of their own the Danes sprang to meet them.

"Hark! Hark!" exclaimed Ferdiad as he and Conn jumped from the ox-cart where they had slept, "the fight has begun!" As none of the boys were allowed in the way of the battle but had been ordered to stay behind the lines, "Let's run up the side of the Hill of Howth," he said, "we can at least see it from there. My, how I wish we could be in it!"

"Don't you though!" cried Conn longingly as they scrambled up the steep grassy slopes.

There were others also watching from the hill; the doctors who must be ready to help the wounded, the priests to comfort the dying, and the historians to write down just what went on. For the Celts liked to keep an account of all their doings.

The boys stood near these, and as the fight became fiercer and fiercer of course they grew more and more excited.

"I wonder where the high king is?" said Conn.

"I don't know," answered Ferdiad, then, "Look!" he cried, "I believe he is over yonder sitting on a rock! Can you see?"

"Yes," replied Conn, "and there's a ring of men with locked shields standing all around him!"

It was indeed the aged high king. His face was white and set as if carved from marble, yet his piercing eyes were brave and fearless as he sat watching the battle which he was certain would in some way bring death to him. For the Dane prophecy had sunk deep into his mind, and nothing could shake his belief that it would be fulfilled.

Wilder and wilder grew the struggle. Banners fluttered

and fell, and the loud battle cries from thousands of throats, the clanking of Danish armor and rattling of spears and shields all mingled in one hoarse roar as the chariots of the Celtic kings rushed hither and thither and the poets goaded their horses to the front ranks bravely chanting their songs and inspiring the courage of the soldiers.

The sun rose higher and higher and the ebbing tide flowed far out to sea, and still the conflict raged and none could foresee who would be the victors. Now one side and now the other seemed gaining the advantage. But toward noon the watchers on the hill began to despair; for they could see the yellow tunics of the Celtic soldiers rolling back in a tawny flood as the gleaming mail of the Danes swept over them.

Ferdiad and Conn scarcely spoke as breathlessly they looked, each wondering whether his father or foster father still lived or had gone down before the Danish hosts as had already the son and grandson of the high king.

But Brian Boru was too proud and skillful a warrior to allow his armies to meet defeat at the hands of pirates and sea rovers no matter how many or how powerful. Still

standing white and motionless, watching the plain through the ring of shields, nevertheless he was all the while sending swift messengers back and forth ordering the battle, till at length, as the sunset tide again surged in, bellowing, over the waterworn boulders, the tide of war turned also for the Celts.

Louder and louder rang the songs of the poets, the voice of Angus leading them all, as the Celtic kings and captains rallying their soldiers for a last mighty effort, rushed restlessly forward, hurling their spears, thrusting with their swords and dealing deadly blows with their battle axes, till suddenly their Danish foes gave way and fled wildly before them.

At this the boys could hold back no longer, but flying down the hillside ran toward the seashore where the victorious Celts were pursuing the Danes, who were trying to reach the long dragon ships in which they had come to Ireland and which were moored at the mouth of the river Liffey. When the tide was low they could easily wade out to these, but now plunging into the great green breakers hundreds and

hundreds met their death. Some tried to reach the bridge over the Liffey which led to their fortress only to find escape cut off by the brave Celts who had captured and held it.

When dusk fell, the great army of the Danes was crushed and defeated. Of those who had not fallen in battle or been drowned in the roaring tide a few had managed to escape, but most were prisoners in the hands of the Celtic soldiers. The Battle of Clontarf was over and the high king, Brian Boru, had forever broken the power of the Danes in Ireland.

But what of the high king himself? Had he escaped the death for which he had waited through all the long day? No, he had not escaped. Faithfully from early dawn to sunset the shield men had guarded him in unbroken ring, and not till the tide of battle turned and the Celts were pursuing the flying Danes did they relax their watch. For how could they know that at the very moment their tired arms dropped to their sides a fugitive Dane, who had managed to escape the Celtic spears and crept through the forest and behind the rocks at the foot of the Hill, would spring upon the aged monarch and deal him death with a



"Thus it was the soothsayer's prophecy was fulfilled."

single thrust of his sword?

But thus it was the soothsayer's prophecy was fulfilled.

CHAPTER XI

Ferdiad and the Dane Prisoner

Ferdiad and Conn stood together in a group of soldiers who were making campfires for the night, and many were the stories they all had to tell of the day. But most of all were they wondering how it was that a single Dane had been able to kill the high king in spite of all the shield men.

"It was that heathen prophecy!" declared one soldier, "and nobody could help it!"

"They say the Dane who struck him was a great sorcerer and that no sword could bite his magic armor," said another. And this explanation seemed to satisfy them best; for they did not like to think an ordinary man could have harmed the king they had taken such pains to guard.

"Did you know the flaith O'Brien was killed?" asked another.

"Yes," spoke up someone else, "his men say that at first

he was invisible because of the cloak from the banshee of Craglea, but as the battle grew fiercer he scorned not to be seen and threw it off. It was then a Dane spear struck him, and they say his shield moaned as he fell!"

"Did you see the war witches dancing on the tips of our Celtic spears?" said another voice.

"To be sure!" came an answering one, "And look! they are flying now over the battlefield!"

"Do you see them, Ferdiad?" whispered Conn, in awed tones.

"It looks like fog coming in from the sea," said Ferdiad, gazing through the gathering dusk, "but I suppose the witches are in it."

Just here some other boys came along on their way to see the prisoners, and Ferdiad and Conn went with them to the rear of the camp where scores of sullen-looking Danes were standing under guard waiting their turn to be chained. Torches flared here and there, and as their flickering light fell on the faces of the prisoners all at once Ferdiad stopped short with a long, "Oh!" He was standing in front of a tall, cruel-looking man with hands chained



"He was standing in front of a tall, cruel looking man."

behind him and an ugly red scar across his forehead.

After his first gasp of surprise, "Conn," whispered Ferdiad excitedly, "he is the man who killed the monk in the raid on Kells! I would know his face in a thousand. And he took what the monk had hid in his robe and I have always thought it was the angel book of Saint Columkille!" Here Ferdiad caught sight of the wooden shield at the Dane's feet: in its center was a pointed boss of iron which was thrust through, and partly held in place, the fragment of a thin sheet of gold. The corners of this were fastened to the wood by a few bronze nails, and the gold was beautifully hammered in a curious design of interlacing lines and queer animal forms with long tails twisting in many intricate spirals.

"Look!" cried Ferdiad, as he examined this eagerly, "now I know it was Saint Columkille's book he got! That gold is part of its case, I've seen it and remember the pattern! I suppose he put it on his shield trying to imitate our handsome Celtic ones with their gold ornaments."

Meantime the captive was staring sullenly at Ferdiad, who was saying to Conn, "I wonder if he understands

Celtic? I wish I could ask him some questions."

"No, boy," said a soldier standing guard nearby, "but if you want to ask him something I can help you, for I know his language."

"Oh," said Ferdiad, "ask him where the book is that was in that case. It was the angel book of the blessed Saint Columkille!"

"It was?" exclaimed the soldier in surprise, for almost every Celt had heard of that wonderful book. But to the soldier's question the Dane only shrugged his shoulders and would say nothing.

"I was at Kells when the Danes raided it, and I saw him kill the monk who was trying to save the book!" went on Ferdiad.

At this the soldier began fiercely to threaten the man, telling him they would kill him. But still the man sullenly refused to speak; for he had been long enough in Ireland to know that the Celtic law would not allow prisoners to be killed.

Then Ferdiad thought of something. "Tell him," he said, "that my foster father is the chief poet of Ireland and I will

get him to compose a scornful poem about him!"

Now do not laugh, for this was no idle threat of Ferdiad's, and when he suggested it the soldier said approvingly, "That will settle him!" For a Celt dreaded nothing more than for a poet to chant scornful verses about him. They had a peculiar reverence for their poets and believed that by their songs they could, if they wished, call down terrible misfortunes or even death.

So the soldier took pains to impress all this on the Dane, who turned pale with fright and at last burst out in a torrent of words to which the soldier listened attentively.

"He says," he interpreted, "that that book has been trouble enough to him. When he was carrying it off from Kells another Dane attacked him and tried to get it away, and in the fight he killed the man but not before he had got a sword thrust that blinded one of his eyes—which served him right! though the wicked heathen was ugly enough already with that red scarred forehead of his!"—put in the soldier on his own account as he went on, "he says the gold was what he wanted, and after his fight with the man he tore the book out of its case and threw it away. And may

the blessed Saint Columkille send his soul to everlasting torment for it!" added the soldier as he piously crossed himself.

Ferdiad drew a long breath, "Well," he said at last, "at least it wasn't burned!" For everybody knew the Danes had made many a bonfire of the precious books and manuscripts they had stolen from the Celts. "Perhaps it may be found yet," he said to Conn as they walked away together.

"But it would surely be spoiled if it had been lying on the ground all this while!" said Conn.

And still discussing it they went over to the center of the camp where everyone was going. For Angus was beginning to chant the mourning song for the high king, who lay within his tent with lighted candles at his head and feet and the royal waxen one blazing at the door.

CHAPTER XII

The Book of Kells

It was the day after the battle of Clontarf, and the Celtic camp was already broken up and the soldiers scattering back to their homes. The body of the dead high king, Brian Boru, was to be borne in a cart drawn by white oxen and covered with a purple pall to the church of Armagh, a very sacred place in the kingdom of Ulster. There, with solemn ceremonies, the Celtic monarch would be buried, standing with his face to the east, wrapped in his royal mantle, his shield and spear beside him.

Now it happened that Kells was one of the stopping places on the way to Armagh; and when Ferdiad heard this, he begged his foster father that he and Conn might go that far along with the pages who attended the different kings and flaiths.

"We can ride in the cart for the pages, and stay at Kells

and you can stop for us when you come back from Armagh!" said Ferdiad eagerly. "I want to hunt for Saint Columkille's book and Conn will help me." For Ferdiad had told his foster father about what the Dane prisoner had said.

Angus had no hope that the beautiful book might be found, but Ferdiad begged so hard that he agreed and Ferdiad ran off happily to tell Conn.

So it came about that the two boys went along when the funeral procession set off, the white oxen and royal cart leading the way while close behind rode poet Angus chanting sorrowful songs in honor of the dead king. After him came as many of the Celtic kings and flaiths as could arrange to go to Armagh, and last of all followed the host of attendants for these, the boys among them.

At Kells the funeral train was received with every honor, and after a brief rest moved on to the north; but Ferdiad and Conn stayed behind. The boys were warmly greeted by the monks, who knew Ferdiad well and were fond of the lad; and they were especially glad to see him as they had not heard from him since the day of the raid.

He soon told them what he had found out about the beautiful book, and Brother Patrick said, "Yes, lad, I remember finding the body of no doubt the very man the Dane prisoner told you he had fought with over the gold case, and we gave the wicked heathen Christian burial where we found him. If the book was thrown away soon after the fight, it must be somewhere not far from that spot."

"Oh, please show us the place and let's begin looking right away!" cried Ferdiad.

"I can show you the Dane's grave," said Brother Patrick with a sigh, "but unless the blessed Saint Columkille has worked a miracle, the beautiful book is surely ruined by this time!"

The spot to which he led the way was in a woodland skirting the monastery fields, and just beyond was a bog where the monks had once cut the peat they burned in winter, though it had now become quite dry. Several of them who had heard Ferdiad's story came along, and all began to search. But most of them were no longer young, and it seemed to them a hopeless task; though they

constantly mourned the loss of the most beautiful book in Ireland.

As the Kells school was over for the summer, there were no young students to help search, for they had all gone away for a time; so at last Ferdiad and Conn found themselves the ones who must find the book if anyone did.

Up and down through the trees they went, peering and poking under every swirl of fallen leaves or dead boughs where they glimpsed anything that looked in the least like the brown carved leather that covered the lost book. Ferdiad led the way southeastward from where the two Danes had fought, "For," he said, "that is the direction Brother Patrick says the raiders went after they left Kells, and even yet you can see the broken branches where they drove the cows through the woods on their way toward the sea."

The boys got down on their hands and knees and looked under every thicket of bushes, and Conn even poked under tufts of violets and cowslips.

"Why, Conn," laughed Ferdiad, "it's too big to hide under those! Saint Columkille's book is at least a foot wide

and more than that long, and thick through!"

Indeed, they got as interested as in a game of hide and seek; moreover, the monks offered as prize, if the book was found, a handsome bow and arrows with a quiver of red enameled leather, such as they gave to their best student at the end of his year's school work.

For almost a week the boys searched and searched in vain. At last Ferdiad said, "There's a fairy mound somewhere in these woods, I think not far from here. Let's go around it three times and say a charm and maybe the fairies will help us!"

"All right!" agreed Conn, and soon finding the little hill they walked around it backward three times, each saying softly under his breath a special charm rime; for many such had been handed down among the people from the days of the DeDanaans.

Now it was an odd thing, but that very morning, while Conn with a stick was poking under some hazel bushes, Ferdiad, in looking behind a log at the edge of the woodland, happened to start a young hare. Off scampered the little creature out of the woods and over a corner of the

peat bog. Suddenly—plump! down it tumbled head over heels in a hole where, long before, the monastery brothers had been cutting their peat.

Ferdiad, who was fond of hunting with his red and green hounds, though he had none with him, instinctively ran after the hare to see what had become of it. Though the ground was spongy lower down, for some distance from the top the bog was dry; and when Ferdiad came to the hole, there was the frightened little hare huddled up at the bottom and in his scrambles to get out his hind legs were scattering the brown dry leaves that had blown over from the forest the autumn before.

As Ferdiad bent over his eyes began to grow very round as he stared, not at the little hare, but at something lying at one side of the ragged hole where the hare had been most active in scattering away the leaves. The corner of a brown flat object was laid bare, and Ferdiad, springing down hurriedly, cleared away the rest of the leaves and drew out—but, of course, you have guessed what!

Yes, indeed, it truly was the angel book which by some strange chance had fallen into the peat hole when the

Dane, hurrying to join the other raiders, had come out of the woodland and cutting across a corner of the bog had torn it from the case and flung it away. It had dropped under a projecting edge of the peat, and this and the drifting leaves had protected it from the weather so that when Ferdiad lifted it out, though its thick leather cover was marred and discolored in places, yet when he opened it its marvelous painted pages shone out as bright and beautiful and undimmed as when first it came from the hand of the unknown artist hundreds of years before!

"Conn! Conn!" shouted Ferdiad, trembling with excitement, "Come here! I have found it!"

In a moment Conn came running, and when Ferdiad told him how he had discovered it he stared in surprise. "Do you suppose it could have been a DeDanaan fairy in the form of a hare that helped you find it?" he cried. "I was sure I saw some fairies flitting around there in the woods after we came back from the mound."

"I don't know," said Ferdiad, "it might have been!"

And perhaps it was; and perhaps, too, as the monks declared when Ferdiad bore back the book in triumph to



"The drifting leaves had protected it from
the weather."

the monastery, the blessed Saint Columkille or the angels who had guided the hand of the bygone artist had indeed wrought a miracle and so saved those rare painted pages from harm as they lay all the long months hidden in the bog.

In very truth, the angels must still guard the sacred volume; for all these things I have told you happened long and long ago. Long and long ago Ferdiad and Conn and Eileen lived out their happy lives and long ago poet Angus sang his last sweet song. The raths of the Celtic people of old and the duns of their high kings are now only ruined walls watched over by the hidden fairies, and their beloved Ireland has passed through many changes and has known much of sorrow. Yet through all the passing centuries the Great Gospel of Saint Columkille, or the Book of Kells, as it is more often called today, still keeps its lovely pages untarnished and unfading. In the city of Dublin, which once was but the fortress at the Ford of the Hurdles, still is it jealously cherished, and still is it ranked, as in the days of Ferdiad, the most beautiful book in all the world.

THE END.