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# NEWS FROM THE DUCHY

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# News from the Duchy

By Sir ARTHUR QUILLER-COUCH

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1913

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To

MY FRIEND

AUSTIN M. PURVES

OF

PHILADELPHIA

AND

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# PART I

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# Tom Tiddler's Ground

## PROLOGUE

### THE LADY OF THE ISLES

"Here lies a most beautiful lady,
Light of heart and step was she;
I think she was the most beautiful lady
That ever was in the West Countrie.
But beauty vanishes, beauty passes,
However rare, rare it be,
And when I crumble who shall remember
That lady of the West Countrie?"

WALTER DE LA MARE.

SHOULD you ask who brought prosperity to the Islands—or brought it back after long years of estrangement—nine Islanders out of ten would have answered 'The Mistress;' meaning the sad and beautiful lady who dwelt at Iniscaw, and now sang to herself, after having sung in capital cities to great audiences, with kings and queens eager to listen. In addition to her beauty and her voice (which in itself was a miracle) God had given her courage, so that she kept her light step; but she had lost her



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lightness of heart ever since she had found love too late, and discovered about the same time that her voice was passing with her beauty.

She was Lady Proprietress of the Islands, holding them on a lease from Queen Victoria. 'All those Her Majesty's territories and rocks,' so the legal wording ran, 'together with all sounds, harbours and sands within the circuit of the said Isles, and all lands, tenements, meadows, pastures, grounds, feedings, fishings, mines of tin, lead and coals, and all profits of the same'—But there were no such mines, by the way, and by consequence no such profits—'and all marshes, void grounds, woods, underwoods, rents, reversions, services and all other profits, rights, commodities, advantages and emoluments within the said Isles; and a moiety of all shipwreck, the other moiety to be received by the Lords Commissioners of Admiralty.'

Her predecessor, being a man, had also been sole justiciary, with full power to hear, examine and finally determine all plaints, suits, matters, actions and demands whatever, moved and depending between partyand party inhabiting the same Isles—all heresies and treasons excepted—with all controversies or causes touching life or member of man, title of land, or ships or other things belonging to the High Court of Admiralty. She, as a woman, assigned the Commission of the Queen's Peace into the hands of three Magistrates, with a solitary policeman to help them; but, for the rest, within the small realm she



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was sovereign more absolute than Queen Victoria, who ruled somewhere on "the Main"—a vaguely realised land, thirty miles away, discernible on clear mornings as a cloud upon the sea.

For the Islands, ridged with reefs and dotted with sentinel lighthouses, lie off the west coast of England, well out in the Atlantic, in the mouth of the warm Gulf Stream. Six are inhabited, and contain between them less than three thousand acres suitable for grazing or tillage; the rest, eighteen or twenty in number, are mere islets, rocky and barren, on which the seabirds breed.

The rock is granitic, the soil light and friable, without width or depth for serious husbandry; and a hundred years ago the inhabitants subsisted almost wholly by fishing and by burning down the seaweed for 'kelp,' which went to Bristol to the making of glass and soap. Times had bettered when the increase of our sea-borne trade brought work to the pilots on St. Ann's, the southernmost island, and every long spell of easterly wind might be counted on to crowd the roadstead with vessels 'waiting for orders.' About that time, too, the farmers on St. Lide's (the largest island), Iniscaw, Brefar and Saaron had taken to growing early potatoes for the English market, planting them in shallow rows with a bare covering of soil—the Islands know no frost—and harvesting them a month ahead of growers on the Main.

During her girlhood—for the Lady was native to



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her realm—these operations had been in full swing, and she could remember the boats arriving in April with gangs of diggers hired over from England to save the crops, which in prosperous years would touch a thousand tons. But to get the freight across to the Main and by rail to London cost forty-five shillings a ton; and when Malta, Algiers, and the Canaries started to compete at sea-borne rates of thirty shillings or thereabouts, the Islanders' profit diminished, until a crop scarcely paid for saving. This happened just as steam started in earnest to sweep the old sailing vessels off the face of the waters, and the island pilots, scarcely realising their doom, would lie off for days and nights together before they fell in with a tall ship to signal them. In brief, the Islands had fallen back into hard poverty when the Lady returned to them to take up her possessions.

Now though she lived remote from the daily life of her people, and in those early days was known to them for the most part as a voice singing wonderful songs to herself in her charmed garden amid the tide races, the Lady was in fact a shrewd woman of business. She had noted, on her visits to London, that Londoners, as they grew prosperous, were growing ever fonder of flowers; that not only did the great houses, the hotels, the restaurants require flowers for their dinner tables, but even the poor clerk pinched his pocket for a bunch to carry home.

One June morning, at the fag-end of a masked ball at Covent Garden, she had spent a couple of hours



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in the flower-market, wandering in the early daylight from stall to stall as the carts rumbled in and the auction assembled; and the buyers and sellers had wondered at the businesslike questions this exquisite visitant in Watteau gown and satin shoes put to them concerning prices, freights, discounts, demand and supply.

She learned from them that the market was hungriest in early spring, between the New Year and Lent, when open-air flowers were few or none. She recalled the sweet narcissi that, home in the Islands, bloomed in late February and early March; not only the common Lent-lily, but tazettas—'Island Whites' or 'Holy-vales'—beneath the apple trees at Holy Vale Farm on St. Lide's; 'Grand Monarque's' within the tumble-down walls of the Fort on Garrison Hill; 'Island Whites' again, intermixed with 'Solidors' (Soleils d'or), in the meadow below her own Abbey House on Iniscaw, fringing the shores of the freshwater lake that had served the old monks for fish-pond. On her return to the Islands she had dropped a hint to Farmer Banford of Holy Vale that here, maybe, was a trade worth starting.

"What!" said he. "In they old things?"

"Ah," she replied, "because flowers are beautiful you think it womanish even to consider them!"

"Beauty doesn't pay." Farmer Banford shook his head.

"You are wrong, my friend," she assured him, with one of her puzzling smiles. "And, what is more,



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many things that don't pay are well worth paying for. I will leave this address with you, at any rate, and you can think it over."

Next spring, early one fine February morning, as the small mail-packet *Lady of the Isles* was getting up steam for her return passage to the Main, Farmer Banford came along the quayside at Garland Town (harbour of St. Lide's) with a huge bandbox of cardboard under his arm.

"Hullo, Farmer!" hailed Captain Frank, the skipper. "Bound across for England, hey?"

The farmer grinned.

"Looks like the kind o' trunk I'd be takin', don't it?"

"What 's inside?"

"Women's notions. If you must know, my old missus have a-taken a bee in her cap, and I 'm sendin' it to Lunnon for the best advice."

So Mrs. Banford's cap-box travelled up to London, packed with three dozen bunches of 'Holy-vales,' and addressed—

*To* Mr. SHELLABEAR
Fruit and Flower Merchant
Covent Garden
London
England

*With Speed*

We shall describe, as well as we may, what prosperity dawned for the Islands from the moment



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when Mr. Shillabear in Covent Garden lifted the lid of that fateful box. As the farmer's luck spread with his story, and the whole archipelago turned to bulb-growing, all praised the Mistress, her woman's wit and her foresight.

Doubtless she deserved their praises. Yet the gods sometimes hide the secret of a gift, and hide it under the obvious. *Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas.*

It was at least curious that the coming of prosperity should coincide with the coming of the child, John Smith, to the Islands.



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# CHAPTER I

## JAN

"Then round went the good ship
And thrice she went round;
When up there stood a guardsman,
A naked man and brown,—
Says, 'You are the Queen of Carthage
And gey young to drown;
But hold you my girdle
That goeth me around,
And we 'll swim to yon Island
As I will be bound' . . .
'Man, your girdle it is breaking!'
'Nay, 'tis strong yet and sound;
'Twas my heart you felt a-breaking,
But here is dry ground.'

. . . . .

"With the white sand she cover'd him,
Her wet hair she wound;
'Deo-gracey,' said Zenobia,
'That I am not drown'd!'"

*Ballad of Queen Zenobia.*

THE mail-boat that brought back a letter for Farmer Banford, and in the letter a postal order, arrived in St. Lide's Pool three hours behind her time, having fought the last twelve miles of her passage against a westerly gale. The gale increased at nightfall, and between midnight and two in the morning blew a hurricane.



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Soon after daybreak, in the midst of her dressing, word reached the Lady that a vessel was ashore on the west side of St. Ann's, and fast breaking up. The message came from the coastguard on St. Lide's across the private cable laid for her between that Island and Iniscaw.

On these occasions she was always prompt, yet not recklessly, being in fact knowledgeable of wind and water as any of her boatmen. She gazed southward from her window, and decided that by the time her launch could be put under steam and worked down to the open sound, the wind—which had northered—would have allayed the seas running there, and the traject would be made with little risk.

Nevertheless the small craft had shipped some bucketfuls, and her fires had more than once been in danger, before she weathered the Smith Rocks, that lie off the north-west angle of St. Ann's, and sheered down like a flying fish into smoother waters. The Lady steered, her sea-cloak and blown hair drenched with spray.

"Where was the wreck?" She hailed a pilot-cutter that was moving dead slow off the islets with mainsail reefed and foresheet to windward. The pilot called back through a megaphone that she had gone down somewhere under their keel and they were creeping about for wreckage. The crew of the coastguard gig, searching closer inshore to the southward, reported the missing vessel to be a



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barque—an Italian, as they believed—name unknown.

"Anyone saved?"

They shook their heads.

"Lost—all hands!" came the answer.

There would be flotsam, no doubt, close under the cliffs—a lifebelt, maybe, or some fragment of a boat bearing the vessel's name; but in the sea yet running the rocks could not be approached. The Lady gave orders to slow down and join in the search. By this the northerly wind had dispersed the storm-wrack, and as they worked southward and opened Prillis Cove the sun shone through. A small crowd of Islanders—men and women—had gathered on the beach at the head of the cove, and the Lady steered in, if haply they might have news.

They had none. But, while she parleyed with them, over the high ground a woman came running against the wind, waving her arms and pointing southward. The launch was backed, turned, set going again on her way.

Beyond the next point lay another beach of clean white sand, on the upper part of which the cliffs cast their morning shadow; and there, a little outside the edge of the shadow, between it and the running dazzle of the waves, stood a group of three figures stooping over a fourth. The Lady at first sight of them gave a start, made sign to one of her men near by in the sternsheets, and yielding over the helm to him as he reached out a hand, drew her field-glass



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from the case slung at her hip, sighted it, and focussed it on the group.

"Set me ashore," she said quietly, fifteen seconds later, lowering the glass. Her face was white to the lips; but the crew did not observe this, so steadily she controlled her voice.

They ran the launch in under the lee of the northerly cliff (where was least run in the waves), and grounded her on the steep-to beach. Two of them leapt out over the bows, and would have made a cradle of their hands to carry their mistress dry-shod over the knee-deep water, but she sprang after them and waded ashore, declining help.

An elderly man—a gentleman by his bearing—came down to the beach to meet her. He wore a brown garment, in length and shape somewhat like the *soutane* of a Roman Catholic priest. He saluted her gravely, respectfully, then lowered his eyes.

"Is he dead?" she asked, her gaze travelling past him to the body beside which his companions—elderly men likewise, the pair of them dressed in ragged blue regimentals—were kneeling as they attempted to restore animation. They had turned it on its right side and were rubbing the naked body briskly, the one at work at the back beneath the shoulder-blade, the other on the legs from calf to ankle; for it lay with no clothing but trousers of dark sea-cloth, rolled tight and tied above the knees.



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Dr. Hervey, the man in the *soutane*, answered with a gesture that might equally well have meant "Yes" or "No."

"How did it happen?"

He cast a hesitating glance at her. Perhaps he was wondering—as she herself wondered—at the strange composure of her voice.

"The Commandant and I were smoking a late pipe together when the rocket went up. He called out the two sergeants here, and in twenty minutes we four were pulling out in the garrison boat, close in the wake of the coastguard. But their gig is a new one and speedy, whereas ours, as you know—— and moreover we were none of us young men. We soon lost sight of them in the darkness, and then, coming to open water and finding that she could not live in it, the Commandant gave orders to shape down for the back of the Island. We fetched the lee of it just before the gale worsened, beached the boat in Menadhu Cove, and started to tramp across land. The wind by this time was incredible. On the high ground we had to make short rushes against it, drop on hands and knees, catch breath and make another rush. It took us till close upon daylight to cross to St. Ann's Down. Then the wind flew almost without warning, and the rest was easy. We came to Chapel Point as the day broke. There was no sign of a ship; but about half a mile from shore the Commandant spied a man swimming, and pointed him out to us. The man was a negro, and



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he swam superbly. We watched him, taking turns with the Commandant's glass. He was black as coal, and strapped high on his shoulders—almost on the nape of the neck—he carried a small white bundle. He swam with his head, too, not straight for shore, but letting the tide carry him—only, of course, he could not know of the eddy race that had begun to set, closer inshore. He met it, and after a minute we could see that he was tiring. He made no headway at all, and this within five hundred yards of shore. The Commandant could not stand the sight of it, but stripped, for all we could do to prevent him, and swam out to help. The black man, when he reached him, would take no help, but passed over the bundle and swam in the Commandant's wake, maybe for half a minute. The heart had gone out of his strokes though, and presently he went out of sight without so much as a cry. At all events the Commandant could have heard none, for he swam on some way before looking back. I was watching all the while through the glass. When he looked and the man had disappeared, he seemed to tread water for a while and to search about, but gave it up and headed for shore again, swimming sideways with one arm and holding the bundle against his right shoulder. He brought it ashore just in that way, not once shifting his hold."

"But I do not understand. He is drowned, you say——"

"I do not say it. We ran down to the shoal water



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to meet him, and as he found footing he dropped forward into my arms; or rather, he thrust the bundle on me and fell, right there on the water's edge."

"The bundle?"

Dr. Hervey turned and pointed. Some twenty yards up the beach lay a white object which she had taken for the dead man's shirt, tossed there as they had stripped it from him. Why did she walk towards it now and not first towards the body? Why, instead of going straight to the body, had she stood inert, letting the tale fall on her ears half apprehended? She had been swift and resolute enough until the moment when her feet felt the shore. Already three of her crew were gathered beside the two old sergeants, gazing soberly down upon the dead, offering suggestions which — too well she knew—were vain. Her presence, likewise, would be vain, yet surely she should have been there.

For—after one girlish passion outlasted and almost forgotten—this man, some years ago, had become the chief man in the world for her; the truest, the most honourable, as she knew in her heart that she had been the sovereign and only woman for him. Disparity of years, his poverty, his pride, had set the barrier, and she had never found courage to cast away shame and break it down. For years they had been able to meet and talk with an undisturbed courtesy.



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" Yet what no chance could then reveal
And neither would be first to own
Let fate and courage now conceal,
When truth could bring remorse alone."

Courage? It had been cowardice, rather, on her part,—or so she told herself. And the cowardice must go on, even now. She stepped to the bundle. It was of linen, soaked with salt water; and within it, stark naked, twisting his small legs while he cried, lay an infant—a man-child. In the bass of the waves on the sand she had caught no sound of the treble wailing. She stooped and lifted him in her arms. With the edge of her cloak she wiped away some of the brine from the creases of his small body; and the child, ceasing his wail, looked up into her eyes and crowed with glee.

" Venus the sea-born mothering Cupid!" muttered Dr. Hervey.

But at this moment the Lady, looking over her shoulder, thrust the child on him with a gesture of repugnance. Her eyes had fallen on the two old sergeants, who had laid their dead master over on his back and were vainly endeavouring to coax back the living breath, raising his arms and anon pressing the elbows back against the sides—all with the dull, dogged motions of a military drill.

" Ah, tell them to stop!" she entreated. " He has had enough of it. Cannot they see that his heart is broken?"



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# CHAPTER II

## STAR CASTLE

*UBIQUE.*

The dead Commandant had carved the word one day, in letters five feet long, out of the short turf on Garrison Hill where it slopes steeply from the Star Castle (as they call its antiquated small citadel) to the cliff overlooking the roadstead and the Western Islands. He had carved it in pure idleness, as an afternoon game to cheat the leisure enforced upon him since Government had dismantled his batteries, drafted his gunners off to the Main, and left him with two old sergeants—Sergeant Archelaus and Sergeant Treacher—to mark time, until the end of his days, by firing a gun at eight in the morning, another at sunset, and in the intervals by ringing the bell over the gate of the Fort every three hours to tell the time to the town below.

*Ubique:* it was the motto of his old corps, which he still served—as they also serve who only stand and wait. When the word was carved he had a mind to efface it, but had again been too indolent. Now he was gone, and Sergeant Archelaus kept the letters religiously trimmed with a turf-cutter. Sergeant Archelaus, a bachelor, lived alone and looked after



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the white-washed empty barracks on the summit of the hill. The other Sergeant—Treacher—was a married man. He and his wife inhabited the Star Castle, and with them lived the boy whom everyone knew as Jan.

Pending discovery of his true name, the Lady had christened him John Smith—Smith from the name of the rocks on which the vessel had split, and John because nothing could be more ordinary. For the rest she seemed to have taken a scunner (as the Scots say) at the helpless babe—an aversion not unmixed with a nameless fear. But something had to be done for him. There is no workhouse on the Islands; the rule that makes the aged, the infirm, the helpless a sacred charge upon their own kindred works well enough in a community so small that everybody is more or less nearly related to everybody else, and tradition has ordered that all shipwrecked persons must be treated with a like beautiful hospitality. So, as Treacher had been present at the finding of the child, and Mrs. Treacher was a comfortable woman who had reared children, to the Treachers little Jan was assigned by the Lady, whose word none disputed.

To be sure, his was a singular case. The ordinary outcast from the sea abides but a short time on the Islands, and in due course is returned to home and friends. But to any home, any friends—any origin, in short—of "John Smith" no clue could be discovered. The vessel proved to be an Italian



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barque, the *Fior dell' Onda*, Glasgow built, and formerly—under the name of *Lochroyan*—owned by a company of Glasgow merchants in whose service she had made half a dozen passages round the Horn. A Genoese firm had purchased and re-named her, and her last port of sailing had been Genoa, whence she was bound in ballast for Fowey, there to load a cargo of china clay. So much the Lady discovered through her agents and through Lloyd's, but the Genoese owners could tell her nothing concerning the child. To their knowledge there had been no woman on board the *Fior dell' Onda* either on this or her previous voyage (Genoa to Famagusta, port of Cyprus, and back).

So Jan lived with the Treachers until his eighth year, sleeping in an attic of the Star Castle, learning his letters in the elementary school down in Garland Town, and picking up a little Latin from Dr. Hervey, who had taken a fancy to the child and a whim to teach him.

His best opportunity for this came with the spring holidays, when the schools on the Islands were closed for a month, that the children might earn money during the daffodil harvest, the boys by picking flowers, the girls by tying them. Threepence a hundred bunches is the rate, and it is estimated that during these busy weeks no less than a million and a half of flowers are picked on the Islands every day.

But no one hired Jan. He was a solitary, shy boy,



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and perhaps people forgot him; or perhaps the Treachers, with their pension and their military post and their dignity as care-keepers of the Star Castle in Her Majesty's name, looked upon the new industry with contempt. Consequently Jan found these weeks the loneliest in the year, and on this spring morning was half minded to rebel, having a craze for flowers.

But Dr. Hervey had come to remind him of his Latin lesson. The weather being so fine, they decided to take it out of doors, on a rock a little below the flagstaff—Jan's favourite perch; and there on the slope at their feet they found Sergeant Archelaus busy with his turf-cutting tool.

"Hullo," nodded Sergeant Archelaus. "Come to talk your Latin? Well, here 's a piece of Latin for ye?" He spelled out the word letter by letter, "U-b-i-q-u-e. Now what does that mean?"

"*Everywhere*," said the boy promptly. He was still in his declensions, but it seemed to him that he had known the word all his life; and yet he could not remember that he had ever inquired or been told its meaning.

"Did I tell you that?" asked Dr. Hervey.

"No—o."

Jan felt confused. He could not explain—for it seemed silly—that things were always happening to him in this way.

"*Everywhere* it is," said Sergeant Archelaus. "'Tis the word o' the R'yal Artillery, and their



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place is the right o' the line. What 's Waterloo to your *Everywhere?* . . . I remember the Commandant carving out these very letters. When he 'd finished he looks up and says, wi' that smile o' his, ' *Everywhere,* Archelaus—and we two be here, of all places ! "

Dr. Hervey muttered some words in a foreign tongue.

" What you say, sir, is always worth listenin' to, but this time I didn't catch," said Sergeant Archelaus, leaning on his turf-cutter.

" I can accept the compliment for once, Archelaus, since it happens that I was quoting an old Greek, who said that ' of illustrious men the whole earth is a sepulchre.' "

" The Commandant was never illustrious, sir, as you put it."

" Remarkable, then."

" No, nor remarkable. An' didn't want to be. He was just an officer and a gentleman, straight as a die and modest as a maid, and we didn't wish for a better."

Dr. Hervey filled his pipe gravely. Dr. Hervey's degree, by the way, had nothing to do with medicine. There are men who seek out-of-the-way spots, such as the Islands, to hide their broken lives, and Dr. Hervey was one. He had been a Professor of Theology at a great Catholic University, noted there for his learning and his caustic tongue. His outspokenness had made him enemies, and these (not without excuse) had arraigned a book of his, accusing



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it of "Modernism." It had ended—since he was obstinate and would neither explain nor retract—in his being expelled from his chair and laid under excommunication. The expulsion would have done him no irremediable harm, since he possessed a competence, and moreover had made a name to command attention for whatever he chose to write. But the excommunication crushed him; for, like many a brusque man, he was sensitive, and like many a fatally driven inquirer, he had a deeper love of the Church and sense of her majesty than have ninety-nine in a hundred who pay her the service of lip and knee. He and his God alone knew what a comfort during the first bitterness of exile it had been to associate with the Commandant, so simple a gentleman, if withal somewhat slow-witted, a holy and humble man of heart, so true at the root, so patient of his own disappointed life, so helpful of other men.

"You didn't wish for a better while you had the best," said Dr. Hervey, lighting his pipe very deliberately.

Jan watched the puffs of tobacco smoke. He owed his life to the man they were discussing, and he could only suppose that they must owe him a grudge for it in return. Sergeant Archelaus, indeed—whose temper did not improve with age—had more than once hinted that, though doubtless Providence had ordained this exchange of two lives, he for his part could not approve it.

"I don't want to speak irreverent, sir, but seemin'



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to me th' Almighty must get a twinge, lookin' down 'pon this plat o' turf. *Everywhere*—Look ye, here the good gentleman carves it out, accusin' nobody, writin' down no more 'n his deserts; and him to spend his life in this God-forsaken hole which is next to Nowhere, and end by losin' it for a child from Nowhere at all."

"That is no way to talk," said Dr. Hervey sternly, after a glance at the boy, who, gazing out over the sea, seemed not to hear.

"A man must speak his thoughts, Doctor."

"It depends how and when he speaks 'em." If Dr. Hervey, in his own career, had always remembered this! "But what does *Everywhere* mean to the best of us finite men? Your John Wesley said, 'All the world is my parish,' and a man as wise might answer, 'Then my parish is all the world.'"

"Good mornin', all!" interrupted a voice.

The new-comer was P.C. Epaminondas Ward (locally 'Paminondas), sole policeman of the Islands, sexton, too, of St. Lide's, town-crier, bill-poster and public official in general of Garland Town. "Good mornin', sir!" He touched his helmet to Dr. Hervey. "You 'll excuse my breakin' in on your talk?"

"Certainly."

"It 's a thing I hate to do. There 's nothing like a good talk, and a man gets so few opportunities in the Force." Constable 'Paminondas was notoriously the first gossip in Garland Town. "But what might you ha' been discussin', making so bold?"



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"Nothing against Her Majesty's peace, Constable, I assure you," answered Dr. Hervey gravely. "In point of fact, we were exercised over the difference between Everywhere and Nowhere, and I was trying to persuade Sergeant Archelaus that 'here' is 'everywhere' to a sensible man."

"That 's true enough if you take ME," agreed 'Paminondas, adding modestly, "But perhaps you 'll say that I 'm an exception?"

Dr. Hervey muttered something polite.

"I 'm a thoughtful man, as by nature, sir," went on the Constable, "and you 'd be astonished what thoughts occur to me by night, when I goes poking around and all the rest o' the world laid asleep. F'r instance, I climb to the top o' the hill here, and 'tis midnight as you might say, in a manner of speakin'. Midnight it is, and all around the Islands the great sea-lights shinin'—fixed white low down on the Monk, white revolvin' on St. Ann's, North Island winkin' like a great red eye, white flashes from the Stones, red-white-red-white from the Wolf, not to mention the Longships an' the south-east sky runnin' in flickers from the Lizard, like men shaking a double whip. 'There you go, all of ye,' I tells myself, 'warning mankind that here be the Islands. And what be the Islands,' says I, 'at the moment to all intents an' purposes but ME,' Paminondas Ward, with a bull's-eye at my navvle more or less——?'"

"There, Archelaus!" Dr. Hervey turned in



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triumph: but Sergeant Archelaus, after first spitting wide, had resumed his turf-trimming.

"Now, maybe you 're wondering what brings me here?" suggested the Constable. Meeting with no response, he continued, "Well, I don't mind telling you. It concerns the boy John Smith, in the form of a letter from her Ladyship. Her Ladyship sends word that Young Matthey Hender, on Brefar, wants an extry hand this fine season for the daffodil pickin', and John Smith is to go. I 've just informed the Treachers."

"Ho?" Sergeant Archelaus paused again and looked up. "What did Treacher say?"

"He made a communication to me——" began 'Paminondas in his best Petty Sessions manner.

"D——d your eyes, I shouldn' wonder?"

It should be mentioned here that the attitude of the garrison towards the civil government was traditionally hostile.

"In a general way," said Constable 'Paminondas magnanimously, "a man may d——n my eyes or he may not, as the case may be, and I takes it from whence it comes. The Force, in a manner of speakin', is accustomed to such misrepresentation, and impervious, if I make myself clear. But as touching her Ladyship's order Treacher saw 'twas no use kickin' against the pricks, an' behaved himself conformably, as you might put it *in toto*. Which the upshot is, as between you and me, that John Smith is to be sailed over to Brefar to-morrow afternoon at 4 p.m., and start pickin' daffodils."



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"Well, lad, that puts an end to Latin for a time," said Dr. Hervey, stopping down the tobacco in his pipe with a useful forefinger.

The boy did not answer; could not for the moment return his look. It would have been ungrateful to confess the truth, that he longed to escape and take his place among the children as one of them. Here, on St. Lide's, he mingled with the children in school, but always as one set mysteriously apart. He adored the sight of them, but could make no friends; and the mere fact that he adored and saw them as so many bright angels playing leap-frog or marbles in the streets was proof that he could never be one of them. As counted by years their ages and his might be the same; in fact he saw them through older, different eyes, yet yearned all the while to join them. In Brefar, picking daffodils, there might be children to understand him better. Brefar, at all events, lay clear out towards the circumference of the circle hemming him in.

The Star Castle, where he lodged with the Treachers, was a queer little octagonal building, set close within a circumvallation shaped like an eight-pointed star. A platform, seven feet high, ran round the interior of this circumvallation at about half its height of sixteen feet, and since the dwelling-house, twenty-one feet in height, was separated all round from the platform by a miserable fosse no more than four feet wide, it follows that the lower rooms lay in perpetual gloom, and only the attic chambers



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peeped over the battlements across the sea. Still, and although its eaves were low, from his bedroom window the boy could watch the great sea lights flashing or occulting—protecting, enclosing him in a magic circle he longed to pierce. He had come from Nowhere, and Nowhere lay somewhere beyond.

He had a few very vague notions about God. The teacher down at the school said something about God every morning before marking the register, and the children regularly sang a hymn.

On the whole he felt pretty safe about God. But "O God, who am I?" was the child's last thought before he dropped off in a healthy sleep. Towards dawn he stirred in a dream uncomfortably, raised himself on an elbow, turned his pillow, damp with tears, and snuggled down to sleep again.

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# CHAPTER III

## CHY-A-N-CHY FARM

It was a voyage of delight; better—yes, far better than all his expectations.

Sergeant Treacher, though of late years he seldom went on the sea, could handle a boat—as the Islanders allowed—" tidy well for a soldier-man," having been the Commandant's mate on many a fishing expedition. He knew all the rocks and shoals, which everywhere among the Islands crop up in the most unexpected places.

The boat sped along, close hauled to a brisk nor'-westerly breeze, across the roadstead, past the length of Saaron Island, and through the entrance of Cromwell's Sound, between Iniscaw and Brefar. Jan, perched up to windward on an old military chest which contained his few shirts and change of clothes (it bore the inscription "*R.A.* 1959*B*, *Depot* 19. *Return to Store*," in white letters upon lead colour), drank in pure joy with the rush of air on his face.

At the mouth of the Sound the wind fell light and headed them for a minute or two. The sail shook this side and that, and he had to duck his dead to avoid the boom.



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"Slip over to leeward here" said the Sergeant as the boat lost way. "Peek your head over-side, an' maybe I 'll show ye something."

Jan obeyed, and peeping over, was surprised to see a rocky ledge close below him. The weed on it floated within a foot or so of the surface.

"Now, watch!" commanded the Sergeant.

Picking up a boat-hook, he jabbed the point of it smartly down amidst the weed. At once a long dark form shot out, darted away with quick gliding motion and was lost, Jan could not tell whither.

"See anything?"

"I—I saw a snake."

Sergeant Treacher chuckled.

"'Snake,' says the child. "What do you know about snakes?"

"Nothing," Jan had to confess. He had never to his knowledge seen one before, or even the picture of one, for there were no picture books in the Star Castle. Yet he felt sure that this had been a snake.

"'Snake!' That 's a good 'un, too!" chuckled Sergeant Treacher again, and fell silent, being a taciturn man by habit.

Jan lifted his head to ask, "What was the animal if not a snake? Couldn't snakes live in the sea?" when his eye; fell on a vision which hitherto the boat's sail had concealed from him; the beautiful shore of Iniscaw, with the Abbey towers rising over a mass of rhododendrons, and backed by tall spires of evergreen trees; and below the Abbey an inland



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lake where a whole herd of fawn-coloured cattle stood knee-deep, some gazing at the boat, others dipping their black muzzles to drink.

He had passed into Wonderland, and the spell was still on him as they sailed up by Brefar shore, close under whole fields of daffodils, golden in the Island's shadow—small fields fenced around with dwarf hedges of escallonia and veronica. But the flowers had leapt these fences, it would seem; for colonies of them straggled along the edge of the cliffs and poured down to the very beaches—these being bulbs discarded by the farmers at sorting time and 'heaved to cliff' to take their own chances.

They brought the boat ashore upon a beach where Farmer Hender—'Young Matthey'—stood awaiting them. He had a grave, not unkindly face, and was clad in earth-stained blue; but what impressed the child most was his hat—a top hat of rusty black silk, extraordinarily high in the crown. Later Jan learned that this hat passed from father to son, and was worn as a crown of authority by the reigning head of Chy-an-Chy Farm.

The farmer took charge of Jan, and shouldering his box—for, as he explained, to-morrow was 'steamer day,' and no hands could be spared from the flower-picking—led the way up a shelving coombe to the farmstead, a grey building or cluster of buildings fenced with tamarisks, and set about with numerous glass-houses. The windows of these houses were banked high with flowers, but over this screen Jan, as



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he passed, caught sight of a number of girls at work, bunching and tying the blooms. The door of the house-porch stood wide, and he followed the farmer straight into the kitchen, where Mrs. Hender and a short middle-aged servant were engaged in setting out tea for the workers.

The kitchen was large, and had an immense open fireplace, with kettles hanging upon long hooks, and crocks mounted on brandises. A table, twenty feet or so in length, stood close against the long window-seat. From a bacon-rack fixed under the beams of the ceiling hung hams and sides of bacon wrapped in dry bracken and paper, with strings and bags of parched herbs—horehound, elder, mugwort,—specifics against various family ailments. The chimney-piece was flanked on the right by a dresser, on the left by a dark settle; and on the settle sat two very old men and an old woman, who regarded the boy—all three—with scarce so much movement as the blink of an eyelid, save that the old woman's head nodded quickly, regularly, as though by clockwork. These old people gave him a scare, and for a while he found it hard to believe them alive.

The middle-aged servant—who had a large, good-natured face, and in shape resembled a full sack tied tightly about the middle—came bustling forward and offered to lend the 'maister' a hand to carry the box upstairs.

"Aye, do," said the mistress. "If it takes ye



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away from breakin' cream-jugs, it 'll be time well spent. . . . Mary Martha broke another cream-jug only five minutes ago, if you 'll believe me."

"That 's true," sighed Mary Martha, still broadly beaming. "I do seem to be very unfortunate in cream-jugs."

"Not to mention the four cups an' saucers you scat to atoms on their way to the Wesleyan tea."

"I am very unfortunate in cups an' saucers," wailed Mary Martha.

"Nor the cream-pan, last Wednesday week."

"Oh, don't mention it, missis! I can't bear no more!"

"And now," persisted Mrs. Hender, addressing Jan, "it 's candlesticks. Last Sunday a china one —one of a pair that I bought at Penzance, and the dealer said they were exact copies of the pillars in Solomon's Temple; an' I mended that. But what was the use? Yesterday she lets fall the fellow to 'en——"

"I do seem to be very unfortunate in candlesticks." Mary Martha's tone of despair and her jolly smile together fairly upset the boy.

"And in 'most everything else," snapped Mrs. Hender.

"You wouldn' think," she said next minute, as Jan's box went bumping up the stairs, Mary Martha knocking her end of it against the balusters, the wall, the edges of the treads,—"you 'd never think that



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woman had put up a twenty-pound tombstone over her late husband—now would you ? ”

It did seem astonishing ; and so Jan agreed, still with a nervous glance at the old folks on the settle, whose faces continued impassive, as though they neither heard nor saw.

Five minutes later the work-people from the glass-houses came trooping into tea. They crowded round the long table and upon forms by the hearth, where the men sat with mugs balanced on one knee and on the other a thick slice of bread and butter or a hunk of saffron cake. Jan tried to count. The company numbered thirty-six or thirty-seven ; he could not be sure, for he had been told to squeeze himself among the young people on the window-seat, and their chatter made counting difficult.

On his right sat a child of about his own age, who told him that her name was Annet, and that she had two sisters and a brother. She pointed them out. The sisters were called Linnet and Bennet ; the brother she explained “ just had to be Mark.”

Jan asked why ; for a study of the boy's face, which was dark of complexion and somewhat heavy, gave him no clue. Annet indicated the old people, who had been led forward from the settle and placed at the head of the board, where they sat chewing slowly like ruminant animals. *That 's* great-gran'-father Matthey ; he 's Old Matthey, and ninety-four last birthday. And *that 's* Un' Matthey, Old



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Matthey's son—and my gran'father, of course—with Aun' Deb next to him. She 's his wife, an' father's mother. Father is Young Matthey. That big man down at the bottom of the table is father's eldest ; we call him Little Matthey. He was married two years back, and Sister Liza—we call Little Matthey's wife Sister Liza—is upstairs putting the baby to bed, and we call *him* Matthey's Matthey.

Jan agreed with her that for one family this was plenty of Mattheys, and that a Mark among them was a change at all events.

" It must feel funny," said Annet, " to be like you, and have no father nor mother nor any belongings."

Jan looked at her quickly, uneasily. But she was serious, it seemed, and did not mean to tease him. At once—how do children learn these ways ?—he began to put on airs and to look darkly romantic.

" Don't ! " he protested, sinking his voice to a confidential whisper. The success of it surprised him. As a matter of fact, he had never felt any deep yearning over his unknown parents, though his yearning for an answer to the questions, *" Who am I ? " " From where in the world do I come ? "* was persistent, often poignant, sometimes keeping him awake in a horror of emptiness, of belonging to nowhere . . . But this, the first romantic adventure of his life, made his head swim, and he played up to it by being false.

Annet—she was a dark pretty girl with really beautiful eyelashes—found him 'interesting,' and carried



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him off after tea to the glass-houses, now lit with oil lamps, where she taught him the simple mysteries of 'bunching'—setting up blooms in pyramidical bunches, a dozen to the bunch, with room for each perianth to expand; for the flowers are picked in bud while it is possible, kept in water under glass until partly open, and so packed; the wise grower timing them to reach the market just at the moment of their perfection. Moreover, he thus avoids the worst risk of the February storms that sweep in from the Atlantic, charged with brine, spotting the open blooms and rendering them unsaleable.

Annet told the boy all this, and much else concerning the daffodils, while her small hands worked away with eleven other pairs of hands, bunching and tying. At the far end of the glass-house three grown girls were packing away the bunches in shallow boxes of various sizes—three, five, or six dozen to the box—and at the head of the table where they worked stood a young man receiving the full boxes, nailing down their covers, and affixing the labels. Twice, as Jan sat and watched, Mary Martha came bustling in with a kettle, for the water in which the flowers stood before being packed must be kept tepid—this was one of the secrets of young Farmer Matthey's success as a marketer. And whenever the door of the glass-house opened, the boy heard the tap-tap of a hammer across the yard from an outbuilding where new boxes were being fashioned and nailed together.

"You may try your hand, if you will," said Annet



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graciously. "Here is a pair of scissors. To-morrow, though, father 'll set you to work on the pickin'—that 's the boys' work. And while you are trying you might tell me a story."

"A story?" Jan echoed blankly. "But I don't know any."

"*Everyone* must know some kind of story," said Annet with firmness. "Once upon a time there was a King and a Queen, and they were very sorry because they had no children. That's how you begin."

"But I don't see how it goes on, if they had no children—unless they go on being sorry."

"Silly! Of course they get a child in the end, and that 's what the story 's about. Now you go on from there."

"Oh!" said Jan, and began desperately—"Once upon a time there was a King and a Queen, and they were very sorry because they had no children; but of course they got a child in the end. He—came to them—in a boat——"

Annet nodded.

"That 's better."

"He came to them in a boat," repeated Jan. "On the way he looked over the boat, and far down in the sea he saw a snake swimming."

"Now you 're *inventing*," said Annet. "Well, never mind! One mustn't believe all one hears."

"But I saw one to-day," Jan protested.

"Go along with you—a snake, swimming in the sea! Well, let 's hear what the snake said."



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"He didn't say anything. Sergeant Treacher pushed a boathook down among the seaweed——"

"Who 's Sergeant Treacher?"

"He—he 's called Treacher, and he 's a sergeant. He lives upon Garrison Hill on St. Lide's, along with Mrs. Treacher, and looks after the Castle."

"How does he come into the story?"

"I don't know that he comes into the story at all; at least, not exactly," Jan confessed.

"I 'm tired of hearing about Sergeant Treacher," said Annet; "and I don't call it telling a story when you leave me to do all the talking. But I must say," she added kindly, "you 've made up that bunch very nicely, if it 's your first try. Who taught you to make that pretty knot?"

"Sergeant Treacher," the boy began; but at this point luckily someone called out from the far end of the glass-house that the boxes were all finished. Fresh boxes would be ready after supper, when the elder women would start packing again, while the children went off to bed. So they trooped back to the kitchen.

At supper Annet could not help being mischievous. She told the children near that Jan on his way to Brefar had seen a snake in the sea; whereat he blushed furiously, which set the girls giggling, while an ugly tow-headed boy across the table burst into a guffaw, showing the gaps in his teeth.

Mrs. Hender, hearing the mirth, glanced down the board.



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"What 's amiss down there?" she asked. "Annet, Annet, you 're not teasing the child, I hope?"

"He says he 's seen a snake, missus," called out the tow-headed boy.

"Lor' mercy! Where?"

"In the sea here, off Brefar," with another guffaw. "Brought up 'pon St. Lide's, an' not to know a conger!"

"Aw, a conger, was it?" said Mrs. Hender. "Yes, now, I dersay 'twas a conger he saw. They 're very like, now you come to mention it," she added, seeing poor Jan's confusion.

He could not understand the laughter, but it overwhelmed him with shame and vexation so that he wished he could slip beneath the table, and lower, till the earth covered him.

"There 's snakes on the Main, now; real adders and vipers; an' that 's one reason why I never could bring myself to live in those parts. The thought came over me only last time I was over to Penzance. Half-way up Market Jew Street it came over me with a rush, and there and then a funny feelin' all round the bottom of my skirt, till I heard a rude man askin' what was the price of calves 'pon the Islands."

"There was a Snake over here once upon a time—over here 'pon the Islands," broke in a high, quavering voice.

It proceeded from the old man, Un' Matthey, and



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he spoke up as if a spring had been started somewhere within him.

Mrs. Hender rapped the table with the back of a fork.

"Hush 'ee, all, now, if you please! Un' Matthey wants to tell a story."

*Conticuere omnes intentique ora tenebant.*



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# CHAPTER IV

## UN' MATTHEY'S STORY

"THERE was a Snake over 'pon St. Lide's, one time," said the old man, still in his high quaver, staring straight across the table; and Aun' Deb, his old wife, kept nodding her head beside him as if confirming the tale from the start.

"—The Snake lived in the middle of the Island, in Holy Vale, and there he lorded it free an' easy till St. Lide came along and shut him up in a bag, out o' harm's way. After a time St. Lide took an' went the way of all flesh, forgetting all about the Snake an' the bag, that he 'd left hangin' from the branch of an apple-tree.

"In those days St. Lide's was a proper wilderness. All the folks that counted—kings and queens an' such-like—lived over this side, 'pon Brefar here and Saaron."

"Hear him!" put in Mrs. Hender. "An' Saaron nowadays but a land o' desolation! Well did the Psalmist say, 'What ups an' downs in the world there be!'"

"One day, hundreds o' years after, a Saaron went over to St. Lide's to shoot rabbits. He came on the bag hangin' from the tree, an' saw the inside



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of it movin'. 'Hullo!' says he, 'some careless fellow has left a bag o' ferrets behind him. This 'll come in very handy.' He whips out his knife, cuts open the neck o' the bag, an' forth jumps a mons'rous big Snake, an' winds itself about his neck ready to strangle him. 'Hullo!' says the Saaron man, 'thee wou's'n't kill me, I hope?' 'Why not?' said the Snake. 'Why, seemin' to me, you owe me your liberty, not to say your life.' 'That 's true enough,' says the Snake. 'A wise man shut me up in that there bag, where for these hundreds o' years I 've been perishin' of hunger.' 'Then how in the world could you be so ongrateful as for to kill me?' says the Man from Saaron. 'Well, that 's a pretty tale, I must say,' answers the Snake. 'Hungry I am, and ongrateful I own myself; but for ongratefulness where 's the like of man?' 'Let some judge decide atween us,' says the Man from Saaron.

"The Snake consented, an' they set off together to hunt up a judge. The first they met was a Tree, an' they stated their quarrel. 'Now, O Tree, judge atween us,' says the Man. Says the Tree, 'No trouble about that. In the summers I let man cool himself an' his flocks under my branches, but soon as winter comes he cuts the same down for fuel. Nothing in the world so ongrateful as man. Take an' throttle en,' says the Tree.

"The Man from Saaron cried out for another judge. 'Very well,' the Snake agreed, an' they came to Sheep. 'You Sheep, decide atween us.' 'No



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trouble at all,' says the Sheep. 'I gave that man my fleece to cover his back. In return he robbed my lambs from me, and to-morrow he 'll turn me over to the slaughterer. Throttle en,' says the Sheep.

"But the Man from Saaron cried out for a fairer judge. They came to a Spring. She fairly choked when they put her the question. 'I 've a hundred daughters,' she said, 'that in pure good natur' turned this fellow's mills, washed his flocks, an' laid bare their ore for him along the bank. In return he defiled them. Throttle en, I say, an' quick!'

"Still the Man cried for another judge. They came to a Rabbit, an' stated the cause. The Rabbit said to hisself, 'Here 's a ticklish business, judgin' atween a Man and a Snake,' and rubbed his nose for a bit to gain time. 'You 've come to a mean critter, an' poor of understandin',' says he after a while. 'Would you mind settin' out the quarrel from the start?' 'Well, to begin with,' says the Snake, 'the Man found me in this here bag.' 'Oh, but you 'll excuse me,' says the Rabbit, looking sideways for fear to meet the Snake's eye, 'in that tiny bag, did you say?' 'I 'm not accustomed to have my word doubted by rabbits,' says the Snake, 'but I 'll forbear a bit yet, and give ye the proof.' He coiled himself back into the bag. The Rabbit wasn' sayin' anythin', but his eyelids went flickety-flink, an' the Man from Saaron didn' miss the hint! He sprang fore 'pon the bag an' closed the neck o' it with a twist!"



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Here the old man struck his hands together and looked round on his audience with a knowing smile of triumph. His face for the moment had grown animated.

The company, too, clapped their hands as they laughed.

"Bravo, Un' Matthey!" they cried.

As Annet applauded, Jan plucked her by the sleeve.

"But that's not the end of the story," he objected.

"Eh?"

"There's more to come—more about the Rabbit ——"

"A lot you know about stories! Why, not an hour ago——"

"What's the child saying?" asked her mother, who had taken the opportunity to step down to where the children sat, and was making forward for an empty centre-dish to replenish it with thick bread and butter.

"He says Un' Matthey hasn't finished yet."

"Well, and that's true enough," said Mrs. Hender, who had heard the story many times. "But how came you so wise, little man?"

Jan could not tell. He had a queer sense—it had been haunting him ever since he landed and the farmer shouldered his box—that everything happening had happened to him before, somewhere, at some time. This was impossible, of course; but with Annet especially he had once or twice forestalled the



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very words she would say next, and then, as she said them, the trick of her voice, some movement of the hands, some turn in the poise of her head, came back as parts of a half-remembered lesson. In just the same way scraps of Un' Matthey's story had come back as it might be out of some dream the boy had dreamed and forgotten.

But meanwhile Un' Matthey had resumed :—

"The Man from Saaron went home-along, an' the Rabbit sat by his hole an' smiled to hisself, thinkin' how clever he 'd been. He was still smilin' there next day, when he looks up an' sees the Man comin' back, an' with a bag in his hand—either the same bag or another. . . .

"'Hullo!' thinks the Rabbit, 'he 's bringin' me a gift for my wise judgment. Well, I deserve one. But,' says he, 'gratitude has a knack o' shrinkin',' for he saw that whatever the bag held 'twas of no great size. The Man gripped it half-way down. The Man came close.

"'Good mornin',' says he. 'Yesterday I was in too much of a hurry to stay an' thank you. A second Solomon you be, an' no mistake.'

"'In justice, as in other things, a body can but do his best,' answers the Rabbit, modest-like.

"'You deserve a reward, anyway,' says the Man.

"'Justice is blind, my lord,' says the Rabbit, edgin' up towards the bag.

"The Man opened it; out jumped a ferret, and *clk!*"—here Un' Matthey made a sudden uncanny



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noise in his throat—" in two twos Master Rabbit lay stretched out dead as a doornail. The Man from Saaron kicked the ferret away off the body.

" ' He 's very properly punished ! ' said the Man from Saaron. ' Justice ought to be without fear or favour, an' his wasn' neither. But he 'll make very good eatin.' "

Un' Matthey had scarcely finished and been applauded when Young Matthey called for prayers. The farmer had pulled out his watch once or twice during the story, for in the daffodil season business is business. He himself read a chapter from the Bible —to-night it was the story of the Shunamite's son— and afterwards put up an extempore prayer when the family had dropped on their knees—all but the three old people, who sat in a row and sat with hands spread palm down on to the board, thumb touching thumb, much as children play the game of ' Up Jenkins ! '

The young folks on the window-seat slipped down and knelt with their faces to it. This, of course, brought Jan's small legs calves upward well hidden under the table, and of a sudden, midway in the prayer, a sharp pinch almost made him cry aloud with pain. This was a trick played on him by the tow-headed boy, who had dodged beneath the form on the opposite side, and as he pinched uttered a derisive hiss, meant to resemble a snake's ; but the trick was by no means a success, for the hiss itself ended in a squeak as a hand reached out after the



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joker, caught him by the ankle, and twisted it with a sharp wrench.

The farmer's prayer, after invoking God's blessing on the household in general, went on to ask a number of things in particular. It entreated: "That Thy loving care may go with the steamer to-morrow and prosper her," whereupon all answered "Amen." It glanced at Mary Martha: "That it may please Thee to lighten the burden of one in our midst lately afflicted with breakages." Jan himself was not let off: "And that Thy mercy may be tender upon a newcomer, a child to-day brought to the circle of these Thy servants." It took the farmer's fields in their order, particularising their crops (whether *Emperors, M.J. Berkeleys* or *Ornatuses*), and separately asking favours for each. In short, it was just such a prayer as that of the Athenians, commanded by Marcus Aurelius: "*Rain, rain, dear Zeus, down on the ploughed fields of the Athenians and on the plains.*" "In truth (says the Emperor) we ought not to pray at all, or to pray in this direct and noble fashion."

On its conclusion the farmer, rising from his knees with the rest, looked down along the board sternly with a masterful eye, and demanded to know "Who it was just now makin' light of our supplications under the table?" There was a constrained silence—Young Farmer Matthey, not a doubt of it, was master in his own household—until the tow-headed boy stood up, yellow with fright, looking as



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though he desired the earth to open at his feet and cover him. At the same moment a dark, good-looking lad seated beside him—a boy probably two years his senior—glanced across at Jan with a smile.

"Billing's boy, is it?" said Young Matthey sternly. "Then you, Billing's boy, will step over yonder and stand with your face to the corner while the others pass out."

The others passed out there and then—the elders to the glass-houses to finish the packing, the youngsters to bed.

To Jan was assigned a small attic chamber, barely furnished, clean as a pin, smelling potently of onions that had been kept to dry the winter through on its naked floor. From its windows, between the eaves, he looked straight out upon the red sea-light on North Island, and just within the edge of the frame, as he lay down in his bed, the far Stones Lightship repeated its quick three flashes of white.

They were the same lights he had watched from his garret window on St. Lide's; but they were nearer, and it seemed to him that he was nearer the edge of the spell. He dropped asleep. At intervals in his dreams he saw the face of the dark, good-looking boy smiling at him across the table, while still through his dreams, until midnight and after, sounded the tap-tap of a hammer from the outhouse, nailing boxes for the daffodils.



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# CHAPTER V

## TOM TIDDLER'S GROUND

"Here we are on Tom Tiddler's ground
Picking up gold and silver;
Daisies and lilies
And daffadownlilies—
O, who wouldn't be a delver!"

NEXT morning the farmer took him out to the fields, having first provided him with a pair of small leggings, for some rain had fallen during the night, and wading among the flowers would be wet work.

They came to a strip of ground, in size about an acre, set about with a low hedge of veronica and ablaze with yellow trumpet daffodils—yes, ablaze, though most of the buds were but half open. Half a dozen boys were already at work here, headed (to Jan's delight) by the brown, smiling boy; for most of the men of the farm had started before daybreak to row Young Matthey's barge, laden with flower-boxes, down to the landing on the south point of Iniscaw, where the Lady's launch would take them in tow across the Sound to St. Lide's Pier, under the lee of which the steamer lay.

The farmer, having briefly instructed Jan what flowers to choose, how to pluck them low down by



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the base with a sharp snap, and how to basket them when plucked, assigned him his row and left him in charge of Dave, as he called the brown boy.

The field lay on the slope above the cliffs in a sheltered hollow, facing southward; so that, over the sheets of daffodils and over the dwarf hedge, you saw the blue water of the archipelago, right away south to St. Lide's and to Garrison Hill with the Star Castle crowning it, and at its base (so clear was the morning) the smoke of the steamer as she lay getting up steam. The sunshine, falling warm on the wet flowers, drew from them the rarest fragrance. (They were trumpet daffodils, as has been said, and nine out of ten of us would have called them odourless; but little Jan, it was to be discovered, had a sense of smell keen almost as a wild animal's.) The fragrance mingled with the wafted brine of the sea, and between them—what with the breeze and the myriad heads of gold it set nodding and the spirit of youth dancing inside of him—they flooded the child's soul with happiness—a happiness so poignant that once, straightening himself up in a pause of the picking, he felt his eyes brim with tears, through which the daffodils danced in a mist. Brushing the back of his hand across his eyes, he glanced shyly across at Dave, fearful lest Dave had detected his weakness.

And Dave had, but set it down to the wrong cause.

"Takes ye in the back, first-along, hey?" said Dave kindly. "Never mind, little 'un; within a



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week you 'll get over the cramps, an' it 's not bad ye 're doin', for a beginner."

Jan blessed him for misunderstanding. What a splendid fellow Dave was—so brown and strong! But Dave, though he could smile most of his time, had very little mouth-speech, as they say on the Islands. He contented himself with showing Jan how to arrange his flowers in the "maund" or basket—they had one maund between them, and were working down two parallel rows—and he did it mostly by dumb show. Once, however, he called out, standing up and pointing—

"There she goes!"

—and all the boys paused for a minute and gazed southward at the steamer heading out from St. Lide's Quay for the Main. As he watched her, the old longing came upon Jan with a rush; the old question, as a sudden cloud upon his glee.

They fell to work again. But a few minutes later word arrived that Dave must attend the farmer in an upper field, where he had an ingenious device of forcing some rarer bulbs as they stood by covering them with small portable glass-houses mounted on wheels. This matured the plants better than the old way of transferring them to boxes and forcing them in a large greenhouse; but the glass-frames needed handling, and the most of his grown men had not yet returned with the barge. So Dave was requisitioned.

He had no sooner left than the industry of the



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boys in the field sensibly slackened. Jan, bending over the row, did not perceive it, and was rudely awakened by a light cuff on the ear. Above him stood the tow-headed boy, grinning and showing the gaps in his teeth.

"Sneak!" said the tow-headed boy, "that 's for telling tales on me last night."

A sudden fury leapt up in Jan. He wanted to kill the tow-headed boy—who was so ugly and told lies. Without waiting to consider, Jan leapt on him, and the attack was so sudden that both rolled over among the dripping daffodils, crushing the flowers as they rolled. For a few seconds Jan was on the top, and his hands felt for the tow-headed boy's throat, to grip it; but by-and-by age and weight prevailed.

"Little devil, I 'll teach you!"

The tow-headed boy first clutched the nape of his neck and rubbed his face into the soil, then caught at one of the writhing arms and began to twist it.

"Now sing small, little devil!"

"I won't," gasped Jan, almost faint with pain. "You tell lies, and are ugly—ugly!"

"Hullo!"

It was Dave's voice, and Dave descended on the scrimmage like a young god. He cuffed the two apart; but Jan, white with passion, flew again at his adversary, and had to be caught by the jacket-neck and flung among the wet flowers.

"Little spitfire!" laughed Dave, after doing this



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gently but firmly. "Seemin' to me, Ben Lager, this field is'n safe for you, and you'd better come along an' help with the glass boxes. Farmer sent me down to fetch up another hand."

So the tow-headed boy was marched off, and Jan, picking himself up, fell to work again. He was trembling from head to foot. He had never in his short life known such a fit of rage, and it affected him like an ague. For a full hour the trembling lasted, at intervals broken by a sob that convulsed all his limbs.

The harvest had begun late this year, in contrast with last season's, when picking started before New Year's Day and went on steadily until May month. Up to the opening days of February Young Matthey had carried a gloomy face about his fields, consoling himself with market reports of unusually high prices (due to severe weather in the South of France, where the gardens of his trade rivals, the Mediterranean growers, had lain under snow for three weeks on end). Young Matthey ever spoke with asperity of these distant Frenchmen, his mind confusing them in a queer fashion with what he had read in newspapers concerning Monte Carlo. He imagined them at the end of a season, when he banked his few hard-earned pounds, as flocking to the tables with large sums of money (that ought by rights to be in *his* pocket), and gambling it away upon *roulette*, a game happily unknown in the Islands. Indeed, the Islanders knew no games at all. Strange to say, even the



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children played none—until Jan taught them, as you shall hear.

In February the flowers awoke and came on with a rush. The previous summer had been a hot one, baking and ripening the bulbs in the ground; but with November had come a spell of cold, and an obstinate one, lasting through December and January and holding (as the farmer argued) the head of the procession in check while the later regiments of flowers pressed up and trod on their leaders' heels, all waiting the signal of fine weather; so that when the sunshine came all burst into bloom together, and bloomed riotously. The Islands had never known such a March. In the first week the workers had to give over saving the flowers in bud and bunching them in water jars under shelter, for they opened faster than the whole population could pick. The sky was clear; the weather-glass stood at 'Set Fair.' The maidens left their glasshouses and worked afield with the lads. In the last week of the holidays the farmers met and sent a deputation to the Lady, protesting that if the schools re-opened as usual the flower industry would perish amid plenty.

"What was Government, with its Education Grant, compared with this hundreds of pounds' worth that must rot in the fields!" The Lady snapped her fingers at the Board of Education in London, and extended the holidays a fortnight. There was even talk of hiring another steamer to ply from the Main.



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The present one would carry but fifty tons at a time, for flower boxes take up much room for their weight. Fifty tons thrice a week—say seventy thousand flowers to the ton—between nine and ten millions of flowers!—which means a million and half picked every day, since the Islanders do not work on Sundays.

So instead of a month Jan dwelt six weeks upon Brefar, until all the trumpet daffodils and the Leedsii were either picked or overblown, and even the Poet's Narcissus, latest of all—in those days little grown on the outer Islands, but chiefly under apple trees in the few orchards on St. Lide's and in the Lady's gardens at Iniscaw—were past their prime. They were happy days for the boy, but they were also days of almost constant labour, so that often after supper and prayers he would climb to his attic almost too weary to drag off his clothes—far too weary to loiter at his window picking out and naming the sea-lights—before tumbling into bed and into a dreamless sleep.

On the last "steamer day" Young Matthey gave him leave to travel across with him to St. Lide's in the barge and prepare the Treachers for his return. As he stepped ashore on the quay he had a queer feeling of having been absent for years instead of for weeks. The steamer lay alongside, as he had seen her lie some scores of times; the carts were rattling down from the island; the laden boats hurrying across the Sound, from St. Ann's in the south, from St. Michael's in the north (where, local report said, the men grew tails and spoke an outlandish



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language). The boxes were being shipped at high pressure, some sliding down shoots into the hold, others overpiling an already monstrous deck cargo; and, as usual, the skipper was holding two altercations at once with shippers who had attempted to encroach beyond their allotted space. But it seemed to Jan that either he had grown or Garland Town had shrunk. He came back to it as one who had seen the world.

At the head of the street, where the rough path climbed to the Garrison gate, he ran against Dr. Hervey.

"Hullo, youngster! Well, it's fine and brown you are!" cried the Doctor genially. "And you've shot up, I protest. Is it Brefar air, or has the world grown for ye?"

Jan, with a new air of independence, yet modestly enough, returned the Doctor's smile.

"It's different, sir."

"Aye, aye! *Cælum, non animum, mutant*—worse rubbish was never uttered. But, boy, ye've missed your Latin—precious days of it. We must make up leeway; and from Latin, in a year's time or so, I'll lead ye to Greek, which is a baptism, look ye,—a baptism into a cult, and the only true key to freedom. There be other ways more alluring, that look easier, but if you'd be a free man—free of these Islands, free of the Main, free of the Mediterranean, which is the sea of seas, and of Rome, to which all the roads lead—ye'll avoid short cuts, and sit down with me again to *mensa, mensam, mensæ*."



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# CHAPTER VI

## MARY MARTHA'S TOMBSTONE

YOUNG Farmer Matthey having much business to transact in Garland Town, the return journey was not made until late in the afternoon. Half-way across, the farmer called Jan aft to speak with him.

"I 'd a sudden thought to-day," he said, "and meeting Sergeant Treacher on the quay just now I broached it to him. You seem to be a quiet, steady boy, an' I hear good reports of 'ee, besides what I 've seen with my own eyes. What d'ye say to livin' 'long with us at Chy-an-Chy, an' goin' to Brefar school along with my own childern? You needn't be in a hurry with 'yes' or 'no,'" he added, as Jan stood with face flushed and stammered for words. "Because, anyway, we 'd have to get the Mistress's leave first. But I was thinkin' that I 've a shortage of boys—maids in plenty, but no boys to mention, or none to be depended on. There 's Little Matthey, my eldest. He 's a grown man, an' the farm 'll come to him in God's time, but he 've no understandin' for flowers, an' never had. As for Mark, his mother spoils 'en. Goin' outside my own, Dave is a good lad; but Dave, when he grows up, 'll go into service with Trinity House. His parents



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have settled 'pon that, and a very good lightkeeper he 'll make. Lager's boy is no good at all, nor Aby Hicks, nor his small brother Sam, nor Seth Piper. What I want is a lad pretty bright at learnin'—— What 's that in your hand ? " he asked, breaking off.

Jan opened the parcel—a scrap of old newspaper. It enwrapped a flat-cupped narcissus, with a belt of earth about the bulb.

" Hullo ! That 's what they call carryin' coals to Newcastle, eh ? Ha'nt we Ornatuses enough on Brefar, these days ? "

" It grows up at the Castle, sir, in the ditch between the house and the outside wall, but near by the door where the sun gets to it. And the red in the cup is quite different to any on Brefar. I was carrying it home to—to show to—— "

" So it is, now you mention it," said the farmer, examining the flower and not noting Jan's confusion. He handed it back. " Some freak, I shouldn't wonder . . . But that only proves what I was sayin'. You' ve a quickness for flowers, a naptitood ; and I was reckonin', maybe, if I brought ye up an' gave ye board an' keep, one o' these days you 'd reward me by turnin' out a pretty useful apprentice, an' then who knows but ye won't finish up as a hind ?—at sixteen shillin' a week an' your meals ! "

But this part of the alluring prospect did not touch Jan, who had never possessed any money and knew nothing of its value.



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"Please, sir, what did Sergeant Treacher say?" he ventured.

"Oh, the Treachers are ready enough! It 's for your good, and," added the farmer not very lucidly, "'tisn' as if you was their own flesh an' blood."

The barge was brought ashore at the little beach where Jan had made his first landing on Brefar. The children, their harvest work over, were all gathered there to welcome it, and Mary Martha, as the custom was at end of harvest, had brought them down a picnic tea from the farm, and had already smashed two cups. The kettle sang on a fire under the cliff's shadow. All around the head of the cove grew clumps of narcissus poeticus—castaway flowers, unmarketable, the most of them by this time over-blown, but beautiful yet—beautiful as white ghosts when the shadows crept down the beach and covered them; for some blossomed even among the stones at the water's edge, and would bloom again next year unless meanwhile an abnormally high tide came and washed the bulbs away. Jan joined the tea-drinkers, his heart swelling with his news. Thanks to Mary Martha's affliction (as she had come to call it) there was no cup for him, and he was told to go shares in Annet's, taking sip and sip with her—the bliss!

But the bliss did not endure.

"What 's that you 've brought me?" asked Annet, nodding towards the parcel, which he had laid beside him.



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"How did you know I brought it for you?" he asked, his heart beating.

She pouted.

"Is it for Linnet, then, or for Bennet?"

"But it *is* for you!"

He unwrapped it, and held it out. Her pretty face darkened.

"Is it mocking me? A silly old Ornatus!"

"But it's *different*," he began stupidly, afraid of the wrath in her voice.

"As if you didn' know that I am sick of flowers—yes, sick of them!"

She tossed the bulb away pettishly, and sat staring before her, with tears in her eyes. The heel of her boot ground a pebble or two in the sand. Poor Jan looked at her ruefully. He had meant to give her pleasure, and a moment ago his own happiness had been brimming. The news he had to tell, news so good for him—Would that, too, make her angry?

But at this point Mary Martha let fall a plate, and upon the crash of it uplifted her voice in a wail.

"An' now it's plates! Oh, my misguided hands! Plates an' cups an' candlesticks will ever be my cross; and no hopes for it, maister, till we meet in the land o' marrow an' fatness, where there's no candle an' the crockery tumbles light."

"Never mind a plate, Mary Martha, up or down," said the farmer genially.

He had done satisfactory business that morning



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with the bank at Garland Town, and could afford the loss of a plate or two at harvest-ending.

To cheat her remorse he suggested that since she was talking of crosses she might tell them about the one she had put up to her deceased husband.

" 'Tis a story that never fails to cheer," he assured the company tactfully.

" It cost the all of twenty pounds," began Mary Martha, cheering up at once. " I got Hugh and Co.'s receipt for the money here in my purse, an' ne'er will I part with it."

She opened the purse and showed the paper, greasy with much folding and unfolding.

" But don't 'ee go callin' it a Cross, maister, when 'tis a Collum."

" Dear me, so 'tis." The farmer took her correction. " Iss, iss, a collum, an' I beg your pardon, woman."

" A broken collum, an' polished granite, with the ivy growin' round it nat'ral as life. Not real ivy, you 'll understand, but granite too, same as the collum. . . . When my poor dear man went off in a decline an' died—an' a kinder man the Lord never put heart into—I went to Hugh and Co. an' told him I wanted a tombstone. Hugh and Co. is the tombstone-maker over to Garland Town; his real name is William Hugh, an' I never saw any Co. about him. I told Hugh and Co. I wanted to be measured for a stone, if he 'd understand, because all my savin's had gone in the funeral, an' I wouldn'



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have the stone until I 'd paid for it, every penny—let alone that the dear man never could abide debt in his lifetime, an' 'd ne'er have rested easy wi' that weight o' credit 'pon his remains. Hugh and Co. was very nice about it, an' accommodatin' ; offered to put up one for me on a sort of hire system, an' made a lot o' useful suggestions. But I stuck out that I 'd have no stone till he had his money ; only I wanted to choose the thing aforehand so 's to have a notion o' what I 'd be savin' for. Seein' how firm I was about the payment, he took me into his yard—such a place, my dears ! Tombstones by the scores, with 'Sacred to the Mem'ry' ready carved 'pon 'em, and then a blank, waitin' till the person died, so that you got the creeps wonderin' if it mightn' be your turn next. But *I* didn't get no creeps, not carin' just then how soon I was taken. Hugh and Co. showed me all kinds o' patterns. Bein' used to his trade, he was as easy about it as a butcher with a calf, an' yet very kind all the time. He wanted to know if I 'd have it in Delabole Slate or in a kind o' what he called Compo, that he praised up for standin' all weathers. 'We 've a cheap line in boards, too,' says he, 'all seasoned wood, with two coats o' best paint besides primin', an' the whole concern to be repainted, often as you like, at contrack prices.' But I was looking at something quite different that had caught my eye, standin' in the middle o' the yard. 'That there pillar would be my fancy,' says I, 'if only 'tweren't broken. How



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did you meet with such a naccydent?' 'Broken?' says he. 'That 's done a-purpose, to show the life underneath was a-snapped off afore its time.' When I come to look closer I saw he was tellin' the truth. 'Just like my poor dear!' says I, an' asks en the price. He seemed a bit absent-minded of a sudden. 'Oh, that there collum 's a masterpiece,' he says, 'done by one of our best workmen on the Main! 'Twas meant for a deceased party whose name I won't mention, bein' actionable, perhaps; but the relatives quarrelled over the will, an' here the blessed thing is, back 'pon my hands. I can't tell you the whole story, missus,' says Hugh and Co., 'but here it be, through an act o' carelessness in the foreman who took the order, an' I 've stuck it up here to show what we can do when we try.' 'How much might it be, sir?' I asks, my heart in my mouth. 'Well,' says he, 'if you should know anyone who happens to be in want of such a thing, you can tell 'em that, misfit tho' 'tis, I can't let it go under twenty pound.' I stood there of a sudden all of a tremble. 'I 'll take it,' says I, hardly believing the sound o' my own voice. 'What!' says he. 'That is, if you 're sure they relatives won't put in no claim, an' if you 'll let me bring the money from time to time, just to show how I 'm gettin' on, an' that I mean honest.' 'Well!' says Hugh and Co., surprised out of hisself, 'you 'll excuse me, missus, but this beats cock-fightin'!' 'It may or it mayn't,' says I; 'but there 's one other thing I 'd



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like to mention. Could ye saw off the broken end clean for me ? ' I says, ' for I see what it means, now you' ve told me, but other people won't, maybe. They 'll think I got so far wi' the payments an' no further, or maybe they 'll think I picked up with a damaged article, or again maybe they 'll think I let it fall, like everything else in the world. I couldn' be in the churchyard all the time explainin', besides which I 'm goin' over to Brefar to Young Matthey Hender, who 've been a father to the fatherless, at five pounds a year and my keep.' "

" Get along with your story, woman," said the farmer hastily.

" Which he agreed," continued Mary Martha, " and I came over here an' saved an' saved till I had five pound put by ! An' then I turned-to again, an' saved and saved till I had another five pound—if someone will be good enough to count. An' after that I saved an' saved another five. An' last of all I saved an' saved another five, an' that made *TWENTY !* "

Mary Martha ran up to the climax with a shout of triumph, and, ceasing abruptly, looked round the circle of her audience for the applause which was duly given.

" It 's gospel truth, too, the woman be tellin'," said the farmer, rising from his meal and preparing to walk away.

Long years of ceaseless daily labour—and in the beginning, before the daffodils brought prosperity,



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they had been years of daily planning and contriving against want—had left him unapt for relaxation. He had been restless for some time before the close of Mary Martha's enthralling story.

"She hid it from us, too; though the Lord knows we 'd ha' been ready to make a push an' help her t'wards the money."

"But 'twouldn't ha' been the same thing, maister," chuckled Mary Martha gleefully.

"No, woman, you 're right there," he answered, and went his way to look over his harvested fields; also, if truth must be told, to rest a minute at the gate of each, bless God's mercy, and entreat it for his children, of whom the younger were all too young to remember less prosperous times.



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# CHAPTER VII

## HOW THE CHILDREN LEARNED TO PLAY

"It must be a fine thing to live on the Main," said Annet thoughtfully.

The children turned their eyes together over the sea, across which the sunset, behind the cliff that shaded them, spread a soft radiance, warming a few high clouds with its afterglow. The Main was not visible from the low beach where they sat, but they knew where it lay afar, beyond the point of Iniscaw.

"Aye," said Dave, "and be rich enough to order a tombstone like that; and, when it 's made, to tell the mason you 've changed your mind."

"For my part," said Linnet, who was a practical little body, "I don't want to make acquaintance with any such whimsical people. You may be sure they 'd look down on you, bein' so rich as they are; and I 'd hate to live where I was looked down upon."

"I wasn't meaning," said Annet, "that I 'd like to go over from here an' be treated as *they* chose. I meant it would be fine to be one o' them, an' so rich that you could look down on everybody else."

"But why *should* you?" put in Jan, puzzled.

"Oh, you don't understand!"



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Here Bennet, who was practical as Linnet, but in a different way, opined that on the Main the Queen rode in a glass coach, which even the Mistress never did in the Islands.

"She couldn', not very well," retorted Linnet, ever a loyal Islander. "But there 's glass windows to the cabin of her launch."

Here Mary Martha, whom the children allowed to listen to their talk, feeling no shyness with one so simple-hearted, laid her hands in her lap with a sigh.

"I 've longed sometimes to be Queen of England," she confessed; "though it don't happen to me so often as it did when I was savin' up for the tombstone. But *that* cures me. Fancy me ridin' in a glass coach, with my unfortunate habits!"

"Let 's pretend that one of us is goin' across to the Main to-morrow," suggested Bennet; "and we 'll each choose what we 'd like for a present. Dave 's the eldest. Dave, you 're to start by the steamer to-morrow, and——"

"But the steamer went to-day," Dave objected.

"Well, then, the day after to-morrow. It don't make any difference to our pretendin'."

"I didn't want to disappoint you, that 's all. Very well, I 'm to go the day after to-morrow," Dave announced. "Now fire ahead, and choose what you want me to bring back."

"It 's like the beginning of *Beauty and the Beast*," said Annet. "'Once upon a time there lived a



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merchant who had three daughters. A message came to him that he had to travel and do business in a country a long way off. So he called his daughters together, and asked what they would like him to bring home for fairings. The first daughter asked for a necklace of ruby stones and satin slippers and a canary bird in a golden cage. The second wanted a new kitten and some strings for a harp and a dress all over diamonds. But when it came to the third—— ' "

" Well, what did *she* want ? " asked Dave, as Annet came to a halt.

Her face had flushed of a sudden.

" I don't know. . . . I didn' set out to tell you all the story."

" But *I* know ! " cried Jan, sitting up suddenly and clutching two small pebbles he had been tossing idly in his hand. " The third one wanted a flower."

" She didn't ! " Annet contradicted angrily. " Not first along, at any rate. And you don't know any stories ; you told me so yourself, the day you came."

Jan passed the back of his hand over his eyes.

" No, first-along she didn't want anything ; but after that, because she didn't like to disappoint her father, she chose a flower. When her father was away on the main, and just about to start back for home, he found himself walking in a beautiful garden, and it came into his mind that he'd remembered to buy the other fairings, but forgotten about the flower



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for his youngest daughter. So he picked the prettiest he could see, when out from the bushes jumped a great roaring lion.

"'Who gave you leave to pick my flowers?' roared the lion. The merchant dropped on his knees, and cried out that he had only picked one. It was for his daughter who lived on the other side of the sea, and had made him promise to bring her home a flower. 'By right I ought to kill you,' said the lion, 'and I will only spare you if you promise to go home and fetch your daughter to me. Bring her to my palace and leave her here. You won't see anybody. But if you don't obey me, be sure I will kill you.' The merchant had to promise, and when he reached home, and told the news, they were all very sad. But the youngest was brave and said she must go, so her father took her back with him to the lion's palace and left her. They saw nobody, and when her father had gone she wandered about alone until she was tired, and at last, coming to a bedroom, she lay down and slept. But by and by she woke up. It was dark, and there was somebody talking to her in the dark, and although she couldn't see his face she knew he was a beautiful Prince. He went away before daylight, but before going he told her that he would always love her, but he must always come in the dark, and she must never try to see his face."

"You're telling it all wrong!" broke in Annet. "That's not the story at all."



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"It 's a very good yarn, anyway," said Dave, as the child came to a stop, all confused; "and I don't see why you want to interrupt. Go on, Janny boy."

"She—she was never to see his face," pursued Jan; but the words came halting, and he seemed to be casting about for the broken thread of the story.

"She wanted too, more and more, and—oh, yes!—it goes on that one night while he was sleeping she lit a lamp—it was a lamp like the *chill** up in the kitchen—and bent over to look at him. He was handsome, ten times handsomer than she had ever supposed. He was so handsome that her hand shook, and a drop of the hot oil fell on his shoulder. He opened his eyes, and then——"

Jan came to a halt again.

"Tell us what happened!"

Annet was as eager now as the others.

"He—he flew away, out of her sight. She had broken her promise, you see. I don't rightly know the end," Jan confessed, rubbing his eyes perplexedly. Where had he learnt the story? It all came to him so clearly, up to a point. "I think she searched after him—yes, and at last they were married, and lived happy ever after," he wound up, like one repeating a lesson.

"I don't think much of a story that breaks off

* *Chill*, a stone lamp shaped like a candlestick and having a shallow saucer on top. A little train (fish) oil was poured into the saucer and a floating rush served for wick. Such a lamp was used up to recent years on the Islands; and the glimmer it gave was called by the housewife an "idle light," meaning that she and her maidens could not see to sew by it.



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in the middle," said Annet cruelly. "Linnet, 'tis your turn. Tell us about Peter Piper that went down to the bottom of the sea and married a mermaid."

Linnet told the story of Peter Piper, and when Linnet had done another child told about the Piskies—how they stole a baby out of its cradle, and how the mother made them bring it back by boiling a crockful of eggshells.

Jan listened, tossing his two pebbles idly and catching them. It was queer. These stories also he had heard at sometime, somewhere, or else he had dreamed them—not exactly as the children were telling them, but so nearly that to all intents they were the same.

Dave's turn came next; but Dave for some minutes had been watching Jan and the way he tossed the pebbles, turning his hand and catching them neatly on the back of his knuckles.

"That 's a funny game you are playin', little Jan. Who taught 'ee the trick of it?"

"Nobody," answered Jan, after considering a moment. "It came into my head one day, and I 've been playing at it ever since, off and on. There are lots of different ways."

He added a third small pebble, tossed up all three and caught them on the back of his hand, where they lay disposed as though they had been carefully placed there. With a quick upward jerk he sent them in air again, to fall just as neatly upon the back of his other hand.



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The children watched him curiously. One or two chose out pebbles, and tried to imitate these tricks. Within five minutes every child in the circle was engaged in the game, and laughing at one another's awkwardness. In this way Jan taught them the beginnings of a game old as the hills, played by shepherds and fisher boys on far-away Grecian Isles before ever Homer sang; and thus it came about that the Brefar children play at knuckle-bones to-day with oddly-shaped pebbles. Also, unknowingly, he taught them to laugh. They were laughing yet when the bell tinkled, up at the farm, summoning them home to supper and bed; and as they climbed the hill echoes of their laughter floated back to the deserted beach.

The echoes died away, faded into the perpetual low hum of the tide races sweeping around the northern isles. In the twilight a belated bee continued at work — *z-z-zoom* — busy among the glimmering flowers of the Poet's Narcissus. The bee pitched on a flower which lay broken among them where Annet had tossed it, and entered its cup inquisitively.



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# CHAPTER VIII

## THE APPRENTICESHIP

**You that build the shade-roof, and you that court the rays,**
**You that leap besprinkling the rock stream-rent:**
**He has been our fellow, the morning of our days;**
**Us he chose for house-mates, and this way went.**
***Phœbus with Admetus***

So Jan continued with Young Farmer Matthey and grew up as one of the household. Our story has no concern with these years, beyond telling that he went with the other children to Brefar school, and was passably sharp with his books; and that he grew into a handsome lad, fair-skinned, beautifully-limbed, cheerful and docile of temper. He never quarrelled, but would walk away whenever the children started bickering among themselves. On the other hand, he never quite broke through his shyness. He craved for their love, but (save unconsciously) could go no way to meet it, even when he taught them to laugh and play games. Only with Dave he had no reserve. If Dave was David, Jan as surely was Jonathan. As a rule, between growing lads two years' difference of age is a gulf: but Jan (as the farmer put it) was old for his age, and in one particular he established a mastery which helped to bring them level.

They learned to swim together; and at swimming



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from the start the younger boy out-paced and out-distanced the elder. Dave had no jealousy in his nature. He toiled admiringly in Jan's wake, and it was he, not Jan, who boasted of Jan's beautiful diving. When they grew up and fitted out an old boat of the farmer's, it was Dave's turn to resume the mastery. Dave had a turn for carpentering. In steering and handling a boat, too, Dave was the teacher, Jan the learner. Moreover, Dave had a sense of navigation which Jan lacked; he seemed, being born to the Islands, to have an instinct for their rocks, shoals, and dangers, the set and run of the tides, what the wind would do next, and how far to trust it.

One other gift of Jan's must be mentioned, since by virtue of it he repaid the farmer's kindness. He developed a wonderful sense of flowers, so that none of the other children, between harvest and harvest, could compare with him. For to harvest the daffodils is simple enough: the grower's real skill shows itself in the between-times, in divining when to lift and transplant, in sorting out the strong from the weakly bulbs, in strengthening the soil, in choosing new situations and aspects. At the age of fourteen Jan appeared, merely by turning a bulb over in his hand, to know what it wanted. It was he, too, who discovered for the farmer that daffodil leaves, duly dried, made good fodder. The green leaves are poisonous for cattle; and hitherto the rakings of the fields—when the flowers' sap had run back into



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the bulbs—had been gathered in heaps and burnt. The farmer saved some, however, and used it for litter, never supposing that the cows would eat the dried stuff. Jan pointed out that they ate their bedding with relish, and moreover that they took no harm. Next year the farmer surprised his neighbours by building a rick of daffodil leaves alongside his hay-ricks.

Little by little, as the boy grew, the old longings, the old questionings, faded out of his mind. Work at Chy-an-Chy Farm was hard, if cheerful: the day over, he climbed the stairs to bed, too wholesomely tired to lie awake and fret, as he had been used to fret, asking "Who am I?" "How came I here?"

Maybe, too, the companionship of the patient cattle, the lesson of the flowers—so obedient, so unexacting, so eager and happy to do their best when the appointed time came, in spite of wind and storm—helped to discipline him.

> The lily is most fair,
> But says not, 'I will only blow
> Upon a southern land'; the cedar makes no coil
> What rocks shall owe
> The springs that wash his feet;
> The crocus cannot arbitrate the foil
> That for its purple radiance is most meet.—
> Lord, even so
> I ask one prayer;
> The which it it be granted,
> It skills not where
> Thou plantest me, only I would be planted.



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But the trouble awoke again.

One evening in early summer,—he was now in his fifteenth year,—he and Dave took a long swim together out to a naked island that stands about midway in Cromwell's Sound. The pair had spent the day in trimming hedges, working under a hot sun with their shirts open at the throat. The pollen of flowers, the blown seeds of early grasses, clung stickily to the sweat of their young bodies, and they sought the water as a salmon seeks the freshet to rid himself of sea-lice.

As usual, Jan quickly out-distanced Dave, and by and by, close under the rocks of the island, ceased swimming and turned over on his back, floating, waiting for Dave to come up. As he lay so, a sound came borne to him across the waters—a sound of a woman's voice singing.

He had never heard singing, save by the children in school, or by their elders in chapel, or at evening prayer, droning out Wesley's hymns at distressful length. He had never imagined that any sound could ravish the ear as did this. He turned about and trod water gently, lifting his head to listen. On the Iniscaw shore a light shone among the dark deodars,—for twilight was falling,—and thence the voice sang to him.

With a few easy strokes he reached the island. He groped for a landing in the shadow of the rocks, found handhold and scrambled ashore. Still the divine voice floated over the waters.



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He stood, naked, rigid as a statue, every nerve strung taut by it. Below his feet, somewhere in the shadow, Dave called up to him that the swim had been long—it was time to return.

"But listen!"

"It 's the Lady, singing to herself. She has her window open, and sometimes, they say, you can hear every note as far as Brefar. Come back, Jan!"

Dave headed back as Jan dived. But Jan neither overtook him nor heeded his shouts. Dave, judging that he himself had barely strength enough left to swim back, swam doggedly on. Within a hundred yards of the beach his limbs began to feel as heavy as lead. But he struggled on and reached shore, his teeth chattering, his body shaking woefully as with an ague.

Meanwhile Jan was swimming for Iniscaw and the voice. Of the long return he recked nothing. No thought crossed his mind that Dave might perhaps be in danger. He would at any time have given his life for Dave's; but just now he was oblivious of all save the voice, and he swam toward the lighted window as a moth is drawn to a lamp.

Within her room, high above the terrace, the Lady sang to herself; and her song was "Caro Nome." Whoso will, let him despise; but when a great singer understands Verdi, it is a great and wonderful song. While the Lady sang, the moon—almost at its full—swam up above the deodars, and toward it Jan swam, toward the lamp beneath it, toward the scent wafted



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across the summer night from garden flowers and dark pines.

Loyal Dave, although his teeth chattered, had no sooner reached the shore than he dragged down the boat and—all naked—pushed across in search of his friend. The rowing by degrees brought back warmth to his blood. When he reached the farther side the Lady had ceased singing and pulled down the blind. He found Jan stretched naked on the sand, shivering, sobbing with exhaustion, and carefully ferried him home.

That was Dave all over—Dave, the good friend, solid, always ready at need.

But the time came when Dave must put on the uniform of the Trinity House and go off to the lightship on the Stones.

The children saw him off tearfully, though he was cheerful enough. From the upper windows of Chy-an-Chy farmhouse they could see the white flash travelling across the waters from the lightship —three white flashes in twenty-four seconds, followed by darkness for thirty-six seconds—and knew, when the flashes came round again, that Dave was alive and well, and keeping watch.

The joy of Jan's life, however, was to welcome Dave home when the relief-boat brought him off for life on a lightship is deadly trying to the nerves of most men, and the rule is—or then was—to relieve one-third of the crew every month, each man



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spending two months on board and taking a month's furlough on shore. Dave had no nerves; he said that with so much cleaning and polishing to do, out yonder, there was no time to be melancholy; and besides, there was a great deal more to talk about than anyone would think—tramp steamers heading round land (in time you got to know one and another like old friends, and to time their comings and goings); full sail to the southward making for the Channel; at the worst a school of porpoises, or a sun-fish, or a line of little murrs flying, or a gannet to watch by the hour, counting his dives. And sometimes the fishing-fleet would come out toward sunset, down sail, and hang out their riding-lights, which gave a friendly feeling, though to be sure they came from the Main. By night, of course, there were the other sea-lights to watch, particularly the red light on North Island, which (said Dave) put him in mind of Chy-an-Chy window at supper-time.

Nevertheless, Dave allowed that it was good to be home; especially on the first Sunday, when he put on his best shore-going clothes (Trinity House uniform) and the girls—Annet, Linnet and Bennet—wore their white frocks to church in the morning and to meeting-house in the evening, this division of worship being the comfortable rule in the Islands (and, I dare say, no one a penny the worse for it). He said in his matter-of-fact way that even the smell of rotten fish at the corner of St. Lide's quay was good enough to come back to, but the best smell was that of the



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lilac-bush by the lych-gate of Brefar Church, because it had been in full bloom, with the early bees about it, at his first home-coming.

The next year he returned in the very height of the daffodil harvest, and Jan—kept busy from morning to night—saw little of him. Somewhere deep down in his heart was a feeling that Dave, having nothing to do on his furlough, might have spared more time to stand by his side in the fields and chat. He understood when Dave, the night before departure, drew him aside and told him shyly—after much pretence of asking advice—that he and Annet had 'made it up.' "Of course," added Dave, "that don't make any difference to you and me."

"Of course," agreed Jan, believing him.

His own heart had not been seriously engaged, though from the first (now he came to think of it) Annet was by far the prettiest girl on Brefar, and therefore marked out to be Dave's sweetheart.

"I 'd take it kindly," said Dave quite solemnly, "if you 'd just bear that in mind. It was you, as a fact, that brought us together."

"Was it?" said Jan doubtfully, wondering when and how this could have happened.

"She thinks a lot of you, too," said Dave. "She 've told me so." He said it in a tone which conveyed that Jan ought to be proud, and proud Jan accordingly was. "Now I 'm thinking that she 'll be feelin' my goin' out to the Stones, this time, more 'n ordinary."



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"Of course she will," Jan agreed.

"An' that," said his friend, "is where you can help. We can't be married till the summer after next; but meantime you can do a lot for us."

"Can I?" asked Jan doubtfully. "Well, I'll do my best. If only you mean what you say—that it—that *this*—'ll make no difference between us."

"Why should it?" (How splendid Dave looked as he asked the question!)

Jan never said a word to Annet concerning her troth with Dave, nor she a word to him. But on the day after Dave's departure he took her for a sail to cheer up her spirits, and they talked much of the hero by the way. Somehow it came to be understood that Jan, as Dave's friend, in a sense belonged to Annet, to be at her beck and call, and during that summer the pair sailed on many an excursion together among the off-islands, being absent at times for a whole afternoon—always after getting leave from the farmer.

There could be no harm in it. The farmer, though inclined to spoil Annet, knew her to be a shrewd girl and level-headed. (He was delighted, by the way, that she had chosen Dave; for Dave, in addition to his other good qualities, was an only son, and his parents had a little money laid up in the savings bank. A better son-in-law could not be wished for.)

As for Jan, his loyalty to his friend was a household



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word, almost a household jest at Chy-an-Chy Farm. In these trips he now and again came near to wearying Annet with his hero-worship.

But when the relief-boat brought Dave home, Jan would efface himself, asking no better reward than the old quiet understanding.



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# CHAPTER IX

## THE SAILING

**And the spring comes slowly up this way.**

ONE day early in the next spring Annet suggested that instead of tacking among the off-islands they should sail boldly out for the Stones and pay a surprise visit to the light-vessel.

The enterprise was not so very audacious, after all. A steady, northerly breeze had been blowing all day and would certainly hold until sunset ; it was a "soldier's breeze," too, and would serve them going and coming. Moreover, this would be their last opportunity; for the daffodil harvest was close at hand, and while it lasted there could be no more holidays.

Jan blamed himself because the suggestion had not come first from him—that Annet should have been left to make it.

On the way out they talked gaily for a while, anticipating Dave's astonishment. Then they fell to discussing the prospects of harvest. All pointed to a good crop and good prices. The farmer would enjoy another prosperous season, and in the summer there would be a merry wedding.



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"It 's good to think," said Annet graciously, "that you and Dave will always be friends."

"We shall always be friends," said Jan, and added quickly, "Whatever becomes of me, I could never do other than love Dave."

His hand was on the tiller and trembled slightly; his eyes were fixed on the water ahead. The boat had broken the charmed circle of the island tides and danced over open sea.

"'*Whatever becomes of you*'?" echoed Annet. "Why, you never mean to leave Brefar, surely!"

"This summer, perhaps; after the wedding. Dave knows. I haven't told your father yet, and it won't be easy. But I belong to the Main, you know—somewhere." His gaze travelled ahead, eagerly. "I can't explain; but when you *belong* to the Main, you know——"

"Dave ought to have told me," said Annet pettishly. She was silent for a full minute. Then she asked, "And when you get to the Main, what will you do?"

"Who knows? I shall fall on my feet, never you fear."

"I heard father telling mother the other day that he was lucky to keep you. You could get good gardener's wages anywhere, and his wonder was the Mistress hadn't heard of you and snapped you up."

"I don't suppose the Mistress wants a gardener more than she has," said Jan. "But anyway she'd never bear the sight of me—the teacher told me that.



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The Commandant was a friend of hers, you know; and he lost his life saving me."

Annet nodded, but she was not heeding.

"I don't see," she said, "that one needs belong to the Main to want to live there. I 've longed for that, all my life. Dave, now—he 's happy anywhere. I 've asked him again and again how he can stand it, bobbing up an' down, up an' down, out yonder at the end of a chain. Then he laughs and says something foolish—that there 's the holidays to look forward to, or some nonsense of that sort."

"And so he feels it."

"But 'tis no life for a man," insisted Annet, tapping her foot on the bottom-boards. "Up an' down on the end of a chain, and looking forward to nothing but that all your life long."

"If he 's happy——" began Jan.

"What about *me?*" asked Annet, almost fiercely.

She recovered her graciousness as they neared the light-vessel, and answered Dave's ecstatic signals with a sufficiently affectionate wave of her handkerchief.

Dave was in transports. He had recognised the boat at two miles' distance, and as she rounded up alongside you would have thought the good fellow clean out of his mind.

"What a notion, too!" he kept shouting. "What a notion! Now, which of 'ee thought of it?"

"Why, Annet, of course," answered Jan.

"Ha, ha! Did she now? Did she really?" he



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fairly bellowed, while Annet blushed, and the crew—bronzed, friendly fellows—grinned down overside.

"Oh, hush—*please!*" Annet entreated him in a vexed voice. "Makin' such a noise, an' before folks. If I 'd known you 'd behave like this——"

But honest Dave was not to be denied. He reached down his arms to lift her on board, and no sooner had her on deck than he kissed her unblushingly, whereat the crew laughed aloud. They caught the painter thrown by Jan, and as he jumped aboard after Annet, let the boat fall astern, to be made fast there.

The next hour was spent in admiring the ship, the machinery of the lantern, the hundred-and-one cunning little contrivances for economising space in galley, pantry, sleeping-bunks. It was all very wonderful and amazingly cosy, yet Jan kept marvelling how Dave, having once broken away from the Islands, could endure (as Annet put it) to live out his life tethered thus.

Annet had recovered her composure, and at tea—the crew insisted on making tea for them before they started for home—she reigned as a queen in the small cabin. The ship smelled potently of oil and brick-dust from end to end, and the smell was disagreeable to Jan.

"Well, an' what news o' the flowers?" demanded Dave.

They told him.

"As if I didn't know!" he shouted delightedly.



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"We can taste the flowers, even out here. There 's the birds arrivin', too, to tell us that spring is comin' along."

On the whole, the surprise visit proved a great success. Yet Jan felt that something was lacking. He noted with some wonder that Dave, the lover, seemed to detect nothing amiss, and to be entirely, even to foolishness, content with Annet's behaviour and bearing.

The time came to say good-bye, and he and Annet sailed back towards the sunset, followed for a long way by the cheers of the lightship's crew. Jan steered. Annet sat on the mid-ship thwart gazing out to leeward under the sail.

For a mile and more they exchanged not a word.

At length Annet said slowly—

"That kind of life don't improve Dave, seemin' to me."

"Dave don't want improvin'," Jan answered her shortly.

There was a long pause, during which Annet watched the froth rushing by under the boat's lee. She broke it, saying—

"You must ha' noticed that I didn't like it."

"Aye," Jan replied, "I took note o' that."

Another long pause followed.

"An' that 's to go on for ever an' ever, I suppose. An' with any pluck he might have gone to the Main and made his fortune."

"But he 's content as he is, lookin' forward to you."



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"An' what about *me?*" she cried for the second time that day. "D' ye think that 's all I 'm worth? Oh," she broke off, "some folk have no eyes in their head!"

But Jan had—and so had Annet. Wicked, enticing eyes hers were, albeit demurely dropped. They watched him from under their long lashes, and he read their meaning. They were asking him to betray his friend.

A shiver ran down his body. She was fair and desirable, but his grip tightened on the tiller as he lied bravely—

"I don't know what you mean, Annet."

She said no more until they reached the entrance of Cromwell's Sound and ran the boat in for shore at the accustomed cove, but her face was dark.

"It 's late," said Jan; for indeed twilight had already gathered. "They 'll be getting anxious about us, up yonder. You 'd best run along and tell them it 's all right, while I stow sail and haul the boat up."

Annet lingered. She had a mind to tell him that she was afraid of the gathering dark, but she knew very well that he would not believe her. But the devil was in her now, and she would not lose her game without a last throw. She went up some way along the path, and dashed aside among the darkling furze-bushes. There she would wait for him, and springing out, seize his arm as he came along. The



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scent of the furze-blossom was intoxicating as it floated close about her on the evening air.

The boat's keelson grated on the beach below. He was hauling her up, then, before lowering sail. Or had she missed to hear the creak of the sheave? If he was hauling the boat up, in another moment the keelson would grate again.

But half a minute passed. He was stumbling about in the boat. Then she heard the soft plash of a paddle, and not knowing what to make of it, stepped out into the pathway for a look. She was barely in time. While she stood there, doubting her eyes, the white sail slid past the southerly point of the cove and out of sight.

"Jan! Jan!"

Annet tore down to the beach, calling, demanding to know where he was bound,—what he meant by it? But Jan looked back once only as he paid out sheet. The northerly wind still held behind him, and he headed the boat straight down Cromwell's Sound for the roadstead. A light glimmered above the trees on Iniscaw shore; but the Lady might sing at the window now if she listed. No spell could any longer bind him. He had tasted liberty to-day and looked on fear; and while the one beckoned him, the other shouted him away from the Islands to his fate.

Still with a free sheet he ran across the roadstead, and hauling close under the lee of St. Lide's, fetched out past the land. He was in open water now, with



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the sea-lights and the stars for guides. The sea was smooth, and he could make no mistake.

At daybreak he saw the tall cliffs of the Main at no more than a mile's distance, rising sheer from the sea, their fissures pencilled with violet shadows ; and following the coast-line southward, he came to a bay, wherein was a harbour thrice the size of St. Lide's Pool.

He steered in boldly. Half a dozen tall ships lay alongside the quay there, and on one of them a man was hauling up a red-white-and-green flag. Having hauled it chock-a-block, he proceeded to make fast the halyards at the rail, and grinned down in friendly fashion as the boat slid close.

"Hi!"

"Hola!"

"Want a hand, do you?" asked Jan.

"*Siete Italiano?*"

Jan rounded alongside.



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# EPILOGUE.

The good harvest was over. The family had celebrated its close, as usual, by a "tea-drinking" on Brefar beach, and were wending homeward up the hill through the dusk; but on the beach a young man and a maid loitered, listening to their voices.

"Poor old Jan!" said Dave thoughtfully. "I wonder what took him? Didn't notice anything queer with him that day, did you? *I* didn't."

"He was always queer," answered Annet. "You never can depend on folks from the Main."

"You used to worry me about going to live there, one time," Dave reminded her.

"Girls can't help havin' their silly notions."

"No, I suppose. But poor old Jan! I wonder if he 'll write to us some day. He ought, you know, for I never had no other real friend," mused Dave wistfully.

"What does it matter?" asked Annet. "Haven't we one another?"

At their feet, unnoted by them, a narcissus bloomed; a flower with white perianth and a cup of flame. This year it must bloom in patience and fade—this year, and another, and another, until Young Farmer Matthey comes along with a sharper eye than any of his children's and discovers it, the glory of the Islands.



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# Pipes in Arcady

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I HARDLY can bring myself to part with this story, it has been such a private joy to me. Moreover, that I have lain awake in the night to laugh over it is no guarantee of your being passably amused. Yourselves, I dare say, have known what it is to awake in irrepressible mirth from a dream which next morning proved to be flat and unconvincing. Well, this my pet story has some of the qualities of a dream; being absurd, for instance, and almost incredible, and even a trifle inhuman. After all, I had better change my mind, and tell you another——

But no; I will risk it, and you shall have it, just as it befel.

* * * *

I had taken an afternoon's holiday to make a pilgrimage: my goal being a small parish church that lies remote from the railway, five good miles from the tiniest of country stations; my purpose to inspect—or say, rather, to contemplate—a Norman porch, for which it ought to be widely famous. (Here let me say that I have an unlearned



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passion for Norman architecture—to enjoy it merely, not to write about it.)

To carry me on my first stage I had taken a crawling local train that dodged its way somehow between the regular expresses and the "excursions" that invade our Delectable Duchy from June to October. The season was high midsummer, the afternoon hot and drowsy with scents of mown hay; and between the rattle of the fast trains it seemed that we, native denizens of the Duchy, careless of observation or applause, were executing a *tour de force* in that fine indolence which has been charged as a fault against us. That we halted at every station goes without saying. Few sidings—however inconsiderable or, as it might seem, fortuitous—escaped the flattery of our prolonged sojourn. We ambled, we paused, almost we dallied with the butterflies afloat over the meadow-sweet and cow-parsley beside the line; we exchanged gossip with stationmasters, and received the congratulations of signalmen on the extraordinary spell of fine weather. It did not matter. Three market-women, a pedlar, and a local policeman made up with me the train's complement of passengers. I gathered that their business could wait; and as for mine—well, a Norman porch is by this time accustomed to waiting.

I will not deny that in the end I dozed at intervals in my empty smoking compartment; but wish to make it clear that I came on the vision (as I will



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call it) with eyes open, and that it left me staring, wide-awake as Macbeth.

Let me describe it. To the left of the line as you travel westward there lies a long grassy meadow on a gentle acclivity, set with three or four umbrageous oaks and backed by a steep plantation of oak saplings. At the foot of the meadow, close alongside the line, runs a brook, which is met at the meadow's end by a second brook which crosses under the permanent way through a culvert. The united waters continue the course of the first brook, beside the line, and maybe for half a mile farther; but, a few yards below their junction, are dammed by the masonry of a bridge over which a country lane crosses the railway; and this obstacle spreads them into a pool some fifteen or twenty feet wide, overgrown with the leaves of the arrow-head, and fringed with water-flags and the flowering rush.

Now I seldom pass this spot without sparing a glance for it; first because of the pool's still beauty, and secondly because many rabbits infest the meadow below the coppice, and among them for two or three years was a black fellow whom I took an idle delight in recognising. (He is gone now, and his place knows him no more; yet I continue to hope for sight of a black rabbit just there.) But this afternoon I looked out with special interest because, happening to pass down the line two days before, I had noted a gang of navvies at work on the culvert; and among them, as they stood aside



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to let the train pass, I had recognised my friend Joby Tucker, their ganger, and an excellent fellow to boot.

Therefore my eyes were alert as we approached the curve that opens the meadow into view, and—as I am a Christian man, living in the twentieth century—I saw this vision: I beheld beneath the shade of the midmost oak eight men sitting stark naked, whereof one blew on a flute, one played a concertina, and the rest beat their palms together, marking the time; while before them, in couples on the sward, my gang of navvies rotated in a clumsy waltz watched by a ring of solemn ruminant kine!

I saw it. The whole scene, barring the concertina and the navvies' clothes, might have been transformed straight from a Greek vase of the best period. Here, in this green corner of rural England, on a workaday afternoon (a Wednesday, to be precise), in full sunlight, I saw this company of the early gods sitting, naked and unabashed, and piping, while twelve British navvies danced to their music. . . . I saw it; and a derisive whistle from the engine told me that driver and stoker saw it too. I was not dreaming then. But what on earth could it mean? For fifteen seconds or so I stared at the vision . . . and so the train joggled past it and rapt it from my eyes.

I can understand now the ancient stories of men who, having by hap surprised the goddesses bathing,



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never recovered from the shock but thereafter ran wild in the woods with their memories.

At the next station I alighted. It chanced to be the station for which I had taken my ticket; but anyhow I should have alighted there. The spell of the vision was upon me. The Norman porch might wait. It is (as I have said) used to waiting, and in fact it has waited. I have not yet made another holiday to visit it. Whether or no the market-women and the local policeman had beheld, I know not. I hope not, but now shall never know. . . . The engine-driver, leaning in converse with the stationmaster, and jerking a thumb backward, had certainly beheld. But I passed him with averted eyes, gave up my ticket, and struck straight across country for the spot.

I came to it, as my watch told me, at twenty minutes after five. The afternoon sunlight still lay broad on the meadow. The place was unchanged save for a lengthening of its oak-tree shadows. But the persons of my vision—naked gods and navvies—had vanished. Only the cattle stood, knee-deep in the pool, lazily swishing their tails in protest against the flies; and the cattle could tell me nothing.

* * * *

Just a fortnight later, as I spent at St. Blazey junction the forty odd minutes of repentance ever thoughtfully provided by our railway company for those who, living in Troy, are foolish enough to travel, I spied at some distance below the station a



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gang of men engaged in unloading rubble to construct a new siding for the clay-traffic, and at their head my friend Mr. Joby Tucker. The railway company was consuming so much of my time that I felt no qualms in returning some part of the compliment, and strolled down the line to wish Mr. Tucker good-day.

"And, by the bye," I added, "you owe me an explanation. What on earth were you doing in Treba meadow two Wednesdays ago—you and your naked friends?"

Joby leaned on his measuring rod and grinned from ear to ear.

"You see'd us?" he asked, and, letting his eyes travel along the line, he chuckled to himself softly and at length. "Well, now, I 'm glad o' that. 'Fact is, I 've been savin' up to tell 'ee about it, but (thinks I) when I tells Mr. Q. he won't never believe."

"I certainly saw you," I answered; "but as for believing——"

"Iss, iss," he interrupted, with fresh chucklings; "a fair knock-out, wasn' it? . . . You see, they was blind—poor fellas!"

"Drunk?"

"No, sir—blind—' pity the pore blind '; three-parts blind, anyways, an' undergoin' treatment for it."

"Nice sort of treatment!"

"Eh? You don't understand. See'd us from the train, did 'ee? Which train?"

"The 1.35 ex Millbay."



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"Wish I'd a-knowed you was watchin' us. I'd ha' waved my hat as you went by, or maybe blawed 'ee a kiss—that bein' properer to the occasion, come to think."

Joby paused, drew the back of a hand across his laughter-moistened eyes, and pulled himself together, steadying his voice for the story.

* * * *

"I'll tell 'ee what happened, from the beginnin'. A gang of us had been sent down, two days before, to Treba meadow, to repair the culvert there. Soon as we started to work we found the whole masonry fairly rotten, and spent the first afternoon (that was Monday) underpinnin', while I traced out the extent o' the damage. The farther I went, the worse I found it; the main mischief bein' a leak about midway in the culvert, on the down side; whereby the water, perc'latin through, was unpackin' the soil, not only behind the masonry of the culvert, but right away down for twenty yards and more behind the stone-facing where the line runs alongside the pool. All this we were forced to take down, shorein' as we went, till we cut back pretty close to the rails. The job, you see, had turned out more serious than reported; and havin' no one to consult, I kept the men at it.

"By Wednesday noon we had cut back so far as we needed, shorein' very careful as we went, and the men workin' away cheerful, with the footboards of the expresses whizzin' by close over their heads, so 's



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it felt like havin' your hair brushed by machinery. By the time we knocked off for dinner I felt pretty easy in mind, knowin' we 'd broke the back o' the job.

"Well, we touched pipe and started again. Bein' so close to the line I'd posted a fella with a flag—Bill Martin it was—to keep a look-out for the down-trains; an' about three o'clock or a little after he whistled one comin'. I happened to be in the culvert at the time, but stepped out an' back across the brook, just to fling an eye along the embankment to see that all was clear. Clear it was, an' therefore it surprised me a bit, as the train hove in sight around the curve, to see that she had her brakes on, hard, and was slowin' down to stop. My first thought was that Bill Martin must have taken some scare an' showed her the red flag. But that was a mistake; besides she must have started the brakes before openin' sight on Bill."

"Then why on earth was she pulling up?" I asked. "It couldn't be signals."

"There ain't no signal within a mile of Treba meadow, up or down. She was stoppin' because—but just you let me tell it in my own way. Along she came, draggin' hard on her brakes an' whistlin'. I knew her for an excursion, and as she passed I sized it up for a big school-treat. There was five coaches, mostly packed with children, an' on one o' the coaches was a board—'Exeter to Penzance.' The four front coaches had corridors, the tail one just ord'nary compartments.



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" Well, she dragged past us to dead-slow, an' came to a standstill with her tail coach about thirty yards beyond where I stood, and, as you might say, with its footboard right over-hangin' the pool. You mayn't remember it, but the line just there curves pretty sharp to the right, and when she pulled up, the tail coach pretty well hid the rest o' the train from us. Five or six men, hearin' the brakes, had followed me out of the culvert and stood by me, wonderin' why the stoppage was. The rest were dotted about along the slope of th' embankment. And then the curiousest thing happened—about the curiousest thing I seen in all my years on the line. A door of the tail coach opened and a man stepped out. He didn' jump out, you understand, nor fling hisself out; he just stepped out into air, and with that his arms and legs cast themselves anyways an' he went down sprawlin' into the pool. It 's easy to say we ought t' have run then an' there an' rescued 'im; but for the moment it stuck us up starin' an'—Wait a bit. You han't heard the end.

" I hadn't fairly caught my breath, before another man stepped out! He put his foot down upon nothing, same as the first, overbalanced just the same, and shot after him base-over-top into the water.

" Close 'pon the second man's heels appeared a third. . . . Yes, sir, I know now what a woman feels like when she 's goin' to have the scritches.* I 'd have asked someone to pinch me in the fleshy part o' the

* Hysterics.



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leg, to make sure I was alive an' awake, but the power o' speech was taken from us. We just stuck an' stared.

"What beat everything was the behaviour of the train, so to say. There it stood, like as if it 'd pulled up alongside the pool for the very purpose to unload these unfortnit' men; an' yet takin' no notice whatever. Not a sign o' the guard—not a head poked out anywheres in the line o' windows—only the sun shinin', an' the steam escapin', an' out o' the rear compartment this procession droppin' out an' high-divin' one after another.

"Eight of 'em! Eight, as I am a truth-speakin' man—but there! you saw 'em with your own eyes. Eight, and the last of the eight scarce in the water afore the engine toots her whistle an' the train starts on again, round the curve an' out o' sight.

"She didn' leave us no time to doubt, neither, for there the poor fellas were, splashin' an' blowin', some of 'em bleatin' for help, an' gurglin', an' for aught we know drownin' in three-to-four feet o' water. So we pulled ourselves together an' ran to give 'em first aid.

"It didn' take us long to haul the whole lot out and ashore; and, as Providence would have it, not a bone broken in the party. One or two were sufferin' from sprains, and all of 'em from shock (but so were we, for that matter), and between 'em they must ha' swallowed a bra' few pints o' water, an' muddy water at that. I can't tell ezackly when or how we



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discovered they was all blind, or near-upon blind. It may ha' been from the unhandiness of their movements an' the way they clutched at us an' at one another as we pulled 'em ashore. Hows'ever, blind they were; an' I don't remember that it struck us as anyways singular, after what we 'd been through a'ready. We fished out a concertina, too, an' a silver-mounted flute that was bobbin' among the weeds.

"The man the concertina belonged to—a tall fresh complexioned young fella he was, an' very mild of manner—turned out to be a sort o' leader o' the party; an' he was the first to talk any sense. 'Th-thank you,' he said. 'They told us Penzance was the next stop.'

"'Hey?' says I.

"'They told us,' he says again, plaintive-like, feelin' for his spectacles an' not finding 'em, 'that Penzance was the next stop.'

"'Bound for Penzance, was you?' I asks.

"'For the Land's End, 'says he, his teeth chatterin'. I set it down the man had a stammer, but 'twas only the shock an' the chill of his duckin'.

"'Well,' says I, 'this ain't the Land's End, though I dessay it feels like it. Then you wasn' thrown out?' I says.

"'Th-thrown out?' says he. 'N-no. They told us Penzance was the next stop.'

"'Then,' says I, 'if you got out accidental you 've had a most providential escape, an' me an' my mates



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don't deserve less than to hear about it. There 's bound to be inquiries after you when the guard finds your compartment empty an' the door open. May be the train 'll put back ; more likely they 'll send a search party ; but anyways you 're all wet through, an' the best thing for health is to off wi' your clothes an' dry 'em this warm afternoon.'

"'I dessay,' says he, 'you 'll have noticed that our eyesight is affected.'

"'All the better if you 're anyways modest,' says I. 'You couldn' find a retirededer place than this—not if you searched : an' *we* don't mind.'

"Well, sir, the end was we stripped 'em naked as Adam, an' spread their clothes to dry 'pon the grass. While we tended on 'em the mild young man told us how it had happened. It seems they 'd come by excursion from Exeter. There 's a blind home at Exeter, an' likewise a cathedral choir, an' Sunday school, an' a boys' brigade, with other sundries ; an' this year the good people financin' half-a-dozen o' these shows had discovered that by clubbin' two sixpences together a shillin' could be made to go as far as eighteenpence ; and how, doin' it on the co-op' instead of an afternoon treat for each, they could manage a two days' outin' for all—Exeter to Penzance an' the Land's End, sleepin' one night at Penzance, an' back to Exeter at some ungodly hour the next. It 's no use your askin' me why a man three-parts blind should want to visit the Land's End. There 's an attraction about that



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place, an' that 's all you can say. Everybody knows as tisn' worth seein', an' yet everybody wants to see it—so why not a blind man ?

" Well, this Happy Holiday Committee (as they called themselves) got the Company to fix them up with a special excursion ; an' our blind friends—bein' sensitive, or maybe a touch above mixin' wi' the school children an' infants—had packed themselves into this rear compartment separate from the others. One of 'em had brought his concertina, an' another his flute, and what with these an' other ways of passin' the time they got along pretty comfortable till they came to Gwinear Road : an' there for some reason they were held up an' had to show their tickets. Anyways, the staff at Gwinear Road went along the train collectin' the halves o' their return tickets. ' What 's the name o' this station ? " asks my blind friend, very mild an' polite. ' Gwinear Road,' answers the porter ; ' Penzance next stop.' Somehow this gave him the notion that they were nearly arrived, an' so, you see, when the train slowed down a few minutes later an' came to a stop, he took the porter at his word, an' stepped out. Simple, wasn't it ? But in my experience the curiousest things in life are the simplest of all, once you come to inquire into 'em."

" What I don't understand," said I, " is how the train came to stop just there."

Mr. Tucker gazed at me rather in sorrow than in anger. " I thought," said he, " 'twas agreed I should tell the story in my own way. Well, as I



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was sayin', we got those poor fellas there, all as naked as Adam, an' we was helpin' them all we could—some of us wringin' out their under linen an' spreading it to dry, others collectin' their hats, an' tryin' which fitted which, an' others even dredgin' the pool for their handbags an' spectacles an' other small articles, an' in the middle of it someone started to laugh. You 'll scarce believe it, but up to that moment there hadn't been so much as a smile to hand round; an' to this day I don't know the man's name that started it—for all I can tell you, I did it myself. But this I do know that it set the whole gang like a motor-engine. There was a sort of 'click,' an' the next moment——

"Laugh? I never heard men laugh like it in my born days. Sort of recoil, I s'pose it must ha' been, after the shock. Laugh? There was men staggerin' drunk with it and there was men rollin' on the turf with it; an' there was men cryin' with it, holdin' on to a stitch in their sides an' beseechin' everyone also to hold hard. The blind men took a bit longer to get going; but by gosh, sir! once started they laughed to do your heart good. O Lord, O Lord! I wish you could ha' seen that mild-mannered spokesman. Somebody had fished out his spectacles for en, and that was all the clothing he stood in—that, an' a grin. He fairly beamed; an' the more he beamed the more we rocked, callin' on en to take pity an' stop it.



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"Soon as I could catch a bit o' breath, 'Land's End next stop!' gasped I. 'O, but this is the Land's End! This is what the Land's End oughter been all the time, an' never was yet. O, for the Lord's sake,' says I, 'stop beamin', and pick up your concertina an' pitch us a tune!'

"Well, he did too. He played us 'Home, sweet home' first of all—'mid pleasure an' palaces—an' the rest o' the young men sat around en an' started clappin' their hands to the tune; an' then some fool slipped an arm round my waist. I'm only thankful he didn't kiss me. Didn't think of it, perhaps; couldn't ha' been that he wasn't capable. It must ha' been just then your train came along. An' about twenty minutes later, when we was gettin' our friends back into their outfits, we heard the search-engine about half a mile below, whistlin' an' feelin' its way up very cautious towards us.

"They was sun-dried an' jolly as sandhoppers—all their eight of 'em—as we helped 'em onboard an' wished 'em ta-ta! The search party couldn' understand at all what had happened—in so short a time, too—to make us so cordial; an' somehow we didn' explain—neither we nor the blind men. I reckon the whole business had been so loonatic we felt it kind of holy. But the pore fellas kept wavin' back to us as they went out o' sight around the curve, an' maybe for a mile beyond. I never heard," Mr. Tucker wound up meditatively, "if they ever reached the Land's End. I wonder?"



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"But, excuse me once more," said I. "How came the train to stop as it did?"

"To be sure. I said just now that the curiousest things in life were, gen'rally speakin', the simplest. One o' the schoolchildren in the fore part of the train—a small nipper of nine—had put his head out o' the carriage window and got his cap blown away. That 's all. Bein' a nipper of some resource, he wasted no time, but touched off the communicatin' button an' fetched the whole train to a standstill. George Simmons, the guard, told me all about it last week, when I happened across him an' asked the same question you 've been askin'. George was huntin' through the corridors to find out what had gone wrong; that 's how the blind men stepped out without his noticin'. He pretended to be pretty angry wi' the young tacker. 'Do 'ee know,' says George, 'it 's a five pound fine if you stop a train without good reason?' 'But I *had* a good reason,' says the child. 'My mother gave 'levenpence for that cap, an' it 's a bran' new one.'"



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# Our Lady of Gwithian

"Mary, mother, well thou be!
Mary, mother, think on me;
Sweetè Lady, maiden clean,
Shield me from ill, shame, and teen;
Shield me, Lady, from villainy
And from all wicked company!"

SPECULUM CHRISTIANI.

HERE is a little story I found one day among the legends of the Cornish Saints, like a chip in porridge. If you love simplicity, I think it may amuse you.

Lovey Bussow was wife of Daniel Bussow, a tin-streamer of Gwithian Parish. He had brought her from Camborne, and her neighbours agreed that there was little amiss with the woman if you overlooked her being a bit weak in the head. They set her down as "not exactly." At the end of a year she brought her husband a fine boy. It happened that the child was born just about the time of year the tin-merchants visited St. Michael's Mount; and the father—who streamed in a small way, and had no beast of burden but his donkey, or "naggur"—had to load up panniers and drive his tin down to the



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shore-market with the rest, which for him meant an absence of three weeks, or a fortnight at the least.

So Daniel kissed his wife and took his leave; and the neighbours, who came to visit her as soon as he was out of the way, all told her the same story—that until the child was safely baptised it behoved her to be very careful and keep her door shut for fear of the Piskies. The Piskies, or fairy-folk (they said), were themselves the spirits of children that had died unchristened, and liked nothing better than the chance to steal away an unchristened child to join their nation of mischief.

Lovey listened to them, and it preyed on her mind. She reckoned that her best course was to fetch a holy man as quickly as possible to baptise the child and make the cross over him. So one afternoon, the mite being then a bare fortnight old, she left him asleep in his cradle and, wrapping a shawl over her head, hurried off to seek Meriden the Priest.

Meriden the Priest dwelt in a hut among the sandhills, a bowshot beyond St. Gwithian's Chapel on the seaward side, as you go out to Godrevy. He had spent the day in barking his nets, and was spreading them out to dry on the short turf of the towans; but on hearing Lovey's errand, he good-naturedly dropped his occupation and, staying only to fill a bottle with holy water, walked back with her to her home.

As they drew near, Lovey was somewhat perturbed



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to see that the door, which she had carefully closed, was standing wide open. She guessed, however, that a neighbour had called in her absence, and would be inside keeping watch over the child. As she reached the threshold, the dreadful truth broke upon her: the kitchen was empty, and so was the cradle!

It made her frantic for a while. Meriden the Priest offered what consolation he could, and suggested that one of her neighbours had called indeed, and, finding the baby alone in the cottage, had taken it off to her own home to guard it. But this he felt to be a forlorn hope, and it proved a vain one. Neither search nor inquiry could trace the infant. Beyond a doubt the Piskies had carried him off.

When this was established so that even the hopefullest of the good-wives shook her head over it, Lovey grew calm of a sudden and (as it seemed) with the calm of despair. She grew obstinate too.

"My blessed cheeld!" she kept repeating. "The tender worm of en! But I'll have en back, if I've to go to the naughty place to fetch en. Why, what sort of a tale be I to pitch to my Dan'l, if he comes home and his firstborn gone?"

They shook their heads again over this. It would be a brave blow for the man, but (said one to another) he that marries a fool must look for thorns in his bed.

"What's done can't be undone," they told her. "You'd best let a two-three of us stay the night and coax 'ee from frettin'. It's bad for the system, and you so soon over child-birth."



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Lovey opened her eyes wide on them.

"Lord's sake!" she said, "you don't reckon I'm goin' to sit down under this? What?—and him the beautifullest, straightest cheeld that ever was in Gwithian Parish! Go'st thy ways home, every wan. Piskies steal my cheeld an' Dan'l's, would they? I'll pisky 'em!"

She showed them forth—"put them to doors" as we say in the Duchy—every one, the Priest included. She would have none of their consolation.

"You mean it kindly, naybors, I don't say; but tiddn' what I happen to want. I wants my cheeld back; an' I'll *have 'n* back, what 's more!"

They went their ways, agreeing that the woman was doited. Lovey closed the door upon them, bolted it, and sat for hours staring at the empty cradle. Through the unglazed window she could see the stars; and when these told her that midnight was near, she put on her shawl again, drew the bolt, and fared forth over the towans. At first the stars guided her, and the slant of the night-wind on her face; but by and by, in a dip between the hills, she spied her mark and steered for it. This was the spark within St. Gwithian's Chapel, where day and night a tiny oil lamp, with a floating wick, burned before the image of Our Lady.

Meriden the Priest kept the lamp filled, the wick trimmed, year in and year out. But he, good man, after remembering Lovey in his prayers, was laid asleep and snoring within his hut, a bowshot away.



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The chapel-door opened softly to Lovey's hand, and she crept up to Mary's image, and abased herself before it.

"Dear Aun' Mary," she whispered, "the Piskies have taken my cheeld! You d'knaw what that means to a poor female—you there, cuddlin' your liddle Jesus in the crook o' your arm. An' you d' knaw likewise what these Piskies be like; spiteful li'l toads, same as you or I might be if happen we 'd died unchristened an' hadn' no share in heaven nor hell nor middle-earth. But that 's no excuse. Aun' Mary, my dear, I want my cheeld back!" said she. That was all Lovey prayed. Without more ado she bobbed a curtsy, crept from the chapel, closed the door, and way-to-go back to her cottage.

When she reached it and struck a light in the kitchen she more than half expected to hear the child cry to her from his cradle. But, for all that Meriden the Priest had told her concerning the Virgin and her power, there the cradle stood empty.

"Well-a-well!" breathed Lovey. "The gentry are not to be hurried, I reckon. I 'll fit and lie down for forty winks," she said; "though I do think, with her experience, Mary might have remembered the poor mite would be famished afore this, not to mention that the milk in me is beginnin' to hurt cruel."

She did off some of her clothes and lay down, and even slept a little in spite of the pain in her breasts; but awoke a good two hours before dawn, to find no



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baby restored to her arms, nor even (when she looked) was it back in its cradle.

"This 'll never do," said Lovey. On went her shawl again, and once again she faced the night and hurried across the towans to St. Gwithian's Chapel. There in her niche stood Our Lady, quite as though nothing had happened, with the infant Christ in her arms and the tiny lamp burning at her feet.

"Aun' Mary, Aun' Mary," said Lovey, speaking up sharp, "this iddn' no sense 't all! A person would think time was no objic, the way you stick there starin', an' my poor cheeld leary with hunger afore now—as you, bein' a mother, oft to knaw. Fit an' fetch en home to me quick. Aw, do'ee co', that 's a dear soul!"

But Our Lady stood there and made no sign.

"I don't understand 'ee 't all," Lovey groaned. "'Tiddn' the way I'd behave in your place, and you d'knaw it."

Still Our Lady made no sign.

Lovey grew desperate.

"Aw, very well, then!" she cried. "Try what it feels like without your liddle Jesus!"

And reaching up a hand, she snatched at the Holy Child that fitted into a stone socket on Our Lady's arm. It came away in her grasp, and she fled, tucking it under her shawl.

All the way home Lovey looked for the earth to gape and swallow her, or a hand to reach down from heaven and grip her by the hair; and all the way she



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seemed to hear Our Lady's feet padding after her in the darkness. But she never stopped nor stayed until she reached home; and there, flinging in through the door and slamming-to the bolt behind her, she made one spring for the bed, and slid down in it, cowering over the small stone image.

*Rat-a-tat! tat!*—someone knocked on the door so that the cottage shook.

"Knock away!" said Lovey. "Whoever thee be, thee 'rt not my cheeld."

*Rat-a-tat! tat!*

"My cheeld wouldn' be knockin': he 's got neither strength nor sproil for it. An' you may fetch Michael and all his Angels, to tear me in pieces," said Lovey; "but till I hear my own cheeld creen to me, I 'll keep what I have!"

Thereupon Lovey sat up, listening. For outside she heard a feeble wail.

She slipped out of bed. Holding the image tight in her right arm, she drew the bolt cautiously. On the threshold, at her feet, lay her own babe, nestling in a bed of bracken.

She would have stooped at once and snatched him to her. But the stone Christling hampered her, lying so heavily in her arm. For a moment, fearing trickery, she had a mind to hurl it far out of doors into the night. . . . It would fall without much hurt into the soft sand of the towans. But on a second thought she held it forth gently in her two hands.



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"I never meant to hurt 'en, Aun' Mary," she said. "But a firstborn 's a firstborn, be we gentle or simple."

In the darkness a pair of invisible hands reached forward and took her hostage.

* * * * *

When it was known that the Piskies had repented and restored Lovey Bussow's child to her, the neighbours agreed that fools have most of the luck in this world; but came nevertheless to offer their congratulations. Meriden the Priest came also. He wanted to know how it had happened; for the Piskies do not easily surrender a child they have stolen.

Lovey—standing very demure, and smoothing her apron down along her thighs—confessed that she had laid her trouble before Our Lady.

"A miracle, then!" exclaimed his Reverence. "What height! What depth!"

"That 's of it," agreed Lovey. "Aw, b'lieve me, your Reverence, we mothers understand wan another."



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# Pilot Matthey's Christmas

PILOT MATTHEY came down to the little fishing-quay at five p.m. or thereabouts. He is an elderly man, tall and sizeable, with a grizzled beard and eyes innocent–tender as a child's, but set in deep crow's-feet at the corners, as all seamen's eyes are. It comes of facing the wind.

Pilot Matthey spent the fore-half of his life at the fishing. Thence he won his way to be a Trinity pilot, and wears such portions of an old uniform as he remembers to don. He has six sons and four daughters, all brought up in the fear of the Lord, and is very much of a prophet in our Israel. One of the sons works with him as apprentice, the other five follow the fishing.

He came down to the quay soon after tea-time, about half-an-hour before the luggers were due to put out. Some twenty-five or thirty men were already gathered, dandering to and fro with hands in pockets, or seated on the bench under the sea wall, waiting for the tide to serve. About an equal number were below in the boats, getting things ready.

There was nothing unusual about Matthey, save



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that, although it was a warm evening in August, he wore a thick pea-jacket, and had turned the collar up about his ears. Nor (if you know Cornish fishermen) was there anything very unusual in what he did, albeit a stranger might well have thought it frantic.

For some time he walked to and fro, threading his way in and out of the groups of men, walking much faster than they—at the best they were strolling—muttering the while with his head sunk low in his jacket collar, turning sharply when he reached the edge of the quay, or pausing a moment or two, and staring gloomily at the water. The men watched him, yet not very curiously. They knew what was coming.

Of a sudden he halted and began to preach. He preached of Redemption from Sin, of the Blood of the Lamb, of the ineffable bliss of Salvation. His voice rose in an agony on the gentle twilight: it could be heard—entreating, invoking, persuading, wrestling—far across the harbour. The men listened quite attentively until the time came for getting aboard. Then they stole away by twos and threes down the quay steps. Meanwhile, and all the while, preparations on the boats had been going forward.

He was left alone at length. Even the children had lost interest in him, and had run off to watch the boats as they crept out on the tide. He ceased abruptly, came across to the beach where I sat smoking my pipe, and dropped exhausted beside



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me. The fire had died out of him. He eyed me almost shamefacedly at first, by-and-by more boldly.

"I would give, sir," said Pilot Matthey, "I would give half my worldly goods to lead you to the Lord."

"I believe you," said I. "To my knowledge you have risked more than that—your life—to save men from drowning. But tell me—you that for twenty minutes have been telling these fellows how Christ feels towards them—how can you know? It is hard enough, surely, to get inside any man's feelings. How can you pretend to know what Christ feels, or felt—for an instance, in the Judgment Hall, when Peter denied?"

"Once I did, sir," said Pilot Matthey, smoothing the worn knees of his trousers. "It was just that. I 'll tell you:—

"It happened eighteen or twenty years ago, on the old *Early and Late*—yes, twenty years come Christmas, for I mind that my eldest daughter was expectin' her first man-child, just then. You saw him get aboard just now, praise the Lord! But at the time we was all nervous about it—my son-in-law, Daniel, bein' away with me on the East Coast after the herrings. I 'd as good as promised him to be back in time for it—this bein' my first grandchild, an' due (so well as we could calculate) any time between Christmas an' New Year. Well, there was



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no sacrifice, as it happened, in startin' for home—the weather up there keepin' monstrous, an' the catches not worth the labour. So we turned down Channel, the wind strong an' dead foul—south at first, then west-sou'-west—headin' us all the way, and always blowin' from just where 'twasn't wanted. This lasted us down to the Wight, and we 'd most given up hope to see home before Christmas, when almost without warnin' it catched in off the land—pretty fresh still, but steady—and bowled us down past the Bill and half-way across to the Start, merry as heart's delight. Then it fell away again, almost to a flat calm, and Daniel lost his temper. I never allowed cursin' on board the *Early and Late*—nor, for that matter, on any other boat of mine; but if Daniel didn't swear a bit out of hearin' well then—poor dear fellow, he 's dead and gone these twelve years (yes, sir—drowned)—well then I 'm doin' him an injustice. One couldn't help pitying him, neither. Didn't I know well enough what it felt like? And the awe of it, to think it 's happenin' everywhere, and ever since world began—men fretting for the wife and firstborn, and gettin' over it, and goin' down to the grave leavin' the firstborn to fret over *his* firstborn! It puts me in mind o' the old hemn, sir: 'tis in the Wesley books, and I can't think why church folk leave out the verse—

" 'The busy tribes o' flesh and blood,
With all their cares and fears'—



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Ay, 'cares and fears;' that 's of it—

"'Are carried downward by the flood,
And lost in followin' years.'

"Poor Daniel—poor boy!"

Pilot Matthey sat silent for a while, staring out over the water in the wake of the boats that already had begun to melt into the shadow of darkness.

"'Twas beautiful sunshiny weather, too, as I mind," he resumed. "One o' those calm spells that happen, as often as not, just about Christmas. I remember drawin' your attention to it, sir, one Christmas when I passed you the compliments of the season; and you put it down to kingfishers, which I thought strange at the time."

"Kingfishers?" echoed I, mystified for the moment. "Oh, yes"—as light broke on me—"Halcyon days, of course!"

"That 's right," Pilot Matthey nodded. "That 's what you called 'em. . . . It took us a whole day to work past the tides of the Start. Then, about sunset, a light draught off the land helped us to Bolt Tail, and after that we mostly drifted all night, with here and there a cat's paw, down across Bigbury Bay. By five in the morning we were inside the Eddystone, with Plymouth Sound open, and by twelve noon we was just in the very same place. It was Christmas Eve, sir.

"I looked at Daniel's face, and then a notion



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struck me. It was foolish I hadn't thought of it before.

"'See here, boys,' I says. (There was three. My second son, Sam, Daniel, and Daniel's brother, Dick, a youngster of sixteen or so.) 'Get out the boat, I says, and we 'll tow her into Plymouth. If you 're smart we may pluck her into Cattewater in time for Daniel to catch a train home. Sam can go home, too, if he has a mind, and the youngster can stay and help me look after things. I 've seen a many Christmasses,' said I, 'and I 'd as lief spend this one at Plymouth as anywhere else. You can give 'em all my love, and turn up again the day after Boxin' Day—and mind you ask for excursion tickets,' I said.

"They tumbled the boat out fast enough, you may be sure. Leastways the two men were smart enough. But the boy seemed ready to cry, so that my heart smote me. 'There!' said I, 'and Dicky can go too, if he 'll pull for it. I shan't mind bein' left to myself. A redeemed man 's never lonely—least of all at Christmas time.'

"Well, sir, they nipped into the boat, leavin' me aboard to steer; and they pulled—pulled—like as if they 'd pull their hearts out. But it happened a strongish tide was settin' out o' the Sound, and long before we fetched past the breakwater I saw there was no chance to make Cattewater before nightfall, let alone their gettin' to the railway station. I blamed myself that I hadn't thought of



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it earlier, and so, steppin' forward, I called out to them to ease up—we wouldn't struggle on for Cattewater, but drop hook in Jennycliff Bay, somewhere inside of the Merchant Shipping anchorage. As things were, this would save a good hour—more likely two hours. 'And,' said I, 'you can take the boat, all three, and leave her at Barbican steps. Tell the harbour-master where she belongs, and where I 'm laying. He 'll see she don't take no harm, and you needn't fear but I 'll get put ashore to her somehow. There 's always somebody passin' hereabouts.'

"'But look 'ee here, father,' said the boys—good boys they were, too—'What 's to happen if it comes on to blow from south or sou'-west, same as it blew at the beginning of the week?'

"'Tisn't goin' to do any such thing,' said I, for I 'd been studyin' the weather. 'And, even if it should happen, I 've signals aboard. 'Tisn't the first time, sonnies, I 've sat out a week-end on board a boat, alone wi' the Redeemer.'

"That settled it, sir. It relieved 'em a bit, too, when they spied another lugger already lyin' inside the anchorage, and made her out for a Porthleven boat, the *Maid in Two Minds*, that had been after the herrings with the rest of us up to a fortni't ago, or maybe three weeks: since when we hadn't seen her. As I told you, the weather had been cruel, and the catches next to nothing; and belike she 'd given it up earlier than we and pushed for



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home. At any rate, here she was. We knowed her owners, as fishermen do; but we'd never passed word with her, nor with any of her crew. I'd heard somewhere—but where I couldn't recollect—that the skipper was a blasphemous man, given to the drink, and passed by the name of Dog Mitchell; but 'twas hearsay only. All I noted, or had a mind to note, as we dropped anchor less than a cable length from her, was that she had no boat astern or on deck (by which I concluded the crew were ashore), and that Dog Mitchell himself was on deck. I reckernised him through the glass. He made no hail at all, but stood leanin' by the mizzen and smokin', watchin' what we did. By then the dark was comin' down.

"Well, sir, I looked at my watch, and there was no time to be choice about position; no time even for the lads to get aboard and pack their bags. I ran forward, heaved anchor, cast off tow-line, an' just ran below, and came up with an armful o' duds which I tossed into the boat as she dropped back alongside. I fished the purse out of my pocket, and two sovereigns out o' the purse. 'That'll take 'ee home and back,' said I, passin' the money to Daniel. 'So long, children! You haven't no time to spare.'

"Away they pulled, callin' back, 'God bless 'ee, father!' and the like; words I shan't forget . . . Poor Daniel! . . . And there, all of



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a sudden, was I, left to spend Christmas alone: which didn't trouble me at all.

"'Stead o' which, as you might say, havin' downed sail and made things pretty well ship-shape on deck, I went below and trimmed and lit the riding light. When I came on deck with it the *Maid in two Minds* was still in darkness. 'That 's queer,' thought I; but may be the *Early and Late's'* light reminded Dog Mitchell of his, for a few minutes later he fetched it up and made it fast, takin' an uncommon long time over the job and mutterin' to himself all the while. (For I should tell you that, the weather bein' so still and the distance not a hundred yards, I could hear every word).

"'Twas then, I think, it first came into my mind that the man was drunk, and five minutes later I was sure of it: for on his way aft he caught his foot and tripped over something—one o' the deck-leads maybe—and the words he ripped out 'twould turn me cold to repeat. His voice was thick, too, and after cursin' away for half a minute it dropped to a sort of growl, same as you 'll hear a man use when he 's full o' drink and reckons he has a grudge against somebody or something—he doesn't quite know which, or what. Thought I, ''Tis a risky game o' those others to leave a poor chap alone in that state. He might catch the boat afire, for one thing: and, for another, he might fall overboard.' It crossed my mind, too, that if he fell overboard I hadn't a boat to pull for him.



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