

RICHARD BLACKMORE

THE MAID OF
SKER

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The Maid of Sker:

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Richard Doddridge Blackmore

The Maid of Sker

CHAPTER I.

FISHERMAN DAVY A

FISH OUT OF WATER

I am but an ancient fisherman upon the coast of Glamorganshire, with work enough of my own to do, and trouble enough of my own to heed, in getting my poor living. Yet no peace there is for me among my friends and neighbours, unless I will set to and try – as they bid me twice a-day perhaps – whether I cannot tell the rights of a curious adventure which it pleased Providence should happen, off and on, amidst us, now for a good many years, and with many ins and outs to it. They assure me, also, that all good people who can read and write for ten, or it may be twenty, miles around the place I live in, will buy my book – if I can make it – at a higher price, perhaps, per lb., than they would give me even for sewin, which are the very best fish I catch: and hence provision may be found for the old age and infirmities, now gaining upon me, every time I try to go out fishing.

In this encouragement and prospect I have little faith, knowing how much more people care about what they eat than what they

read. Nevertheless I will hope for the best, especially as my evenings now are very long and wearisome; and I was counted a hopeful scholar, fifty years ago perhaps, in our village school here – not to mention the Royal Navy; and most of all, because a very wealthy gentleman, whose name will appear in this story, has promised to pay all expenses, and £50 down (if I do it well), and to leave me the profit, if any.

Notwithstanding this, the work of writing must be very dull to me, after all the change of scene, and the open air and sea, and the many sprees ashore, and the noble fights with Frenchmen, and the power of oaths that made me jump so in his Majesty's navy. God save the King, and Queen, and members of the Royal Family, be they as many as they will – and they seem, in faith, to be manifold. But His power is equal to it all, if they will but try to meet Him.

However, not to enter upon any view of politics – all of which are far beyond the cleverest hand at a bait among us – I am inditing of a thing very plain and simple, when you come to understand it; yet containing a little strangeness, and some wonder, here and there, and apt to move good people's grief at the wrongs we do one another. Great part of it fell under mine own eyes, for a period of a score of years, or something thereabout. My memory still is pretty good; but if I contradict myself, or seem to sweep beyond my reach, or in any way to meddle with things which I had better have let alone, as a humble man and a Christian, I pray you to lay the main fault thereof on the badness

of the times, and the rest upon human nature. For I have been a roving man, and may have gathered much of evil from contact with my fellow-men, although by origin meant for good. In this I take some blame to myself; for if I had polished my virtue well, the evil could not have stuck to it. Nevertheless, I am, on the whole, pretty well satisfied with myself; hoping to be of such quality as the Lord prefers to those perfect creatures with whom He has no trouble at all, and therefore no enjoyment.

But sometimes, taking up a book, I am pestered with a troop of doubts; not only about my want of skill, and language, and experience, but chiefly because I never have been a man of consummate innocence, excellence, and high wisdom, such as all these writers are, if we go by their own opinions.

Now, when I plead among my neighbours, at the mouth of the old well, all the above, my sad shortcomings, and my own strong sense of them (which perhaps is somewhat over-strong), they only pat me on the back, and smile at one another, and make a sort of coughing noise, according to my bashfulness. And then if I look pleased (which for my life I cannot help doing), they wink, as it were, at one another, and speak up like this: —

"Now, Davy, you know better. You think yourself at least as good as any one of us, Davy, and likely far above us all. Therefore, Davy the fisherman, out with all you have to say, without any French palaver. You have a way of telling things so that we can see them."

With this, and with that, and most of all with hinting about

a Frenchman, they put me on my mettle, so that I sit upon the side-stones of the old-well gallery (which are something like the companion-rail of a fore-and-after), and gather them around me, with the householders put foremost, according to their income, and the children listening between their legs; and thus I begin, but never end, the tale I now begin to you, and perhaps shall never end it.

CHAPTER II.

HUNGER DRIVES HIM A-FISHING

In the summer of the year 1782, I, David Llewellyn, of Newton-Nottage, fisherman and old sailor, was in great distress and trouble, more than I like to tell you. My dear wife (a faithful partner for eight-and-twenty years, in spite of a very quick temper) was lately gone to a better world; and I missed her tongue and her sharp look-out at almost every corner. Also my son (as fine a seaman as ever went aloft), after helping Lord Rodney to his great victory over Grass the Frenchman, had been lost in a prize-ship called the Tonner, of 54 guns and 50 °Crappos, which sank with all hands on her way home to Spithead, under Admiral Graves. His young wife (who had been sent to us to see to, with his blessing) no sooner heard of this sad affair as in the Gazette reported, and his pay that week stopped on her, but she fell into untimely travail, and was dead ere morning. So I buried my wife and daughter-in-law, and lost all chance to bury my son, between two Bridgend market-days.

Now this is not very much, of course, compared with the troubles some people have. But I had not been used to this matter, except in case of a messmate; and so I was greatly broken down, and found my eyes so weak of a morning, that I would not be seen out of doors, almost.

The only one now to keep a stir or sound of life in my little cottage, which faces to the churchyard, was my orphan grandchild "Bunny," daughter of my son just drowned, and his only child that we knew of. Bunny was a rare strong lass, five years old about then, I think; a stout and hearty-feeding child, able to chew every bit of her victuals, and mounting a fine rosy colour, and eyes as black as Archangel pitch.

One day, when I was moping there, all abroad about my bearings, and no better than water-ballasted, the while I looked at my wife's new broom, now carrying cobweb try-sails, this little Bunny came up to me as if she had a boarding-pike, and sprang into the netting hammocks of the best black coat I wore.

"Grand-da!" she said, and looked to know in what way I would look at her; "Grand-da, I must have sumkin more to eat."

"Something more to eat!" I cried, almost with some astonishment, well as I knew her appetite; for the child had eaten a barley-loaf, and two pig's feet, and a dog-fish.

"Yes, more; more bexfass, grand-da." And though she had not the words to tell, she put her hands in a way that showed me she ought to have more solid food. I could not help looking sadly at her, proud as I was of her appetite. But, recovering in a minute or two, I put a good face upon it.

"My dear, and you shall have more," I said; "only take your feet out of my pocket. Little heart have I for fishing, God knows; but a-fishing I will go this day, if mother Jones will see to you."

For I could not leave her alone quite yet, although she was

a brave little maid, and no fire now was burning. But within a child's trot from my door, and down toward the sandhills, was that famous ancient well of which I spoke just now, dedicate to St John the Baptist, where they used to scourge themselves. The village church stood here, they say, before the inroad of the sand; and the water was counted holy. How that may be, I do not know; but the well is very handy. It has a little grey round tower of stone domed over the heart of it, to which a covered way goes down, with shallow steps irregular. If it were not for this plan, the sand would overwhelm the whole of it over; even as it has overwhelmed all the departure of the spring, and the cottages once surrounding it. Down these steps the children go, each with a little brown pitcher, holding hands and groping at the sides, as they begin to feel darker. And what with the sand beneath their feet, and the narrowing of the roof above, and the shadows moving round them, and the doubt where the water begins or ends (which nobody knows at any time), it is much but what some little maid tumbles in, and the rest have to pull her out again.

For this well has puzzled all the country, and all the men of great learning, being as full of contrariety as a maiden courted. It comes and goes, in a manner, against the coming and going of the sea, which is only half a mile from it; and twice in a day it is many feet deep, and again not as many inches. And the water is so crystal-clear, that down in the dark it is like a dream. Some people say that John the Baptist had nothing to do with the making of it, because it was made before his time by the ancient

family of De Sandford, who once owned all the manors here. In this, however, I place no faith, having read my Bible to better purpose than to believe that John Baptist was the sort of man to claim anything, least of all any water, unless he came honestly by it.

In either case, it is very pretty to see the children round the entrance on a summer afternoon, when they are sent for water. They are all a little afraid of it, partly because of its maker's name, and his having his head on a charger, and partly on account of its curious ways, and the sand coming out of its "nostrils" when first it begins to flow.

That day with which I begin my story, Mrs Jones was good enough to take charge of little Bunny; and after getting ready to start, I set the thong of our latch inside, so that none but neighbours who knew the trick could enter our little cottage (or rather "mine" I should say now); and thus with conger-rod, and prawn-net, and a long pole for the bass, and a junk of pressed tobacco, and a lump of barley-bread, and a maybird stuffed with onions (just to refine the fishiness), away I set for a long-shore day, upon as dainty a summer morn as ever shone out of the heavens.

"Fisherman Davy" (as they call me all around our parts) was fifty and two years of age, I believe, that very same July, and with all my heart I wish that he were as young this very day. For I never have found such call to enter into the affairs of another world, as to forget my business here, or press upon Providence impatiently

for a more heavenly state of things. People may call me worldly-minded for cherishing such a view of this earth; and perhaps it is not right of me. However, I can put up with it, and be in no unkindly haste to say "good-bye" to my neighbours. For, to my mind, such a state of seeking, as many amongst us do even boast of, is, unless in a bad cough or a perilous calenture, a certain proof of curiosity displeasing to our Maker, and I might even say of fickleness degrading to a true Briton.

The sun came down upon my head, so that I thought of bygone days, when I served under Captain Howe, or Sir Edward Hawke, and used to stroll away upon leave, with half a hundred Jacks ashore, at Naples, or in Bermudas, or wherever the luck might happen. Now, however, was no time for me to think of strolling, because I could no longer live at the expense of the Government, which is the highest luck of all, and full of noble dignity. Things were come to such a push that I must either work or starve; and could I but recall the past, I would stroll less in the days gone by. A pension of one and eightpence farthing for the weeks I was alive (being in right of a heavy wound in capture of the *Bellona*, Frenchman of two-and-thirty guns, by his Majesty's frigate *Vesta*, under Captain Hood) was all I had to hold on by, in support of myself and Bunny, except the slippery fish that come and go as Providence orders them. She had sailed from Martinique, when luckily we fell in with her; and I never shall forget the fun, and the five hours at close quarters. We could see the powder on the other fellows' faces while they were training

their guns at us, and we showed them, with a slap, our noses, which they never contrived to hit. She carried heavier metal than ours, and had sixty more men to work it, and therefore we were obliged at last to capture her by boarding. I, like a fool, was the first that leaped into her mizen-chains, without looking before me, as ought to have been. The Frenchmen came too fast upon me, and gave me more than I bargained for.

Thus it happened that I fell off, in the very prime of life and strength, from an able-bodied seaman and captain of the foretop to a sort of lurcher along shore, and a man who must get his own living with nets and rods and suchlike. For that very beautiful fight took place in the year 1759, before I was thirty years old, and before his present most gracious Majesty came to the throne of England. And inasmuch as a villanous Frenchman made at me with a cutlash, and a power of blue oaths (taking a nasty advantage of me, while I was yet entangled), and thumped in three of my ribs before a kind Providence enabled me to relieve him of his head at a blow – I was discharged, when we came to Spithead, with an excellent character in a silk bag, and a considerable tightness of breathing, and leave to beg my way home again.

Now I had not the smallest meaning to enter into any of these particulars about myself, especially as my story must be all about other people – beautiful maidens, and fine young men, and several of the prime gentry. But as I have written it, so let it stay; because, perhaps, after all, it is well that people should

have some little knowledge of the man they have to deal with, and learn that his character and position are a long way above all attempt at deceit.

To come back once again, if you please, to that very hot day of July 1782 – whence I mean to depart no more until I have fully done with it – both from the state of the moon, I knew, and from the neap when my wife went off, that the top of the spring was likely to be in the dusk of that same evening. At first I had thought of going down straight below us to Newton Bay, and peddling over the Black Rocks towards the Ogmore river, some two miles to the east of us. But the bright sun gave me more enterprise; and remembering how the tide would ebb, also how low my pocket was, I felt myself bound in honour to Bunny to make a real push for it, and thoroughly search the conger-holes and the lobster-ledges, which are the best on all our coast, round about Pool Tavan, and down below the old house at Sker.

CHAPTER III.

THE FISH ARE AS HUNGRY AS HE IS

To fish at Sker had always been a matter of some risk and conflict; inasmuch as Evan Thomas, who lived in the ancient house there, and kept the rabbit-warren, never could be brought to know that the sea did not belong to him. He had a grant from the manor, he said, and the shore was part of the manor; and whosoever came hankering there was a poacher, a thief, and a robber. With these hard words, and harder blows, he kept off most of the neighbourhood; but I always felt that the lurch of the tide was no more than the heeling of a ship, and therefore that any one free of the sea, was free of the ebb and flow of it.

So when he began to reproach me once, I allowed him to swear himself thoroughly out, and then, in a steadfast manner, said, "Black Evan, the shore is not mine or yours. Stand you here and keep it, and I will never come again;" for in three hours' time there would be a fathom of water where we stood. And when he caught me again, I answered, "Evan Black, if you catch me inland, meddling with any of your land-goods, coneys, or hares, or partridges, give me a leathering like a man, and I must put up with it; but dare you touch me on this shore, which belongs to our lord the King, all the way under high-water mark, and by the

rod of the Red Sea I will show you the law of it."

He looked at me and the pole I bore, and, heavy and strong man as he was, he thought it wiser to speak me fair. "Well, well, Dyo, dear," he said in Welsh, having scarce any English, "you have served the King, Dyo, and are bound to know what is right and wrong; only let me know, good man, if you see any other rogues fishing here."

This I promised him freely enough, because, of course, I had no objection to his forbidding other people, and especially one vile Scotchman. Yet being a man of no liberality, he never could see even me fish there without following and abusing me, and most of all after a market-day.

That tide I had the rarest sport that ever you did see. Scarcely a conger-hole I tried without the landlord being at home, and biting savagely at the iron, which came (like a rate) upon him; whereupon I had him by the jaw, as the tax-collector has us. Scarcely a lobster-shelf I felt, tickling as I do under the weeds, but what a grand old soldier came to the portcullis of his stronghold, and nabbed the neat-hide up my fingers, and stuck thereto till I hauled him out "nolus-woluss," as we say; and there he showed his purple nippers, and his great long whiskers, and then his sides, hooped like a cask, till his knuckled legs fought with the air, and the lobes of his tail were quivering. It was fine to see these fellows, worth at least a shilling, and to pop them into my basket, where they clawed at one another. Glorious luck I had, in truth, and began to forget my troubles, and the long way home again

to a lonely cottage, and my fear that little Bunny was passing a sorry day of it. She should have a new pair of boots, and mother Jones a good Sunday dinner; and as for myself, I would think, perhaps, about half a glass of fine old rum (to remind me of the navy), and a pipe of the short cut Bristol tobacco – but that must depend upon circumstances.

Now circumstances had so much manners (contrary to their custom) that they contrived to keep themselves continually in my favour. Not only did I fetch up and pile a noble heap of oysters and mussels just at the lowest of the ebb, but after that, when the tide was flowing, and my work grew brisker – as it took me by the calves, and my feet were not cut by the mussels more than I could walk upon – suddenly I found a thing beating all experience both of the past and future.

This was, that the heat of the weather, and the soft south wind prevailing, had filled the deep salt-water pools among the rocks of Pool Tavan, and as far as Ffynnon wen, with the finest prawns ever seen or dreamed of; and also had peopled the shallow pools higher up the beach with shoals of silver mullet-fry – small indeed, and as quick as lightning, but well worth a little trouble to catch, being as fine eating as any lady in the land could long for.

And here for a moment I stood in some doubt, whether first to be down on the prawns or the mullet; but soon I remembered the tide would come first into the pools that held the prawns. Now it did not take me very long to fill a great Holland bag with these noble fellows, rustling their whiskers, and rasping their long

saws at one another. Four gallons I found, and a little over, when I came to measure them; and sixteen shillings I made of them, besides a good many which Bunny ate raw.

Neither was my luck over yet, for being now in great heart and good feather, what did I do but fall very briskly upon the grey mullet in the pools: and fast as they scoured away down the shallows, fluting the surface with lines of light, and huddling the ripples all up in a curve, as they swung themselves round on their tails with a sweep, when they could swim no further – nevertheless it was all in vain, for I blocked them in with a mole of kelp, weighted with heavy pebbles, and then baled them out at my pleasure.

Now the afternoon was wearing away, and the flood making strongly up channel by the time I came back from Ffynnon wen – whither the mullet had led me – to my headquarters opposite Sker farmhouse, at the basin of Pool Tavan. This pool is made by a ring of rocks sloping inward from the sea, and is dry altogether for two hours' ebb and two hours' flow of a good spring-tide, except so much as a little land-spring, sliding down the slippery sea-weed, may have power to keep it moist.

A wonderful place here is for wild-fowl, the very choicest of all I know, both when the sluice of the tide runs out and when it comes swelling back again; for as the water ebbs away with a sulky wash in the hollow places, and the sand runs down in little crannies, and the bladder-weeds hang trickling, and the limpets close their valves, and the beautiful jelly-flowers look no better

than chilblains, – all this void and glistening basin is at once alive with birds.

First the seapie runs and chatters, and the turn-stone pries about with his head laid sideways in a most sagacious manner, and the sanderlings glide in file, and the greenshanks separately. Then the shy curlews over the point warily come, and leave one to watch; while the brave little mallard teal, with his green triangles glistening, stands on one foot in the fresh-water runnel, and shakes with his quacks of enjoyment.

Again, at the freshening of the flood, when the round pool fills with sea (pouring in through the gate of rock), and the waves push merrily onward, then a mighty stir arises, and a different race of birds – those which love a swimming dinner – swoop upon Pool Tavan. Here is the giant grey gull, breasting (like a cherub in church) before he dowses down his head, and here the elegant kittywake, and the sullen cormorant in the shadow swimming; and the swiftest of swift wings, the silver-grey sea-swallow, dips like a butterfly and is gone; while from slumber out at sea, or on the pool of Kenfig, in a long wedge, cleaves the air the whistling flight of wild-ducks.

Standing upright for a moment, with their red toes on the water, and their strong wings flapping, in they souse with one accord and a strenuous delight. Then ensues a mighty quacking of unanimous content, a courteous nodding of quick heads, and a sluicing and a shovelling of water over shoulder-blades, in all the glorious revelry of insatiable washing.

Recovering thence, they dress themselves in a sober-minded manner, paddling very quietly, proudly puffing out their breasts, arching their necks, and preening themselves, titivating (as we call it) with their bills in and out the down, and shoulders up to run the wet off; then turning their heads, as if on a swivel, they fettle their backs and their scapular plume. Then, being as clean as clean can be, they begin to think of their dinners, and with stretched necks down they dive to catch some luscious morsel, and all you can see is a little sharp tail and a pair of red feet kicking.

Bless all their innocent souls, how often I longed to have a good shot at them, and might have killed eight or ten at a time with a long gun heavily loaded! But all these birds knew, as well as I did, that I had no gun with me; and although they kept at a tidy distance, yet they let me look at them, which I did with great peace of mind all the time I was eating my supper. The day had been too busy till now to stop for any feeding; but now there would be twenty minutes or so ere the bass came into Pool Tavan, for these like a depth of water.

So after consuming my bread and maybird, and having a good drink from the spring, I happened to look at my great flag-basket, now ready to burst with congers and lobsters and mullet, and spider-crabs for Bunny (who could manage any quantity), also with other good saleable fish; and I could not help saying to myself, "Come, after all now, Davy Llewellyn, you are not gone so far as to want a low Scotchman to show you the place where

the fish live." And with that I lit a pipe.

What with the hard work, and the heat, and the gentle splash of wavelets, and the calmness of the sunset, and the power of red onions, what did I do but fall asleep as snugly as if I had been on watch in one of his Majesty's ships of the line after a heavy gale of wind? And when I woke up again, behold, the shadows of the rocks were over me, and the sea was saluting the calves of my legs, which up to that mark were naked; and but for my instinct in putting my basket up on a rock behind me, all my noble catch of fish must have gone to the locker of Davy Jones.

At this my conscience smote me hard, as if I were getting old too soon; and with one or two of the short strong words which I had learned in the navy, where the chaplain himself stirred us up with them, up I roused and rigged my pole for a good bout at the bass. At the butt of the ash was a bar of square oak, figged in with a screw-bolt, and roven round this was my line of good hemp, twisted evenly, so that if any fish came who could master me, and pull me off the rocks almost, I could indulge him with some slack by unreeving a fathom of line. At the end of the pole was a strong loop-knot, through which ran the line, bearing two large hooks, with the eyes of their shanks lashed tightly with cobbler's ends upon whipcord. The points of the hooks were fetched up with a file, and the barbs well backened, and the whole dressed over with whale-oil. Then upon one hook I fixed a soft crab, and on the other a cuttle-fish. There were lug-worms also in my pot, but they would do better after dark, when a tumbling cod might

be on the feed.

Good-luck and bad-luck has been my lot ever since I can remember; sometimes a long spell of one, wing and wing, as you might say, and then a long leg of the other. But never in all my born days did I have such a spell of luck in the fishing way as on that blessed 10th of July 1782.

What to do with it all now became a puzzle, for I could not carry it home all at once; and as to leaving a bit behind, or refusing to catch a single fish that wanted to be caught, neither of these was a possible thing to a true-born fisherman.

At last things came to such a pitch that it was difficult not to believe that all must be the crowd and motion of a very pleasant dream. Here was the magic ring of the pool, shaped by a dance of sea-fairies, and the fading light shed doubtfully upon the haze of the quivering sea, and the silver water lifting like a mirror on a hinge, while the black rocks seemed to nod to it; and here was I pulling out big fishes almost faster than I cast in.

CHAPTER IV.

HE LANDS AN UNEXPECTED FISH

Now, as the rising sea came sliding over the coronet of rocks, as well as through the main entrance – for even the brim of the pool is covered at high water – I beheld a glorious sight, stored in my remembrance of the southern regions, but not often seen at home. The day had been very hot and brilliant, with a light air from the south; and at sunset a haze arose, and hung as if it were an awning over the tranquil sea. First, a gauze of golden colour, as the western light came through, and then a tissue shot with red, and now a veil of silvery softness, as the summer moon grew bright.

Then the quiet waves began – as their plaited lines rolled onward into frills of whiteness – in the very curl and fall, to glisten with a flitting light. Presently, as each puny breaker overshadowed the one in front, not the crest and comb alone, but the slope behind it, and the crossing flaws inshore, gleamed with hovering radiance and soft flashes vanishing; till, in the deepening of the dusk, each advancing crest was sparkling with a mane of fire, every breaking wavelet glittered like a shaken seam of gold. Thence the shower of beads and lustres lapsed into a sliding tier, moving up the sands with light, or among the pebbles breaking into a cataract of gems.

Being an ancient salt, of course I was not dismayed by this show of phosphorus, nor even much astonished, but rather pleased to watch the brightness, as it brought back to my mind thoughts of beautiful sunburnt damsels whom I had led along the shore of the lovely Mediterranean. Yet our stupid landsmen, far and wide, were panic-struck; and hundreds fell upon their knees, expecting the last trump to sound. All I said to myself was this: "No wonder I had such sport to-day; change of weather soon, I doubt, and perhaps a thunderstorm."

As I gazed at all this beauty, trying not to go astray with wonder and with weariness, there, in the gateway of black rock, with the offing dark behind her, and the glittering waves upon their golden shoulders bearing her – sudden as an apparition came a smoothly-gliding boat. Beaded all athwart the bows and down the bends with drops of light, holding stem well up in air, and the forefoot shedding gold, she came as strait toward this poor and unconverted Davy as if an angel held the tiller, with an admiral in the stern-sheets.

Hereupon such terror seized me, after the wonders of the day, that my pole fell downright into the water (of which a big fish wronged me so as to slip the hook and be off again), and it was no more than the turn of a hair but what I had run away head over heels. For the day had been so miraculous, beginning with starvation, and going on with so much heat and hard work and enjoyment, and such a draught of fishes, that a poor body's wits were gone with it; and therefore I doubt not it must have been an

especial decree of Providence that in turning round to run away I saw my big fish-basket.

To carry this over the rocks at a run was entirely impossible (although I was still pretty good in my legs), but to run away without it was a great deal more impossible for a man who had caught the fish himself; and beside the fish in the basket, there must have been more than two hundredweight of bass that would not go into it. Three hundred and a half in all was what I set it down at, taking no heed of prawns and lobsters; and with any luck in selling, it must turn two guineas.

Hence, perhaps, it came to pass (as much as from downright bravery, of which sometimes I have some little) that I felt myself bound to creep back again, under the shade of a cold wet rock, just to know what that boat was up to.

A finer floatage I never saw, and her lines were purely elegant, and she rode above the water without so much as parting it. Then, in spite of all my fear, I could not help admiring; and it struck me hotly at the heart, "Oh, if she is but a real boat, what a craft for my business!" And with that I dropped all fear. For I had not been able, for many years, to carry on my fishing as skill and knowledge warranted, only because I could not afford to buy a genuine boat of my own, and hitherto had never won the chance without the money.

As yet I could see no soul on board. No one was rowing, that was certain, neither any sign of a sail to give her steerage-way. However, she kept her course so true that surely there must

be some hand invisible at the tiller. This conclusion flurried me again, very undesirably; and I set my right foot in such a manner as to be off in a twinkling of anything unholy.

But God has care of the little souls which nobody else takes heed of; and so He ordained that the boat should heel, and then yaw across the middle of the pool; but for which black rocks alone would have been her welcome.

At once my heart came back to me; for I saw at once, as an old sailor pretty well up in shipwrecks, that the boat was no more than a derelict; and feeling that here was my chance of chances, worth perhaps ten times my catch of fish, I set myself in earnest to the catching of that boat.

Therefore I took up my pole again, and finding that the brace of fish whom I had been over-scared to land had got away during my slackness, I spread the hooks, and cast them both, with the slugs of lead upon them, and half a fathom of spare line ready, as far as ever my arms would throw.

The flight of the hooks was beyond my sight, for the phosphorus spread confusion; but I heard most clearly the thump, thump of the two leaden bobs – the heavy and the light one – upon hollow planking. Upon this I struck as I would at a fish, and the hooks got hold (or at any rate one of them), and I felt the light boat following faster as she began to get way on the haul; and so I drew her gently toward me, being still in some misgiving, although resolved to go through with it.

But, bless my heart, when the light boat glided buoyantly up

to my very feet, and the moon shone over the starboard gunwale, and without much drawback I gazed at it – behold! the little craft was laden with a freight of pure innocence! All for captain, crew, and cargo, was a little helpless child. In the stern-sheets, fast asleep, with the baby face towards me, lay a little child in white. Something told me that it was not dead, or even ailing; only adrift upon the world, and not at all aware of it. Quite an atom of a thing, taking God's will anyhow; cast, no doubt, according to the rocking of the boat, only with one tiny arm put up to keep the sun away, before it fell asleep.

Being taken quite aback with pity, sorrow, and some anger (which must have been of instinct), I laid hold of the bows of the skiff, and drew her up a narrow channel, where the land-spring found its way. The lift of a round wave helped her on, and the bladder-weed saved any chafing. A brand-new painter (by the feel) it was that I caught hold of; but instead of a hitch at the end, it had a clean sharp cut across it. Having made it fast with my fishing-pole jammed hard into a crevice of rock, I stepped on board rather gingerly, and, seating myself on the forward thwart, gazed from a respectful distance at the little stranger.

The light of the moon was clear and strong, and the phosphorus of the sea less dazing as the night grew deeper, therefore I could see pretty well; and I took a fresh plug of tobacco before any further meddling. For the child was fast asleep; and, according to my experience, they are always best in that way.

CHAPTER V.

A LITTLE ORPHAN MERMAID

By the clear moonlight I saw a very wee maiden, all in white, having neither cloak nor shawl, nor any other soft appliance to protect or comfort her, but lying with her little back upon the aftmost planking, with one arm bent (as I said before), and the other drooping at her side, as if the baby-hand had been at work to ease her crying; and then, when tears were tired out, had dropped in sleep or numb despair.

My feelings were so moved by this, as I became quite sure at last that here was a little mortal, that the tears came to mine own eyes too, she looked so purely pitiful. "The Lord in heaven have mercy on the little dear!" I cried, without another thought about it; and then I went and sat close by, so that she lay between my feet.

However, she would not awake, in spite of my whistling gradually, and singing a little song to her, and playing with her curls of hair; therefore, as nothing can last for ever, and the tide was rising fast, I was forced to give the little lady, not what you would call a kick so much as a very gentle movement of the muscles of the foot.

She opened her eyes at this, and yawned, but was much inclined to shut them again; till I (having to get home that night)

could make no further allowance for her, as having no home to go to; and upon this I got over all misgivings about the dirtiness of my jacket, and did what I had feared to do, by reason of great respect for her; that is to say, I put both hands very carefully under her, and lifted her like a delicate fish, and set her crosswise on my lap, and felt as if I understood her; and she could not have weighed more than twenty pounds, according to my heft of fish.

Having been touched with trouble lately, I was drawn out of all experience now (for my nature is not over-soft) towards this little thing, so cast, in a dream almost, upon me. I thought of her mother, well drowned, no doubt, and the father who must have petted her, and of the many times to come when none would care to comfort her. And though a child is but a child, somehow I took to that child. Therefore I became most anxious as to her state of body, and handled her little mites of feet, and her fingers, and all her outworks; because I was not sure at all that the manner of her yawning might be nothing more or less than a going out of this world almost. For think, if you can see it so, how everything was against her. To be adrift without any food, or any one to tend her, many hours, or days perhaps, with a red-hot sun or cold stars overhead, and the greedy sea beneath her!

However, there she was alive, and warm, and limp, to the best of my judgment, sad though I was to confess to myself that I knew more of bass than of babies. For it had always so pleased God that I happened to be away at sea when He thought fit to send them; therefore my legs went abroad with fear of dandling

this one, that now was come, in a way to disgrace a seaman; for if she should happen to get into irons, I never could get her out again.

Upon that matter, at any rate, I need not have concerned myself, for the child was so trim and well ballasted, also ribbed so stiff and sound, that any tack I set her on she would stick to it, and start no rope; and knowing that this was not altogether the manner of usual babies (who yaw about, and no steerage-way), I felt encouraged, and capable almost of a woman's business. Therefore I gave her a little tickle; and verily she began to laugh, or perhaps I should say by rights to smile, in a gentle and superior way – for she always was superior. And a funnier creature never lived, neither one that could cry so distressfully.

"Wake up, wake up, my deary," said I, "and don't you be afraid of me. A fine little girl I've got at home, about twice the size that you be, and goes by the name of 'Bunny.'"

"Bunny!" she said; and I was surprised, not being up to her qualities, that she could speak so clearly. Then it struck me that if she could talk like that I might as well know more about her. So I began, very craftily, with the thing all children are proud about, and are generally sure to be up to.

"Pretty little soul," I said, "how old do you call yourself?"

At this she gathered up her forehead, not being used to the way I put it, while she was trying to think it out.

"How old are you, deary?" said I, trying hard to suck up my lips and chirp, as I had seen the nurses do.

"I'se two, I'se two," she answered, looking with some astonishment; "didn't 'a know that? Hot's 'a name?"

This proof of her high standing and knowledge of the world took me for the moment a good deal off my legs, until I remembered seeing it put as a thing all must give in to, that the rising generation was beyond our understanding. So I answered, very humbly, "Deary, my name is 'old Davy.' Baby, kiss old Davy."

"I 'ill," she answered, briskly. "Old Davy, I likes 'a. I'll be a good gal, I 'ill."

"A good girl! To be sure you will. Bless my heart, I never saw such a girl." And I kissed her three or four times over, until she began to smell my plug, and Bunny was nobody in my eyes. "But what's your own name, deary, now you know old Davy's name?"

"I'se Bardie. Didn't 'a know that?"

"To be sure I did," for a little fib was needful from the way she looked at me, and the biggest one ever told would have been a charity under the circumstances.

"Pease, old Davy, I'se aye hungry," she went on ere I was right again, "and I 'ants a dink o' yater."

"What a fool I am!" cried I. "Of course you do, you darling. What an atomy you are to talk! Stop here a moment."

Setting her on the seat by herself (like a stupid, as I was, for she might have tumbled overboard), I jumped out of the boat to fetch her water from the spring-head, as well as the relics of my food from the corner of the fish-basket. And truly vexed was I with

myself for devouring of my dinner so. But no sooner was I gone, than feeling so left alone again after so much desertion, what did the little thing do but spring like a perfect grasshopper, and, slipping under the after-thwart, set off in the bravest toddle for the very bow of the boat, in fear of losing sight of me? Unluckily, the boat just happened to lift upon a bit of a wave, and, not having won her sea-legs yet in spite of that long cruise, down came poor Bardie with a thump, which hurt me more than her, I think.

Knowing what Bunny would have done, I expected a fearful roar, and back I ran to lift her up. But even before I could interfere, she was up again and all alive, with both her arms stretched out to show, and her face set hard to defy herself.

"I 'ont ky, I 'ont, I tell 'a. 'Ee see if I does now, and ma say hot a good gal I is."

"Where did you knock yourself, little wonder? Let old Davy make it well. Show old Davy the poor sore place."

"Nare it is. Gardy là! nare poor Bardie knock herself."

And she held up her short white smock, and showed me the bend of her delicate round knee as simply and kindly as could be.

"I 'ont ky; no, I 'ont," she went on, with her pretty lips screwed up. "Little brother ky, 'e know; but Bardie a gate big gal, savvy voo? Bardie too big enough to ky."

However, all this greatness vanished when a drop of blood came oozing from the long black bruise, and still more when I tried to express my deep compassion. The sense of bad-luck was too strong for the courage of even two years' growth, and

little Bardie proved herself of just the right age for crying. I had observed how clear and bright and musical her voice was for such a tiny creature; and now the sound of her great woe, and scene of her poor helpless plight, was enough to move the rocks into a sense of pity for her.

However, while she had her cry out (as the tide would never wait), I took the liberty of stowing all my fish and fishing-tackle on board of that handy little boat, which I began to admire and long for more and more every time I jumped from the rock into her foresheets. And finding how tight and crank she was, and full of spring at every step and with a pair of good ash sculls, and, most of all, discovering the snugest of snug lockers, my conscience (always a foremost feature) showed me in the strongest light that it would be a deeply ungracious, ungrateful, and even sinful thing, if I failed to thank an ever wise and overruling Providence for sending me this useful gift in so express a manner.

And taking this pious and humble view of the night's occurrence, I soon perceived a special fitness in the time of its ordering. For it happened to be the very night when Evan Thomas was out of the way, as I had been told at Nottage, and the steward of the manor safe to be as drunk as a fiddler at Bridgend; and it was not more than a few months since that envious Scotchman, Sandy Macraw (a scurvy limb of the coastguards, who lived by poaching on my born rights), had set himself up with a boat, forsooth, on purpose to rogue me and rob me the better. No

doubt he had stolen it somewhere, for he first appeared at night with it; and now here was a boat, in all honesty mine, which would travel two feet for each one of his tub!

By the time I had finished these grateful reflections, and resolved to contribute any unsold crabs to the Dissenting minister's salary (in recognition of the hand of Providence, and what he had taught me concerning it no longer ago than last Sabbath-day, when he said that the Lord would make up to me for the loss of my poor wife, though never dreaming, I must confess, of anything half so good as a boat), and by the time that I had moored this special mercy snugly, and hidden the oars, so that no vile wrecker could make off with her feloniously, that dear little child was grown quiet again, being unable to cry any more, and now beginning to watch my doings as much as I could wish, or more.

She never seemed tired of watching me, having slept out all her sleep for the moment; and as I piled up fish on fish, and they came sliding, slippery, she came shyly, eyeing them with a desire to see each one, pushing her mites of fingers out, and then drawing back in a hurry as their bellies shone in the moonlight. Some of the congers could wriggle still, and they made her scream when they did it; but the lobsters were her chief delight, being all alive and kicking. She came and touched them reverently, and ready to run if they took it amiss; and then she stroked their whiskers, crying, "Pitty, pitty! jolly, jolly!" till one great fellow, who knew no better, would have nipped her wrist

asunder if I had not ricked his claw.

"Now, deary," said I, as I drew her away, "you have brought poor old Davy a beautiful boat, and the least that he can do for you is to get you a good supper." For since her tumble the little soul had seemed neither hungry nor thirsty.

"Pease, old Davy," she answered, "I 'ants to go to mama and papa, and ickle bother and Susan."

"The devil you do!" thought I, in a whistle, not seeing my way to a fib as yet.

"Does 'ee know mama and papa, and ickle bother, old Davy?"

"To be sure I do, my deary – better than I know you, almost."

"'Et me go to them, 'et me go to them. Hot ma say about my poor leggy peggy?"

This was more than I could tell; believing her mother to be, no doubt, some thirty fathoms under water, and her father and little brother in about the same predicament.

"Come along, my little dear, and I'll take you to your mother." This was what I said, not being ready, as yet, with a corker.

"T'se yeady, old Davy," she answered; "T'se kite yeady. 'Hen 'll 'e be yeady? Peshy voo."

"Ready and steady: word of command! march!" said I, looking up at the moon, to try to help me out of it. But the only thing that I could find to help me in this trouble was to push about and stir, and keep her looking at me. She was never tired of looking at things with life or motion in them; and this I found the special business of her nature afterwards.

Now, being sure of my boat, I began to think what to do with Bardie. And many foolish ideas came, but I saw no way to a wise one, or at least I thought so then, and unhappily looked to prudence more than to gracious Providence, for which I have often grieved bitterly, ever since it turned out who Bardie was.

For the present, however (though strongly smitten with her manners, appearance, and state of shipwreck, as well as impressed with a general sense of her being meant for good-luck to me), I could not see my way to take her to my home and support her. Many and many times over I said to myself, in my doubt and uneasiness, and perhaps more times than need have been if my conscience had joined me, that it was no good to be a fool, to give way (as a woman might do) to the sudden affair of the moment, and a hot-hearted mode of regarding it. And the harder I worked at the stowing of fish, the clearer my duty appeared to me.

So by the time that all was ready for starting with this boat of mine, the sea being all the while as pretty as a pond by candle-light, it was settled in my mind what to do with Bardie. She must go to the old Sker-house. And having taken a special liking (through the goodness of my nature and the late distress upon me) to this little helpless thing, most sincerely I prayed to God that all might be ordered for the best; as indeed it always is, if we leave it to Him.

Nevertheless I ought never to have left it to Him, as every one now acknowledges. But how could I tell?

By this time she began to be overcome with circumstances, as might happen naturally to a child but two years old, after long exposure without any food or management. Scared, and strange, and tired out, she fell down anyhow in the boat, and lay like a log, and frightened me. Many men would have cared no more, but, taking the baby for dead, have dropped her into the grave of the waters. I, however, have always been of a very different stamp from these; and all the wars, and discipline, and doctrine I have encountered, never could imbue me with the cruelty of my betters. Therefore I was shocked at thinking that the little dear was dead.

CHAPTER VI.

FINDS A HOME OF SOME SORT

However, it was high time now, if we had any hope at all of getting into Sker-house that night, to be up and moving. For though Evan Thomas might be late, Moxy, his wife, would be early; and the door would open to none but the master after the boys were gone to bed. For the house is very lonely; and people no longer innocent as they used to be in that neighbourhood.

I found the child quite warm and nice, though overwhelmed with weight of sleep; and setting her crosswise on my shoulders, whence she slid down into my bosom, over the rocks I picked my way, by the light of the full clear moon, towards the old Sker-Grange, which stands a little back from the ridge of beach, and on the edge of the sandhills.

This always was, and always must be, a very sad and lonesome place, close to a desolate waste of sand, and the continual roaring of the sea upon black rocks. A great grey house, with many chimneys, many gables, and many windows, yet not a neighbour to look out on, not a tree to feed its chimneys, scarce a firelight in its gables in the very depth of winter. Of course, it is said to be haunted; and though I believe not altogether in any stories of that kind – despite some very strange things indeed which I have beheld at sea – at any rate, I would rather not hear any yarns on

that matter just before bedtime in that house; and most people would agree with me, unless I am much mistaken.

For the whole neighbourhood – if so you may call it, where there are no neighbours – is a very queer one – stormy, wild, and desolate, with little more than rocks and sand and sea to make one's choice among. As to the sea, not only dull, and void it is of any haven, or of proper traffic, but as dangerous as need be, even in good weather, being full of draughts and currents, with a tide like a mill-race, suffering also the ups and downs which must be where the Atlantic Ocean jostles with blind narrowings: it offers, moreover, a special peril (a treacherous and a shifty one) in the shape of some horrible quicksands, known as the "Sker-Weathers: " these at the will of storm and current change about from place to place, but are, for the most part, some two miles from shore, and from two to four miles long, according to circumstances; sometimes almost bare at half-tide, and sometimes covered at low water. If any ship falls into them, the bravest skipper that ever stood upon a quarter-deck can do no more than pipe to prayers, though one or two craft have escaped when the tide was rising rapidly.

As for the shore, it is no better (when once you get beyond the rocks) than a stretch of sandhills, with a breadth of flaggy marsh behind them all the way to the mouth of Neath river, some three leagues to the westward. Eastward, the scene is fairer inland, but the coast itself more rugged and steep, and scarcely more inhabited, having no house nearer than Rhwychyns, which

is only a small farm, nearly two miles from Sker-Grange, and a mile from any other house. And if you strike inland from Sker – that is to say, to the northward – there is nothing to see but sand, warren, and furze, and great fields marked with rubble, even as far as Kenfig.

Looking at that vast lonely house, there were two things I never could make out. The first was, who could ever have been mad enough to build it there? – for it must have cost a mint of money, being all of quarried and carried stone, and with no rich farm to require it. And the second thing was still worse a puzzle: how could any one ever live there?

As to the first point, the story is, that the house was built by abbots of Neath, when owners of Sker-manor, adding to it, very likely, as they followed one another; and then it was used as their manor-court, and for purposes more important, as a place of refecton, being near good fisheries, and especially Kenfig Pool, stocked with all fresh-water fish, and every kind of wild-fowl.

But upon the other question all that I can say is this: I have knocked about the world a good bit, and have suffered many trials, by the which I am, no doubt, chastened and highly rectified; nevertheless, I would rather end my life among the tomb-stones, if only allowed three farthings' worth of tobacco every day, than live with all those abbots' luxuries in that old grey house.

However, there were no abbots now, nor any sort of luxury, only a rough unpleasant farmer, a kind but slovenly wife of

his, and five great lads, notorious for pleasing no one except themselves; also a boy of a different order, as you soon shall see.

Thinking of all this, I looked with tenderness at the little dear, fallen back so fast asleep, innocent, and trustful, with her head upon my shoulder, and her breathing in my beard. Turning away at view of the house, I brought the moonlight on her face, and this appeared so pure, and calm, and fit for better company, that a pain went to my heart, as in Welsh we speak of it.

Because she was so fast asleep, and that alone is something holy in a very little child; so much it seems to be the shadow of the death itself, in their pausing fluttering lives, in their want of wit for dreaming, and their fitness for a world of which they must know more than this; also to a man who feels the loss of much believing, and what grievous gain it is to make doubt of everything, such a simple trust in Him, than whom we find no better father, such a confidence of safety at the very outset seems a happy art unknown, and tempts him back to ignorance. Well aware what years must bring, from all the ill they have brought to us, we cannot watch this simple sort without a sadness on our side, a pity, and a longing, as for something lost and gone.

In the scoop between two sandhills such a power of moonlight fell upon the face of this baby, that it only wanted the accident of her lifting bright eyes to me to make me cast away all prudence, and even the dread of Bunny. But a man at my time of life must really look to the main chance first, and scout all romantic visions; and another face means another mouth, however pretty

it may be. Moreover, I had no wife now, nor woman to look after us; and what can even a man-child do, without their apparatus? While on the other hand I knew that (however dreary Sker might be) there was one motherly heart inside it. Therefore it came to pass that soon the shadow of that dark house fell upon the little one in my arms, while with a rotten piece of timber, which was lying handy, I thumped and thumped at the old oak door, but nobody came to answer me; nobody even seemed to hear, though every knock went further and further into the emptiness of the place.

But just as I had made up my mind to lift the latch, and to walk in freely, as I would have done in most other houses, but stood upon scruple with Evan Thomas, I heard a slow step in the distance, and Moxy Thomas appeared at last – a kindly-hearted and pleasant woman, but apt to be low-spirited (as was natural for Evan's wife), and not very much of a manager. And yet it seems hard to blame her there, when I come to think of it, for most of the women are but so, round about our neighbourhood – sanding up of room and passage, and forming patterns on the floor every other Saturday, and yet the roof all frayed with cobwebs, and the corners such as, in the navy, we should have been rope-ended for.

By means of nature, Moxy was shaped for a thoroughly good and lively woman; and such no doubt she would have been, if she had had the luck to marry me, as at one time was our signification. God, however, ordered things in a different manner, and no doubt He was considering what might be most for

my benefit. Nevertheless, in the ancient days, when I was a fine young tar on leave, and all Sunday-school set caps at me (perhaps I was two-and-twenty then), the only girl I would allow to sit on the crossing of my legs, upon a well-dusted tombstone, and suck the things I carried for them (all being fond of peppermint), was this little Moxy Stradling, of good Newton family, and twelve years old at that time. She made me swear on the blade of my knife never to have any one but her; and really I looked forward to it as almost beyond a joke; and her father had some money.

"Who's there at this time of night?" cried Moxy Thomas, sharply, and in Welsh of course, although she had some English; "pull the latch, if you be honest. Evan Black is in the house."

By the tone of her voice I knew that this last was a fib of fright, and glad I was to know it so. Much the better chance was left me of disposing Bardie somewhere, where she might be comfortable.

Soon as Mrs Thomas saw us by the light of a home-made dip, she scarcely stopped to stare before she wanted the child out of my arms, and was ready to devour it, guessing that it came from sea, and talking all the while, full gallop, as women find the way to do. I was expecting fifty questions, and, no doubt, she asked them, yet seemed to answer them all herself, and be vexed with me for talking, yet to want me to go on.

"Moxy, now be quick," I said; "this little thing from out the sea – "

"Quick is it? Quick indeed! Much quick you are, old Dyo!"

she replied in English. "The darling dear, the pretty love!" for the child had spread its hands to her, being taken with a woman's dress. "Give her to me, clumsy Davy. Is it that way you do carry her?"

"Old Davy tarry me aye nicely, I tell 'a. Old Davy good and kind; and I 'ont have him called kumsy."

So spake up my two-year-old, astonishing me (as she always has done) by her wonderful cleverness, and surprising Moxy Thomas that such clear good words should come from so small a creature.

"My goodness me! you little vixen! wherever did you come from? Bring her in yourself, then, Dyo, if she thinks so much of you. Let me feel her. Not wet she is. Where-ever did you get her? Put her on this little stool, and let her warm them mites of feet till I go for bread and butter."

Although the weather was so hot, a fire of coal and driftwood was burning in the great chimney-place, for cooking of black Evan's supper; because he was an outrageous man to eat, whenever he was drunk, which (as a doctor told me once) shows the finest of all constitutions.

But truly there was nothing else of life, or cheer, or comfort, in the great sad stony room. A floor of stone, six gloomy doorways, and a black-beamed ceiling – no wonder that my little darling cowered back into my arms, and put both hands before her eyes.

"No, no, no!" she said. "Bardie doesn't 'ike it. When mama come, she be very angy with 'a, old Davy."

I felt myself bound to do exactly as Mrs Thomas ordered me, and so I carried Miss Finical to the three-legged stool of firwood which had been pointed out to me; and having a crick in my back for a moment after bearing her so far, down I set her upon her own legs, which, although so neat and pretty, were uncommonly steadfast. To my astonishment, off she started (before I could fetch myself to think) over the rough stone flags of the hall, trotting on her toes entirely, for the very life of her. Before I could guess what she was up to, she had pounced upon an old kitchen-towel, newly washed, but full of splinters, hanging on a three-legged horse, and back she ran in triumph with it – for none could say that she toddled – and with a want of breath, and yet a vigour that made up for it, began to rub with all her power, as well as a highly skilful turn, the top of that blessed three-legged stool, and some way down the sides of it.

"What's the matter, my dear?" I asked, almost losing my mind at this, after all her other wonders.

"Dirt," she replied; "degustin' dirt!" never stopping to look up at me.

"What odds for a little dirt, when a little soul is hungry?"

"Bardie a boofley kean gal, and this 'tool degustin' cochong!" was all the reply she vouchsafed me; but I saw that she thought less of me. However, I was glad enough that Moxy did not hear her, for Mrs Thomas had no unreasonable ill-will towards dirt, but rather liked it in its place; and with her its place was everywhere. But I, being used to see every cranny searched and

scoured with holy-stone, blest, moreover, when ashore, with a wife like Amphitrite (who used to come aboard of us), could thoroughly enter into the cleanliness of this Bardie, and thought more of her accordingly.

While this little trot was working, in the purest ignorance of father and of mother, yet perhaps in her tiny mind hoping to have pleased them both, back came Mrs Thomas, bringing all the best she had of comfort and of cheer for us, although not much to speak of.

I took a little hollands hot, on purpose to oblige her, because she had no rum; and the little baby had some milk and rabbit-gravy, being set up in a blanket, and made the most we could make of her. And she ate a truly beautiful supper, sitting gravely on the stool, and putting both hands to her mouth in fear of losing anything. All the boys were gone to bed after a long day's rabbiting, and Evan Black still on the spree; so that I was very pleasant (knowing my boat to be quite safe) toward my ancient sweetheart. And we got upon the old times so much, in a pleasing, innocent, teasing way, that but for fear of that vile black Evan we might have forgotten poor Bardie.

CHAPTER VII.

BOAT *VERSUS* BARDIE

Glad as I was, for the poor child's sake, that Black Evan happened to be from home, I had perhaps some reason also to rejoice on my own account. For if anything of any kind could ever be foretold about that most uncertain fellow's conduct, it was that when in his cups he would fight – with cause, if he could find any; otherwise, without it.

And in the present case, perhaps, was some little cause for fighting; touching (as he no doubt would think) not only his marital but manorial rights of plunder. Of course, between Moxy and myself all was purely harmless, each being thankful to have no more than a pleasant eye for the other; and of course, in really serious ways, I had done no harm to him; that boat never being his, except by downright piracy. Nevertheless few men there are who look at things from what I may call a large and open standing-place; and Evan might even go so far as to think that I did him a double wrong, in taking that which was his, the boat, and leaving that which should have been mine – to wit, the little maiden – as a helpless burden upon his hands, without so much as a change of clothes; and all this after a great day's sport among his rocks, without his permission!

Feeling how hopeless it would be to reason these matters out

with him, especially as he was sure to be drunk, I was glad enough to say "Good-night" to my new young pet, now fast asleep, and to slip off quietly to sea with my little frigate and its freight, indulging also my natural pride at being, for the first time in my life, a legitimate shipowner and independent deep-sea fisherman. By this time the tide was turned, of course, and running strong against me as I laid her head for Newton Bay by the light of the full moon; and proud I was, without mistake, to find how fast I could send my little crank bark against the current, having being a fine oarsman in my day, and always stroke of the captain's gig.

But as one who was well acquainted with the great dearth of honesty (not in our own parish only, but for many miles around), I could not see my way to the public ownership of this boat, without a deal of trouble and vexation. Happening so that I did not buy it, being thoroughly void of money (which was too notorious, especially after two funerals conducted to everybody's satisfaction), big rogues would declare at once, judging me by themselves, perhaps, that I had been and stolen it. And likely enough, to the back of this, they would lay me half-a-dozen murders and a wholesale piracy.

Now I have by nature the very strongest affection for truth that can be reconciled with a good man's love of reason. But sometimes it happens so that we must do violence to ourselves for the sake of our fellow-creatures. If these, upon occasion offered, are only too sure to turn away and reject the truth with a strong disgust, surely it is dead against the high and pure duty we owe

them, to saddle them with such a heavy and deep responsibility. And to take still loftier views of the charity and kindness needful towards our fellow-beings – when they hanker for a thing, as they do nearly always for a lie, and have set their hearts upon it, how selfish it must be, and inhuman, not to let them have it. Otherwise, like a female in a delicate condition, to what extent of injury may we not expose them? Now sailors have a way of telling great facts of imagination in the most straightforward and simple manner, being so convinced themselves that they care not a rope's end who besides is convinced, and who is not. And to make other people believe, the way is not to want them to do it; only the man must himself believe, and be above all reasoning.

And I was beginning to believe more and more as I went on, and the importance of it grew clearer, all about that ill-fated ship of which I had been thinking ever since the boat came in. Twelve years ago, as nearly as need be, and in the height of summer – namely, on the 3d of June 1770 – a large ship called the 'Planter's Welvard,' bound from Surinam to the Port of Amsterdam, had been lost and swallowed up near this very dangerous place. Three poor children of the planter (whose name was J. S. Jackert), on their way home to be educated, had floated ashore, or at least their bodies, and are now in Newton churchyard. The same must have been the fate of Bardie but for the accident of that boat. And though she was not a Dutchman's child, so far as one could guess, from her wonderful power of English, and no sign of Dutch build about her, she might very well have been in a Dutch ship

with her father and mother, and little brother and Susan, in the best cabin. It was well known among us that Dutch vessels lay generally northward of their true course, and from the likeness of the soundings often came up the Bristol instead of the English Channel; and that this mistake (which the set of the stream would increase) generally proved fatal to them in the absence of any lighthouse.

That some ship or other had been lost, was to my mind out of all dispute, although the weather had been so lovely; but why it must have been a Dutch rather than an English ship, and why I need so very plainly have seen the whole of it myself (as by this time I began to believe that I had done), is almost more than I can tell, except that I hoped it might be so, as giving me more thorough warrant in the possession of my prize. This boat, moreover, seemed to be of foreign build, so far as I could judge of it by moonlight: but of that hereafter.

The wonder is that I could judge of anything at all, I think, after the long and hard day's work, for a man not so young as he used to be. And rocks are most confusing things to be among for a length of time, and away from one's fellow-creatures, and nothing substantial on the stomach. They do so darken and jag and quiver, and hang over heavily as a man wanders under them, with never a man to speak to; and then the sands have such a way of shaking, and of shivering, and changing colour beneath the foot, and shining in and out with patterns coming all astray to you! When to these contrary vagaries you begin to add the

loose unprincipled curve of waves, and the up and down of light around you, and to and fro of sea-breezes, and startling noise of sea-fowl, and a world of other confusions, with roar of the deep confounding them – it becomes a bitter point to judge a man of what he saw, and what he thinks he must have seen.

It is beneath me to go on with what might seem excuses. Enough that I felt myself in the right; and what more can any man do, if you please, however perfect he may be? Therefore I stowed away my boat (well earned both by mind and body) snugly enough to defy, for the present, even the sharp eyes of Sandy Macraw, under Newton Point, where no one ever went but myself. Some of my fish I put to freshen in a solid mass of bladder-weed, and some I took home for the morning, and a stroke of business after church. And if any man in the world deserved a downright piece of good rest that night, with weary limbs and soft conscience, you will own it was Davy Llewellyn.

Sunday morning I lay abed, with Bunny tugging very hard to get me up for breakfast, until it was almost eight o'clock, and my grandchild in a bitter strait of hunger for the things she smelled. After satisfying her, and scoring at the "Jolly Sailors" three fine bass against my shot, what did I do but go to church with all my topmost togs on? And that not from respect alone for the parson, who was a customer, nor even that Colonel Lougher of Candleston Court might see me, and feel inclined to discharge me as an exemplary Churchman (when next brought up before him). These things weighed with me a little, it is useless to deny;

but my main desire was that the parish should see me there, and know that I was not abroad on a long-shore expedition, but was ready to hold up my head on a Sunday with the best of them, as I always had done.

At one time, while I ate my breakfast, I had some idea perhaps that it would be more pious almost, and create a stronger belief in me, as well as ease my own penitence with more relief of groaning, if I were to appear in the chapel of the Primitive Christians, after certain fish were gutted. But partly the fear of their singing noise (unsuitable to my head that morning after the Hollands at Sker-house), and partly my sense that after all it was but fore-castle work there, while the church was quarter-deck, and most of all the circumstance that no magistrate ever went there, led me, on the whole, to give the preference to the old concern, supported so bravely by royalty. Accordingly to church I went, and did a tidy stroke of business, both before and after service, in the way of lobsters.

We made a beautiful dinner that day, Bunny and I, and mother Jones, who was good enough to join us; and after slipping down to see how my boat lay for the tide, and finding her as right as could be, it came into my head that haply it would be a nice attention, as well as ease my mind upon some things that were running in it, if only I could pluck up spirit to defy the heat of the day, and challenge my own weariness by walking over to Sker-Manor. For of course the whole of Monday, and perhaps of Tuesday too, and even some part of Wednesday (with people

not too particular), must be occupied in selling my great catch of Saturday: so I resolved to go and see how the little visitor was getting on, and to talk with her. For though, in her weariness and wandering of the night before, she did not seem to remember much, as was natural at her tender age, who could tell what might have come to her memory by this time, especially as she was so clever? And it might be a somewhat awkward thing if the adventures which I felt really must have befallen her should happen to be contradicted by her own remembrance: for all I wanted was the truth; and if her truths contradicted mine, why, mine must be squared off to meet them; for great is truth, and shall prevail.

I thought it as well to take Bunny with me, for children have a remarkable knack of talking to one another, which they will not use to grown people; also the walk across the sands is an excellent thing for young legs, we say, being apt to crack the skin a little, and so enabling them to grow. A strong and hearty child was Bunny, fit to be rated A.B., almost, as behaved a fine sailor's daughter. And as proud as you could wish to see, and never willing to give in; so I promised myself some little sport in watching our Bunny's weariness, as the sand grew deeper, and yet her pride to the last declaring that I should not carry her.

But here I reckoned quite amiss, for the power of the heat was such – being the very hottest day I ever knew out of the tropics, and the great ridge of sandhills shutting us off from any sight of the water – that my little grandchild scarcely plodded a mile

ere I had to carry her. And this was such a heavy job among the deep dry mounds of sand, that for a time I repented much of the over-caution which had stopped me from using my beautiful new boat at once, to paddle down with the ebb to Sker, and come home gently afterwards with the flow of the tide towards evening. Nevertheless, as matters proved, it was wiser to risk the broiling.

This heat was not of the sun alone (such as we get any summer's day, and such as we had yesterday), but thickened heat from the clouds themselves, shedding it down like a burning-glass, and weltering all over us. It was, though I scarcely knew it then, the summing-up and crowning period of whole weeks of heat and drought, and indeed of the hottest summer known for at least a generation. And in the hollows of yellow sand, without a breath of air to stir, or a drop of moisture, or a firm place for the foot, but a red and fiery haze to go through, it was all a man could do to keep himself from staggering.

Hence it was close upon three o'clock, by the place the sun was in, when Bunny and I came in sight of Sker-house, and hoped to find some water there. Beer, of course, I would rather have; but never was there a chance of that within reach of Evan Thomas. And I tried to think this all the better; for half a gallon would not have gone any distance with me, after ploughing so long through sand, with the heavy weight of Bunny, upon a day like that. Only I hoped that my dear little grandchild might find something fit for her, and such as to set her up again; for never before had I seen her, high and strong as her spirit was, so overcome by the power

and pressure of the air above us. She lay in my arms almost as helpless as little Bardie, three years younger, had lain the night before; and knowing how children will go off without a man's expecting it, I was very uneasy, though aware of her constitution. So in the heat I chirped and whistled, though ready to drop myself almost; and coming in sight of the house, I tried my best to set her up again, finding half of her clothes gone down her back, and a great part of her fat legs somehow sinking into her Sunday shoes.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHILDREN WILL BE CHILDREN

The "boys of Sker," as we always called those rough fellows over at Newton, were rabbiting in the warren; according to their usual practice, on a Sunday afternoon. A loose unseemly lot of lads, from fifteen up to two-and-twenty years of age, perhaps, and very little to choose between them as to work and character. All, however, were known to be first-rate hands at any kind of sporting, or of poaching, or of any roving pleasure.

Watkin, the sixth and youngest boy, was of a different nature. His brothers always cast him off, and treated him with a high contempt, yet never could despise him. In their rough way, they could hardly help a sulky sort of love for him.

The seventh and last child had been a girl – a sweet little creature as could be seen, and taking after Watkin. But she had something on her throat from six months up to six years old; and when she died, some three months back, people who had been in the house said that her mother would sooner have lost all the boys put together, if you left Watkin out of them. How that was I cannot say, and prefer to avoid those subjects. But I know that poor black Evan swore no oath worth speaking of for one great market and two small ones, but seemed brought down to sit by himself, drinking quietly all day long.

When we came to the ancient hall (or kitchen, as now they called it), for a moment I was vexed – expecting more of a rush, perhaps, than I was entitled to. Knowing how much that young child owed me for her preservation, and feeling how fond I was of her, what did I look for but wild delight at seeing "old Davy" back again? However, it seems, she had taken up with another and forgotten me.

Watkin, the youngest boy of Sker, was an innocent good little fellow, about twelve years old at that time. Bardie had found this out already; as quickly as she found out my goodness, even by the moonlight. She had taken the lead upon Watkin, and was laying down the law to him, upon a question of deep importance, about the manner of dancing. I could dance a hornpipe with anybody, and forward I came to listen.

"No, no, no! I tell 'a. 'E mustn't do like that, Yatkin. 'E must go yound and yound like this; and 'e must hold 'a cothes out, same as I does. Gardy là! 'E must hold 'a cothes out all the time, 'e must."

The little atom, all the time she delivered these injunctions, was holding out her tiny frock in the daintiest manner, and tripping sideways here and there, and turning round quite upon tiptoe, with her childish figure poised, and her chin thrown forward; and then she would give a good hard jump, but all to the tune of the brass jew's-harp which the boy was playing for his very life. And all the while she was doing this, the amount of energy and expression in her face was wonderful. You would have thought there was nothing else in all the world that required doing

with such zeal and abandonment. Presently the boy stopped for a moment, and she came and took the knee of his trousers, and put it to her pretty lips with the most ardent gratitude.

"She must be a foreigner," said I to myself: "no British child could dance like that, and talk so; and no British child ever shows gratitude."

As they had not espied us yet, where we stood in the passage-corner, I drew Bunny backward, and found her all of a tremble with eagerness to go and help.

"More pay," said little missy, with a coaxing look; "more pay, Yarkin!"

"No, no. You must say 'more play, please, Watkin.'"

"See voo pay, Yarkin; I 'ants – more pay!" The funny thing laughed at herself while saying it, as if with some comic inner sense of her own insatiability in the matter of play.

"But how do you expect me to play the music," asked Watkin, very reasonably, "if I am to hold my clothes out all the time?"

"Can't 'a?" she replied, looking up at him with the deepest disappointment; "can't 'a pay and dance too, Yarkin? I thought 'a could do anything. I 'ants to go to my dear mama and papa and ickle bother."

Here she began to set up a very lamentable cry, and Watkin in vain tried to comfort her, till, hearing us, she broke from him.

"Nare's my dear mama, nare's my dear mama coming!" she exclaimed, as she trotted full speed to the door. "Mama! mama! here I is. And 'e mustn't scold poor Susan."

It is out of my power to describe how her little flushed countenance fell when she saw only me and Bunny. She drew back suddenly, with the brightness fading out of her eager eyes, and the tears that were in them began to roll, and her bits of hands went up to her forehead, as if she had lost herself, and the corners of her mouth came down; and then with a sob she turned away, and with quivering shoulders hid herself. I scarcely knew what to do for the best; but our Bunny was very good to her, even better than could have been hoped, although she came of a kindly race. Without standing upon ceremony, as many children would have done, up she ran to the motherless stranger, and, kneeling down on the floor, contrived to make her turn and look at her. Then Bunny pulled out her new handkerchief, of which she was proud, I can tell you, being the first she had ever owned, made from the soundest corner of mother Jones's old window-blind, and only allowed with a Sunday frock; and although she had too much respect for this to wet it with anything herself, she never for a moment grudged to wipe poor Bardie's eyes with it. Nay, she even permitted her – which was much more for a child to do – to take it into her own two hands and rub away at her eyes with it.

Gradually she coaxed her out of the cupboard of her refuge, and sitting in some posture known to none but women children, without a stool to help her, she got the little one on her lap, and stroked at her, and murmured to her, as if she had found a favourite doll in the depth of trouble. Upon the whole, I was so pleased that I vowed to myself I would give my Bunny the very

brightest halfpenny I should earn upon the morrow.

Meanwhile, the baby of higher birth – as a glance was enough to show her – began to relax and come down a little, both from her dignity and her woe. She looked at Bunny with a gleam of humour, to which her wet eyes gave effect.

"'E call that a ponkey-hankerchy? Does 'a call that a ponkey-hankerchy?"

Bunny was so overpowered by this, after all that she had done, and at the air of pity wherewith her proud ornament was flung on the floor, that she could only look at me as if I had cheated her about it. And truly I had seen no need to tell her about mother Jones and her blind. Then these little ones got up, having sense of a natural discordance of rank between them, and Bunny no longer wiped the eyes of Bardie, nor Bardie wept in the arms of Bunny. They put their little hands behind them, and stood apart to think a bit, and watched each other shyly. To see them move their mouths and fingers, and peep from the corners of their eyes, was as good as almost any play without a hornpipe in it. It made no difference, however. Very soon they came to settle it between them. The low-born Bunny looked down upon Bardie for being so much smaller, and the high-born Bardie looked down upon Bunny for being so much coarser. But neither was able to tell the other at all what her opinion was; and so, without any further trouble, they became very excellent playmates.

Doing my best to make them friends, I seized the little stranger, and gave her several good tosses-up, as well as tickles

between them; and this was more than she could resist, being, as her nature shows, thoroughly fond of any kind of pleasure and amusement. She laughed, and she flung out her arms, and every time she made such jumps as to go up like a feather. Pretty soon I saw, however, that this had gone on too long for Bunny. She put her poor handkerchief out of sight, and then some fingers into her mouth, and she looked as black as a dog in a kennel. But Bardie showed good-nature now, for she ran up to Bunny and took her hand and led her to me, and said very nicely, "Give this ickle gal some, old Davy. She haven't had no pay at all. Oh, hot boofley buckens oo's got! Jolly, jolly! Keel song grand!"

This admiration of my buttons – which truly were very handsome, being on my regulation-coat, and as good as gilt almost, with "Minotaur" (a kind of grampus, as they say) done round them – this appreciation of the navy made me more and more perceive what a dear child was come ashore to us, and that we ought to look alive to make something out of her. If she had any friends remaining (and they could scarcely have all been drowned), being, as she clearly was, of a high and therefore rich family, it might be worth ten times as much as even my boat had been to me, to keep her safe and restore her in a fat state when demanded. With that I made up my mind to take her home with me that very night, especially as Bunny seemed to have set up a wonderful fancy to her. But man sees single, God sees double, as our saying is, and her bits of French made me afraid that she might after all be a beggar.

"Now go and play, like two little dears, and remember whose day it is," I said to them both, for I felt the duty of keeping my grandchild up to the mark on all religious questions; "and be sure you don't go near the well, nor out of sight of the house at all, nor pull the tails of the chickens out, nor throw stones at the piggy-wiggy," for I knew what Bunny's tricks were. "And now, Watty, my boy, come and talk to me, and perhaps I will give you a Juneating apple from my own tree under the Clevice."

Although the heat was tremendous now (even inside those three-feet walls), the little things did as I bade them. And I made the most of this occasion to have a talk with Watkin, who told me everything he knew. His mother had not been down since dinner, which they always got anyhow; because his father, who had been poorly for some days, and feverish, and forced to lie in bed a little, came to the top of the stairs, and called, requiring some attendance. What this meant I knew as well as if I had seen black Evan there, parched with thirst and with great eyes rolling after helpless drunkenness, and roaring, with his night-clothes on, for a quart of fresh-drawn ale.

But about the shipwrecked child Watty knew scarce anything. He had found her in his bed that morning – Moxy, no doubt, having been hard pushed (with her husband in that state) what to do. And knowing how kind young Watty was, she had quartered the baby upon him. But Watkin, though gifted with pretty good English (or "Sassenach," as we call it) beyond all the rest of his family, could not follow the little creature in her manner of

talking; which indeed, as I found thereafter, nobody in the parish could do except myself, and an Englishwoman whose word was not worth taking.

"Indeed and indeed then, Mr Llewellyn," he went on in English, having an evident desire to improve himself by discourse with me, "I did try, and I did try; and my mother, she try too. Times and times, for sure we tried. But no use was the whole of it. She only shakes her head, and thinks with all her might, as you may say. And then she says 'No! I'se not hot you says. I'se two years old, and I'se Bardie. And my papa he be very angry if 'e goes on so with me. My mama yoves me, and I yove her, and papa, and ickle bother, and everybody. But not the naughty bad man, I doesn't.' That isn't true English now, I don't think; is it then, Mr Llewellyn?"

"Certainly not," I answered, seeing that my character for good English was at stake.

"And mother say she know well enough the baby must be a foreigner. On her dress it is to show it. No name, as the Christians put, but marks without any meaning. And of clothes so few upon her till mother go to the old cupboard. Rich people mother do say they must be; but dead by this time, she make no doubt."

"Boy," I replied, "your mother, I fear, is right in that particular. To me it is a subject of anxiety and sorrow. And I know perhaps more about it than any one else can pretend to do."

The boy looked at me with wonder and eagerness about it. But I gave him a look, as much as to say, "Ask no more at

present." However, he was so full of her that he could not keep from talking.

"We asked who the naughty bad man was, but she was afraid at that, and went all round the room with her eyes, and hid under mother's apron. And dreadful she cried at breakfast about her mama and her own spoon. To my heart I feel the pain when she does cry; I know I do. And then of a sudden she is laughing, and no reason for it! I never did see such a baby before. Do you think so, Mr Llewellyn?"

CHAPTER IX.

SANDHILLS TURNED TO SAND-HOLES

While I was talking thus with the boy, and expecting his mother every minute (with hope of a little refreshment when the farmer should have dropped off into his usual Sunday sleep), a very strange thing began more and more to force itself on my attention. I have said that the hall of this desolate house was large and long, and had six doorways – narrow arches of heavy stone without a door to any of them. Three of these arches were at the west and three at the east end of the room, and on the south were two old windows, each in a separate gable, high up from the floor, and dark with stone-work and with lead-work; and in the calmest weather these would draw the air and make a rattle. At the north side of the hall was nothing but dead wall, and fireplace, and cupboards, and the broad oak staircase. Having used the freedom to light a pipe, I sate with my face to the chimney-corner, where some wood-ashes were smouldering, after the dinner was done with; and sitting thus, I became aware of a presence of some sort over my right shoulder. At first I thought it was nothing more than the smoke from my own pipe, for I puffed rather hard, in anxiety about that little darling. But seeing surprise, and alarm perhaps, in Watkin's face, who sate opposite, I turned round,

and there beheld three distinct and several pillars of a brownish-yellow light standing over against the doorways of the western end.

At first I was a little scared, and the more so because the rest of the hall was darkening with a pulse of colour gradually vanishing; and for an instant I really thought that the ghosts of the wrecked child's father and mother, and perhaps her nurse, were come to declare the truth about her, and challenge me for my hesitation. But presently I called to mind how many strange things had befallen me, both at sea and on the coast, in the way of feeling and vision too, designed, however, by the Power that sends them, more to forewarn than frighten us, and, as we get used to them, to amuse or edify.

Therefore I plucked my spirit up and approached this odd appearance, and found that no part of it was visible upon the spot where it seemed to stand. But Watkin, who was much emboldened by my dauntless carriage, called out in Welsh that he could see me walking in and out of them, like so many haystacks. Upon this I took yet further courage, having a witness so close at hand, and nothing seeming to hurt me. So what did I do but go outside, without any motion of running away, but to face the thing to its utmost; and Watkin, keeping along the wall, took good care to come after me.

Here I discovered in half a second that I had been wise as well as strong in meeting the matter valiantly; for what we had seen was but the glancing – or reflection, as they call it now – of what

was being done outside. In a word, the thick and stifling heat of the day (which had gathered to a head the glaring and blazing power of the last two months of hot summer) was just beginning to burst abroad in whirlwind, hail, and thunder. All the upper heaven was covered with a spread of burning yellow; all the half-way sky was red as blood with fibres under it, and all the sides and margin looked as black as the new-tarred bends of a ship. But what threw me most astray was, that the whole was whirling, tossing upward jets of darkness, as a juggler flings his balls, yet at one time spinning round, and at the same time scowling down.

"It is a hurricane," said I, having seen some in the West Indies which began like this. Watkin knew not much of my meaning, but caught hold of my coat, and stood. And in truth it was enough to make not only a slip of a boy, but a veteran sailor, stand and fear.

Not a flash of lightning yet broke the expectation of it, nor had been a drop of rain. But to my surprise, and showing how little we know of anything, over the high land broke a sand-storm, such as they have in Africa. It had been brewing some time, most likely in the Kenfig burrows, toward the westward and the windward, although no wind was astir with us. I thought of a dance of waterspouts, such as we had twice encountered in the royal navy; once, I know, was after clearing the mouth of the Strait of Malaccas; where the other was I truly forget, having had so much to go everywhere. But this time the whirling stuff was neither water, nor smoke, nor cloud; but sand, as plain as

could be. It was just like the parson's hour-glass – only going up, not coming down, and quickly instead of slowly. And of these funnels, spinning around, and coming near and nearer, there may have been perhaps a dozen, or there may have been threescore. They differed very much in size, according to the breadth of whirlwind, and the stuff it fed upon, and the hole in the air it bored; but all alike had a tawny colour, and a manner of bulking upward, and a loose uncertain edge, often lashing off in frays; and between them black clouds galloped; and sometimes two fell into one, and bodily broke downward; then a pile (as big as Newton Rock) rose in a moment anyhow. Hill or valley made no odds; sandhill, or sand-bottom; the sand was in the place of the air, and the air itself was sand.

Many people have asked me, over and over again (because such a thing was scarcely known, except at the great storm of sand four hundred years ago, they say) – our people, ever so many times, assert their privilege to ask me (now again especially) how many of these pillars there were! I wish to tell the truth exactly, having no interest in the matter – and if I had, no other matter would it be to me; and after going into my memory deeper than ever I could have expected there would be occasion for, all I can say is this – legion was their number; because they were all coming down upon me; and how could I stop to count them?

Watkin lost his mind a little, and asked me (with his head gone under my regulation-coat) if I thought it was the judgment-day. To this question I "replied distinctly in the negative" (as the

man of the paper wrote, when I said "no" about poaching); and then I cheered young Watkin up, and told him that nothing more was wanted than to keep a weather-helm.

Before his wit could answer helm so much as to clear my meaning, the storm was on me, and broke my pipe, and filled my lungs and all my pockets, and spoiled every corner of the hat I had bought for my dear wife's funeral. I pulled back instantly (almost as quickly as boy Watkin could), and we heard the sand burst over the house, with a rattle like shot, and a roar like cannon. And being well inside the walls, we fixed our eyes on one another, in the gloom and murkiness, as much as we could do for coughing, to be sure of something.

"Where is Bardie gone?" I asked, as soon as my lungs gave speech to me: it should have been, "Where is Bunny gone?" But my head was full of the little one.

"Who can tell?" cried the boy, in Welsh, being thoroughly scared of his English. "Oh, Dyo dear, God the great only knows."

"God will guard her," I said softly, yet without pure faith in it, having seen such cruel things; but the boy's face moved me. Moreover, Bardie seemed almost too full of life for quenching; and having escaped rocks, waves, and quicksands, surely she would never be wrecked upon dry land ignobly. Nevertheless, at the mere idea of those helpless little ones out in all this raging havoc, tears came to my eyes, until the sand, of which the very house was full, crusted up and blinded them.

It was time to leave off thinking, if one meant to do any good.

The whirlwinds spun and whistled round us, now on this side, now on that; and the old house creaked and rattled as the weather pulled or pushed at it. The sand was drifted in the courtyard (without any special whirlwind) three feet deep in the north-east corner; and the sky, from all sides, fell upon us, like a mountain undermined.

"Boy, go into your mother," I said; and I thank God for enabling me, else might she have been childless. "Tell your mother not to be frightened, but to get your father up, and to have the kettle boiling."

"Oh, Dyo – dear Dyo! let me come with you, after that poor little child, and after my five brothers."

"Go in, you helpless fool," I said; and he saw the set of my countenance, and left me, though but half-content.

It needed all my strength to draw the door of the house behind me, although the wind was bent no more on one way than another, but universal uproar. And down-roar too; for it fell on my head quite as much as it jerked my legs, and took me aback, and took me in front, and spun me round, and laughed at me. Then of a sudden all wind dropped, and yellow sky was over me.

What course to take (if I had the choice) in search of those poor children, was more at first than I could judge, or bring my mind to bear upon. For as sure as we live by the breath of the Lord, the blast of His anger deadens us.

Perhaps it was my instinct only, having been so long afloat, which drove me, straight as affairs permitted, toward the margin

of the sea. And perhaps I had some desire to know how the sea itself would look under this strange visiting. Moreover, it may have come across me, without any thinking twice of it, that Bunny had an inborn trick of always running toward the sea, as behoved a sailor's daughter.

Anyhow, that way I took, so far as it was left to me to know the points of the compass, or the shape and manner of anything. For simple and short as the right road was, no simpleton or shortwitted man could have hit it, or come near it, in that ravenous weather. In the whirl and grim distortion of the air and the very earth, a man was walking (as you might say) in the depth of a perfect calm, with stifling heat upon him, and a piece of shadow to know himself by; and then, the next moment, there he was in a furious state of buffeting, baffled in front, and belaboured aback, and bellowed at under the swing of his arms, and the staggering failure of his poor legs.

Nevertheless, in the lull and the slack times, I did my utmost to get on, having more presence of mind perhaps than any landsman could have owned. Poor fellows they are when it comes to blow; and what could they do in a whirlwind?

As I began to think of them, and my luck in being a seaman, my courage improved to that degree that I was able quite heartily to commend myself to the power of God, whom, as a rule, I remember best when the world seems coming to an end. And I think it almost certain that this piety on my part enabled me to get on as I did.

For without any skill at all or bravery of mine, but only the calmness which fell upon me, as it used to do in the heat of battle, when I thought on my Maker, all at once I saw a way to elude a great deal of the danger. This was as simple as could be, yet never would have come home to a man unable to keep his wits about him.

Blurred and slurred as the whole sky was with twisted stuff and with yellowness, I saw that the whirling pillars of sand not only whirled but also travelled in one spiral only. They all came from the west, where lay the largest spread of sandhills, and they danced away to the north-east first, and then away to south of east, shaping a round like a ship with her helm up, preserving their spiral from left to right as all waterspouts do on the north of the Line.

So when a column of sand came nigh to suck me up, or to bury me – although it went thirty miles an hour, and I with the utmost care of my life could not have managed ten perhaps – by porting my helm without carrying sail, and so working a traverse, I kept the weather-gage of it and that made all the difference.

Of course I was stung in the face and neck as bad as a thousand musquitoes when the skirts of the whirl flapped round at me, but what was that to care about? It gave me pleasure to walk in such peril, and feel myself almost out of it by virtue of coolness and readiness. Nevertheless it gave me far greater pleasure, I can assure you, to feel hard ground beneath my feet, and stagger along the solid pebbles of the beach of Sker, where the sand-

storm could not come so much.

Hereupon I do believe that, in spite of all my courage – so stout and strong in the moment of trial – all my power fell away before the sense of safety. What could my old battered life matter to any one in the world, except myself and Bunny? However, I was so truly thankful to kind Providence for preserving it, that I cannot have given less than nine jumps, and said, "Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John," three times over, and in both ways.

This brought me back to the world again, as any power of piety always does when I dwell therein, and it drove me thereupon to trust in Providence no longer than the time was needful for me to recover breathing.

When I came to my breath and prudence, such a fright at first oppressed me, that I made a start for running into the foremost of the waves, thinking (if I thought at all) of lying down there, with my head kept up, and defying the sand to quench the sea.

Soon, however, I perceived that this was not advisable. Such a roar arose around me from the blows of hills and rocks, and the fretful eagerness of the sea to be at war again, and the deep sound of the distance – the voice of man could travel less than that of a sandpiper, and the foot of man might long to be the foot of a sandhopper. For the sea was rising fast up the verge of ground-swell, and a deep hoarse echo rolling down the shoaling of the surges. This to me was pleasant music, such as makes a man awake.

The colour of the sun and sky was just as I had once beholden

near the pearl-grounds of Ceylon, where the bottom of the sea comes up with a very mournful noise, and the fish sing dirges, and no man, however clear of eye, can open the sea and the sky asunder. And by this time being able to look round a little – for the air was not so full of sand, though still very thick and dusty – I knew that we were on the brink of a kind of tornado, as they call it in the tropics, – a storm that very seldom comes into these northern latitudes, being raised by violence of heat, as I have heard a surveyor say, the air going upward rapidly, with a great hole left below it.

Now as I stood on watch, as it were, and, being in such a situation, longed for more tobacco, what came to pass was exactly this – so far as a man can be exact when his wits have long been failing him.

The heaven opened, or rather seemed to be cloven by a sword-sweep, and a solid mass of lightning fell, with a cone like a red-hot anvil. The ring of black rocks received its weight, and leaped like a boiling caldron, while the stormy waters rose into a hiss and heap of steam. Then the crash of heaven stunned me.

When I came to myself it was raining as if it had never rained before. The rage of sand and air was beaten flat beneath the rain, and the fretful lifting of the sea was hushed off into bubbles. What to do I could not tell, in spite of all experience, but rubbed the sand from both my eyes, as bad as the beard of an oyster, and could see no clear way anywhere.

Now the sky was spread and traversed with a net of crossing

fires, in and out like mesh and needle, only without time to look. Some were yellow, some deep red, and some like banks of violet, and others of a pale sweet blue, like gazing through a window. They might have been very beautiful, and agreeable to consider, if they had been further off, and without that wicked crack of thunder through the roar. Worse storms I had seen, of course, in the hot world and up mountains, and perhaps thought little of them; but then there was this difference, I had always plenty of fellows with me, and it was not Sunday. Also, I then was young, and trained for cannons to be shot at me. Neither had I a boat of my own, but my dear wife was alive.

These considerations moved me to be careful of my life – a duty which increases on us after the turn of the balance; and seeing all things black behind me, and a world of storm around, knowing every hole as I did, with many commendations of myself to God for the sake of Bunny, in I went into a hole under a good solid rock, where I could watch the sea, and care for nothing but an earthquake.

CHAPTER X.

UNDER THE ROCK

For a while the power of the lightning seemed to quench the wind almost, and one continuous roar of thunder rang around the darkness. Then, with a bellow, the wind sprang forth (like a wild bull out of a mountain), and shattered the rain and drowned the thunder, and was lord of everything. Under its weight the flat sea quivered, and the crests flew into foam, and the scourge upon the waters seemed to beat them all together. The whirlwinds now were past and done with, and a violent gale begun, and in the burst and change of movement there appeared a helpless ship.

She was bearing towards Pool Tavan, as poor Bardie's boat had done, but without the summer glory and the golden wealth of waves. All was smooth and soft and gentle, as the moonlight in a glass, when the little boat came gliding with its baby captain. All was rough and hard and furious as a fight of devils, when that ship came staggering with its load of sin and woe. And yet there had not been so much as twenty-four hours between the two.

Not one of our little coasting vessels, but a full-rigged ship she loomed, of foreign build, although at present carrying no colours. I saw at once what her business was, to bring from the West Indies sugar, rum, and suchlike freight, to Bristol, or to the Dutchmen. This was in her clearance-bill; but behind that she

had other import not so clearly entered. In a word, she carried negroes from the overstocked plantations, not to be quite slaves (at least in the opinion of their masters), but to be distributed, for their own Christian benefit, at a certain sum per head, among the Bristol or Dutch merchants, or wherever it might be. And it serves them right, I always say; for the fuss that we now make about those black men must bring down the anger of the Creator, who made them black, upon us.

As the gale set to its work, and the sea arose in earnest, and the lightning drifted off into the scud of clouds, I saw, as plain as a pikestaff, that the ship must come ashore, and go to pieces very likely, before one could say "Jack Robinson." She had been on the Sker-weather sands already, and lost her rudder and some of her sternpost, as the lift of the water showed; and now there was nothing left on board her of courage or common seamanship. The truth of it was, although of course I could not know it then, that nearly all the ship's company acted as was to be expected from a lot of foreigners; that is to say, if such they were. They took to the boats in a kind of panic when first she struck among the sands in the whirlwind which began the storm. There could have been then no great sea running, only quiet rollers; and being but two miles off the shore, they hoped, no doubt, to land well enough, after leaving the stupid negroes and the helpless passengers to the will of Providence.

However, before they had rowed a mile, with the flood-tide making eastward, one of the boats was struck by lightning, and

the other caught in a whirl vorago (as the Spaniards call it), and not a soul ever came to land, and scarcely any bodies. Both these accidents were seen from Porthcawl Point by Sandy Macraw through a telescope: and much as he was mine enemy, I do him the justice to believe it; partly because he could look for no money from any lies in the matter, and still more because I have heard that some people said that they saw him see it.

But to come back to this poor ship: the wind, though blowing madly enough (as a summer gale is often hotter for a while than a winter one), had not time and sweep as yet to raise any very big rollers. The sea was sometimes beaten flat and then cast up in hillocks; but the mighty march of waters fetched by a tempest from the Atlantic was not come, and would not come in a veering storm like this. For it takes a gale of at least three tides, such as we never have in summer, to deliver the true buffet of the vast Atlantic.

Nevertheless the sea was nasty and exceeding vicious; and the wind more madly wild, perhaps, than when it has full time to blow; in short, the want of depth and power was made up by rage and spite. And for a ship not thoroughly sound and stanch in all her timbers it had been better, perhaps, to rise and fall upon long billows, with a chance of casting high and dry, than to be twirled round and plucked at, thrown on beam-ends, and taken aback, as this hapless craft was being, in the lash of rocky waters and the drift of gale and scud.

By this time she was close ashore, and not a man (except

myself) to help or even pity her. All around her was wind and rocks, and a mad sea rushing under her. The negroes, crouching in the scuppers, or clinging to the masts and rails, or rolling over one another in their want of pluck and skill, seemed to shed their blackness on the snowy spray and curdled foam, like cuttle-fish in a lump of froth. Poor things! they are grieved to die as much, perhaps, as any white man; and my heart was overcome, in spite of all I know of them.

The ship had no canvas left, except some tatters of the fore-topsail, and a piece of the main-royals; but she drifted broadside on, I daresay five or six knots an hour. She drew too much water, unluckily, to come into Pool Tavan at that time of the tide, even if the mouth had been wide enough; but crash she went on a ledge of rocks thoroughly well known to me, every shelf of which was a razor. Half a cable's length below the entrance to Pool Tavan, it had the finest steps and stairs for congers and for lobsters, whenever one could get at it in a low spring-tide; but the worst of beaks and barbs for a vessel to strike upon at half-flow, and with a violent sea, and a wind as wild as Bedlam.

With the pressure of these, she lay so much to leeward before striking (and perhaps her cargo had shifted), that the poor blackies rolled down the deck like pickling walnuts on a tray; and they had not even the chance of dying each in his own direction.

I was forced to shut my eyes; till a grey squall came, and caught her up, as if she had been a humming-top, and flung her (as we drown a kitten) into the mashing waters.

Now I hope no man who knows me would ever take me for such a fool as to dream for a moment – after all I have seen of them – that a negro is "our own flesh and blood, and a brother immortal," as the parsons begin to prate, under some dark infection. They differ from us a great deal more than an ass does from a horse; but for all that I was right down glad – as a man of loving-kindness – that such a pelt of rain came up as saved me from the discomfort – or pain, if you must have the truth – of beholding several score, no doubt, of unfortunate blacks a-drowning.

If it had pleased Providence to drown any white men with them, and to let me know it, beyond a doubt I had rushed in, though without so much as a rope to help me; and as it was, I was ready to do my very best to save them if they had only shown some readiness to be hawled ashore by a man of proper colour. But being, as negroes always are, of a most contrary nature, no doubt they preferred to drift out to sea rather than Christian burial. At any rate, none of them came near me, kindly disposed as I felt myself, and ready to tuck up my Sunday trousers at the very first sight of a woolly head. But several came ashore next tide – when it could be no comfort at all to them. And such, as I have always found, is the nature of black people.

But for me it was a sad, and, as I thought, severe, visitation to be forced on a Sabbath-day – my only holiday of the week – to meditate over a scene like this. As a truly consistent and truth-seeking Christian (especially when I go round with fish on

a Monday morning among Nonconformists), it was a bitter trial for me to reflect upon those poor negroes, gone without any sense at all, except of good Christians' wickedness, to the judgment we decree for all, except ourselves and families.

But there was worse than this behind; for after waiting as long as there seemed good chance of anything coming ashore, which might go into my pocket, without risk of my pension, and would truly be mine in all honesty – and after seeing that the wreck would not break up till the tide rose higher, though all on board were swept away – suddenly it came into my head about poor Bardie and Bunny. They were worth all the niggers that ever made coal look the colour of pipeclay; and with a depth of self-reproach which I never deserved to feel, having truly done my utmost – for who could walk in such weather? – forth I set, resolved to face whatever came out of the heavens. Verily nothing could come much worse than what was come already. Rheumatics, I mean, which had struck me there, under the rock, as a snake might. Three hours ago all the world was sweat, and now all the air was shivers. Such is the climate of our parts, and many good people rail at it, who have not been under discipline. But all who have felt that gnawing anguish, or that fiery freezing, burning at once and benumbing (like a dead bone put into the live ones, with a train of powder down it) – all these will have pity for a man who had crouched beneath a rock for at least three hours, with dripping clothes, at the age of two-and-fifty.

For a hero I never set up to be, and never came across one

until my old age in the navy, as hereafter to be related. And though I had served on board of one in my early years, off La Hague and Cape Grisnez, they told me she was only a woman that used to hold a lantern. Hero, however, or no hero, in spite of all discouragement and the aching of my bones, resolved I was to follow out the fate of those two children. There seemed to be faint hope, indeed, concerning the little stranger; but Bunny might be all alive and strong, as was right and natural for a child of her age and substance. But I was sore downcast about it when I looked around and saw the effect of the storm that had been over them. For the alteration of everything was nothing less than amazing.

It is out of my power to tell you how my heart went up to God, and all my spirit and soul was lifted into something purer, when of a sudden, in a scoop of sand, with the rushes overhanging, I came on those two little dears, fast asleep in innocence. A perfect nest of peace they had, as if beneath their Father's eye, and by His own hand made for them. The fury of the earth and sky was all around and over them; the deep revenge of the sea was rolling, not a hundred yards away; and here those two little dots were asleep, with their angels trying to make them dream.

Bunny, being the elder and much the stronger child, had thrown the skirt of her frock across poor little Bardie's naked shoulders; while Bardie, finding it nice and warm, had nestled her delicate head into the lap of her young nurse, and had tried (as it seemed), before dropping off, to tell her gratitude by pressing

Bunny's red hands to her lips. In a word, you might go a long way and scarcely see a prettier or more moving picture, or more apt to lead a man who seldom thinks of his Maker. As for me, I became so proud of my own granddaughter's goodness, and of the little lady's trust and pure repose therein, that my heart went back at once to my dead boy Harry, and I do believe that I must have wept, if I could have stopped to look at them.

But although I was truly loath to spoil this pretty picture, the poor things must be partly wet, even in that nest of rushes, which the whirlwinds had not touched. So I awoke them very gently, and shook off the sand, while they rubbed their eyes, and gaped, and knew no more of their danger than if they had been in their own dear beds. Then, with Bardie in my arms, and Bunny trotting stoutly with her thumb spliced into my trousers, I shaped a course for Sker farmhouse, having a strong gale still abaft, but the weather slightly moderating.

CHAPTER XI.

A WRECKER WRECKED

Near the gate I met Evan Thomas, the master of the house himself, at length astir, but still three-parts drunk, and – if I may say so with due compassion for the trouble then before him – in a very awkward state of mind. It happened so that the surliness of his liquor and of his nature mingled at this moment with a certain exultation, a sense of good-luck, and a strong desire to talk and be told again of it. And this is the nature of all Welshmen; directly they have any luck, they must begin to brag of it. You will find the same in me perhaps, or, at any rate, think you do, although I try to exclude it, having to deal with Englishmen, who make nothing of all the great deeds they have done until you begin to agree with them. And then, my goodness, they do come out! But the object of my writing is to make them understand us, which they never yet have done, being unlike somehow in nature, although we are much of their fathers.

Having been almost equally among both these nations, and speaking English better perhaps than my native tongue of the Cymry – of which anybody can judge who sees the manner in which I do it – it is against my wish to say what Evan Thomas looked like. His dark face, overhung with hair, and slouched with a night of drinking, was beginning to burn up, from paleness

and from weariness, into a fury of plunder. Scarcely did I know the man, although I had so many recollections of evil against him. A big, strong, clumsy fellow at all times, far more ready to smite than smile, and wholly void of that pleasant humour, which among almost all my neighbours – though never yet could I find out why – creates a pleasing eagerness for my humble society as punctual as my pension-day.

But now his reeling staggering manner of coming along towards us, and the hunching of his shoulders, and the swaggering of his head, and, most of all, the great gun he carried, were enough to make good quiet people who had been to church get behind a sandhill. However, for that it was too late. I was bound to face him. Bardie dropped her eyes under my beard, and Bunny crept closer behind my leg. For my part, although the way was narrow, and the lift of the storm gave out some light, it would have moved no resentment in me if he had seen (as rich men do) unfit to see a poor man.

However, there was no such luck. He carried his loaded gun with its muzzle representing a point of view the very last I could have desired – namely, at my midships; and he carried it so that I longed to have said a little word about carefulness. But I durst not, with his coal-black eyes fixed upon me as they were, and so I pulled up suddenly. For he had given me an imperious nod, as good as ordering me to stop.

"Wreck ashore!" he cried out in Welsh, having scarce a word of English – "wreck ashore! I smell her, Dyo. Don't tell me no

lies, my boy. I smelled her all the afternoon. And high time to have one."

"There is a wreck ashore," I answered, looking with some disgust at him, as a man who has been wrecked himself must do at a cruel wrecker; "but the ebb most likely will draw her off and drift her into the quicksands."

"Great God! speak not like that, my boy. The worst you are of everything. If those two children came ashore, there must have been something better." And he peered at the children as if to search for any gold upon them.

"Neither child came from that wreck. One is my granddaughter Bunny. Bunny, show yourself to black Evan." But the child shrank closer behind me. "Evan black, you know her well. And the other is a little thing I picked up on the coast last night."

"Ha, ha! you pick up children where you put them, I suppose. But take them indoors and be done with them. Cubs to come with a wreck ashore, a noble wreck ashore, I say! But come you down again, fisherman Dyo." He used the word "fisherman" with a peculiar stress, and a glance of suspicion at my pockets. "Come you down again, Dyo dear. I shall want you to help me against those thieves from Kenfig. Bring my other gun from the clock-case, and tell the boys to run down with their bando-sticks. I'll warrant we'll clear the shore between us; and then, good Dyo, honest Dyo, you shall have some – you shall, you dog. Fair-play, Dyo; fair share and share, though every stick is mine of right.

Ah, Dyo, Dyo, you cunning sheep's head, you love a keg of rum, you dog."

This I knew to be true enough, but only within the bounds of both honesty and sobriety. But so much talking had made his brain, in its present condition, go round again; and while I was thinking how far it might be safe and right to come into his views, his loaded gun began wagging about in a manner so highly dangerous, that for the sake of the two poor children I was obliged to get out of his way, and, looking back from a safer distance, there I beheld him flourishing with his arms on the top of a sandhill, and waving his hat on the top of his gun, for his sons to come over the warren.

Moxy Thomas was very kind; she never could help being so, and therefore never got any thanks. She stripped the two wet children at once, and put them in bed together to keep each other warm. But first she had them snugly simmering in a milk-pan of hot water with a little milk for the sake of their skins. Bunny was heavy and sleepy therein, and did nothing but yawn and stretch out her arms. Bardie, on the other hand, was ready to boil over with delight and liveliness, flashing about like a little dab-chick.

"Old Davy," she said, as I came to see her at her own invitation, and she sate quite over Bunny, "'Ill 'a have a ickle dop?" With the water up to her neck, she put one mite of a transparent finger to my grizzled mouth, and popped a large drop in, and laughed, until I could have worshipped her.

Now, having seen these two little dears fast asleep and warmly

compassed, I began, according to Evan's orders, to ask about the boys, not having seen any sign of them. Moxy said that Watkin went out to look for his five brothers about an hour after I had left, and in spite of the rain and lightning. She had tried in vain to stop him: something was on his mind, it seemed; and when she went up to attend on his father, he took the opportunity to slip out of the kitchen.

Now Moxy having been in the house, and the house away from the worst of the storm, being moreover a woman, and therefore wholly abroad about weather, it was natural that she should not have even the least idea of the jeopardy encountered by her five great sons in the warren. Enough for her that they were not at sea. Danger from weather upon dry land was out of her comprehension.

It wanted perhaps half an hour of dusk, and had given over raining, but was blowing a good reef-topsail gale, when I started to search for the sons of Sker. Of course I said nothing to make their mother at all uneasy about them, but took from the clock-case the loaded gun (as Evan had commanded me), and set forth upon the track of young Watkin, better foot foremost. For he was likely to know best what part of the warren his five great brothers had chosen for their sport that day; and in the wet sand it was easy to follow the course the boy had taken.

The whirlwinds had ceased before he went forth, and the deluge of rain was now soaked in, through the drought so long abiding. But the wind was wailing pitifully, and the rushes

swaying wearily; and the yellow baldness, here and there, of higher sandhills, caught the light. Ragged clouds ran over all, and streamers of the sunset; and the sky was like a school let loose, with the joy of wind and rain again. It is not much of me that swears, when circumstances force me; only a piece, perhaps, of custom, and a piece of honesty. These two lead one astray sometimes; and then comes disappointment. For I had let some anger vex me at the rudeness of black Evan, and the ungodliness of his sons, which forced me thus to come abroad, when full of wet and weariness. In spite of this, I was grieved and frightened, and angry with no one but myself, when I chanced upon boy Watkin, fallen into a tuft of rushes, with his blue eyes running torrents. There he lay, like a heap of trouble, as young folk do ere they learn the world; and I put him on his legs three times, but he managed to go down again. At last I got his knees to stick; but even so he turned away, and put his head between his hands, and could not say a word to me. And by the way his shoulders went, I knew that he was sobbing. I asked him what the matter was, and what he was taking so much to heart; and, not to be too long over a trifle, at last I got this out of him: —

"Oh, good Mr Llewellyn, dear, I never shall see nothing more of my great brothers five, so long as ever I do live. And when they kicked me out of bed every Sunday morning, and spread the basins over me, it was not that they meant to harm — I do feel it, I do feel it; and perhaps my knees ran into them. Under the sands, the sands, they are; and never to kick me again no more!

Of sorrow it is more than ever I can tell."

"Watty," said I, "why talk you so? Your brothers know every crick and corner of this warren, miles and miles; and could carry a sandhill among them. They are snug enough somewhere with their game, and perhaps gone to sleep, like the little ones."

Of the babies' adventures he knew nothing, and only stared at me; so I asked him what had scared him so.

"Under the sands, the sands, they are, so sure as ever I do live. Or the rabbit-bag would not be here, and Dutch, who never, never leaves them, howling at the rabbit-bag!"

Looking further through the tussocks, I saw that it was even so. Dutch, the mongrel collie, crouched beside a bag of something, with her tail curled out of sight, and her ears laid flat and listless, and her jowl along the ground. And every now and then she gave a low but very grievous howl.

"Now, boy, don't be a fool," I said, with the desire to encourage him; "soon we shall find your brothers five, with another great sack of rabbits. They left the bitch yonder to watch the sack, while they went on for more, you see."

"It is the sack; the sack it is! And no other sack along of them. Oh, Mr Llewellyn, dear, here is the bag, and there is Dutch, and never no sign at all of them!"

At this I began to fear indeed that the matter was past helping – that an accident and a grief had happened worse than the drowning of all the negroes, which it has ever pleased Providence (in a darkness of mood) to create for us. But my main desire was

to get poor Watty away at once, lest he should encounter things too dreadful for a boy like him.

"Go home," I said, "with the bag of rabbits, and give poor Dutch her supper. Your father is down on the shore of the sea, and no doubt the boys are with him. They are gone to meet a great shipwreck, worth all the rabbits all the way from Dunraven to Giant's Grave."

"But little Dutch, it is little Dutch! They never would leave her, if wreck there was. She can fetch out of the water so good almost as any dog."

I left him to his own devices, being now tired of arguing. For by this time it was growing dark; and a heavy sea was roaring; and the wreck was sure to be breaking up, unless she had been swallowed up. And the common-sense of our village, and parish, would go very hard against me for not being on the spot to keep the adjacent parish from stealing. For Kenfig and Newton are full of each other, with a fine old ancient hatred. So we climbed over the crest of high sand, where the rushes lay weltering after the wind; and then with a plunge of long strides down hill, and plucking our feet out hastily, on the watered marge we stood, to which the sea was striving.

Among the rocks black Evan leaped, with white foam rushing under him, and sallies of the stormy tide volleying to engulf him. Strong liquor still was in his brain, and made him scorn his danger, and thereby saved him from it. One timid step, and the churning waters would have made a curd of him. The fury of his

visage showed that somebody had wronged him, after whom he rushed with vengeance, and his great gun swinging.

"Sons of dogs!" he cried in Welsh, alighting on the pebbles; "may the devil feed their fathers with a melting bowl!"

"What's the rumpus now?" I asked; "what have your sons been doing?"

For he always swore at his sons as freely as at anybody's, and at himself for begetting them.

"My sons!" he cried, with a stamp of rage; "if my sons had been here, what man would have dared to do on the top of my head this thing? Where are they? I sent you for them."

"I have sought for them high and low," I answered; "here is the only one I could find."

"Watkin! What use of Watkin? A boy like a girl or a baby! I want my five tall bully-boys to help their poor father's livelihood. There's little Tom tailor gone over the sandhills with a keg of something; and Teddy shoemaker with a spar; and I only shot between them! Cursed fool! what shall I come to, not to be able to shoot a man?"

He had fired his gun, and was vexed, no doubt, at wasting a charge so randomly; then spying his other gun on my shoulder, with the flint and the priming set, he laid his heavy hand on it. I scarce knew what to do, but feared any accident in the struggle; and after all, he was not so drunk that the law would deny him his own gun.

"Ha, ha!" with a pat of the breech, he cried; "for this I owe

thee a good turn, Dyo. Thou art loaded with rocks, my darling, as the other was with cowries. Twenty to the pound of lead for any long-shore robbers. I see a lot more sneaking down. Dyo, now for sport, my boy."

I saw some people, dark in the distance, under the brow of a sandhill; and before I could speak or think, black Evan was off to run at them. I too set my feet for speed, but the strings of my legs hung backward; and Watty, who could run like a hare, seemed to lag behind me. And behind him there was little Dutch, crawling with her belly down, and her eyes turned up at us, as if we were dragging her to be hanged.

Until we heard a shout of people, through the roar of wind and sea, in front of where black Evan strode; and making towards it, we beheld, in glimmering dusk of shore and sky, something we knew nothing of.

A heavy sandhill hung above them, with its brow come over; and long roots of rushes naked in the shrillness of the wind. Under this were men at work, as we work for lives of men; and their Sunday shirt-sleeves flashed, white like ghosts, and gone again. Up to them strode Evan black, over the marge of the wild March tides; and grounded his gun and looked at them. They for a breath gazed up at him, and seemed to think and wonder; and then, as though they had not seen him, fell again a-digging.

"What means this?" he roared at them, with his great eyes flashing fire, and his long gun levelled. But they neither left their work nor lifted head to answer him. The yellow sand came sliding

down, in wedge-shaped runnels, over them, and their feet sank out of sight; but still they kept on working.

"Come away, then, Evan great; come away and seek for wreck," I shouted, while he seemed to stand in heaviness of wonder. "This is not a place for you. Come away, my man, my boy."

Thus I spoke, in Welsh of course, and threw my whole weight on his arm, to make him come away with me. But he set his feet in sand, and spread his legs, and looked at me; and the strongest man that was ever born could not have torn him from his hold, with those eyes upon him.

"Dyo, I am out of dreaming. Dyo, I must see this wreck; only take the gun from me."

This I would have done right gladly, but he changed his mind about it, falling back to a savage mood.

"You down there, who gave you leave to come and dig my sandhills? Answer, or have skins of lead."

Two or three of the men looked up, and wanted to say something. But the head-man from the mines, who understood the whole of them, nodded, and they held their tongues. Either they were brave men all (which never is without discipline), or else the sense of human death confused and overpowered them. Whatever they meant, they went on digging.

"Some damned sailor under there," cried Evan, losing patience; "little mustard-spoons of sand. Can't you throw it faster? Fine young fellows three of them, in the hole their own

ship made, last March tide, it must have been. Let us see this new batch come. They always seem to have spent their wages before they learn to drown themselves."

He laughed and laid his gun aside, and asked me for tobacco, and, trying to be sober, sang "the rising of the lark." I, for my part, shrunk away, and my flesh crawled over me.

"Work away, my lads, work away. You are all of a mind to warm yourselves. Let me know when you have done. And all you find belongs to me. I can sit and see it out, and make a list of everything. Ear-rings gold, and foreign pieces, and the trinkets they have worn. Out with them! I know them all. Fools! what use of skulking? You are on soft stuff, I see. Have out every one of them."

So they did; and laid before him, in the order of their birth, the carcasses of his five sons. Evan first, his eldest born; Thomas next, and Rees, and Hopkin, and then (with the sigh of death still in him) Jenkin, newly turned fifteen.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW TO SELL FISH

What I had seen that night upset me more than I like to dwell upon. But with all my fish on hand, I was forced to make the best of it. For a down-hearted man will turn meat, as we say, and much more, fish, to a farthing's-worth. And though my heart was sore and heavy for my ancient sweetheart Moxy, and for little Bardie in the thick of such disasters, that could be no excuse to me for wasting good fish – or at least pretty good – and losing thoroughly good money.

Here were the mullet, with less of shine than I always recommended and honestly wish them to possess; here were the prawns, with a look of paleness and almost of languishing, such as they are bound to avoid until money paid and counted; and most of all, here were lawful bass, of very great size and substance, inclined to do themselves more justice in the scales than on the dish.

I saw that this would never answer to my present high repute. Concerning questions afterwards, and people being hard upon me, out of thoughtless ignorance, that was none of my affair. The whole of that would go, of course, upon the weather and sudden changes, such as never were known before. And if good religious people would not so be satisfied with the will of Providence

to have their fish as fish are made, against them I had another reason, which never fails to satisfy.

The "burning tide," as they called it (through which poor Bardie first appeared), had been heard of far inland, and with one consent pronounced to be the result of the devil improperly flipping his tail while bathing. Although the weather had been so hot, this rumour was beyond my belief; nevertheless I saw my way, if any old customer should happen, when it came to his dinner-time, to be at all discontented (which no man with a fine appetite and a wholesome nose should indulge in) – I saw my way to sell him more, upon the following basket-day, by saying what good people said, and how much I myself had seen of it.

With these reflections I roused my spirits, and resolved to let no good fish be lost, though it took all the week to sell them. For, in spite of the laws laid down in the books (for young married women, and so forth), there is scarcely any other thing upon which both men and women may be led astray so pleasantly as why to buy fish, and when to buy fish, and what fish to buy.

Therefore I started in good spirits on the Monday morning, carrying with me news enough to sell three times the weight I bore, although it was breaking my back almost. Good fish it was, and deserved all the praise that ever I could bestow on it, for keeping so well in such shocking weather; and so I sprinkled a little salt in some of the delicate places, just to store the flavour there; for cooks are so forgetful, and always put the blame on me when they fail of producing a fine fresh smell.

Also knowing, to my sorrow, how suspicious people are, and narrow-minded to a degree none would give them credit for, I was forced to do a thing which always makes me to myself seem almost uncharitable.

But I felt that I could trust nobody to have proper faith in me, especially when they might behold the eyes of the fishes retire a little, as they are very apt to do when too many cooks have looked at them. And knowing how strong the prejudice of the public is in this respect, I felt myself bound to gratify it, though at some cost of time and trouble. This method I do not mind describing (as I am now pretty clear of the trade) for the good of my brother fishermen.

When the eyes of a fish begin to fail him through long retirement from the water, you may strengthen his mode of regarding the world (and therefore the world's regard for him) by a delicate piece of handling. Keep a ray-fish always ready – it does not matter how stale he is – and on the same day on which you are going to sell your bass, or mullet, or cod, or whatever it may be, pull a few sharp spines, as clear as you can, out of this good ray. Then open the mouth of your languid fish and embolden the aspect of either eye by fetching it up from despondency with a skewer of proper length extended from one ball to the other. It is almost sure to drop out in the cooking; and even if it fails to do so, none will be the wiser, but take it for a provision of nature – as indeed it ought to be.

Now, if anybody is rude enough to gainsay your fish in the

market, you have the evidence of the eyes and hands against that of the nose alone. "Why, bless me, madam," I used to say, "a lady like you, that understands fish a great deal better than I do! His eyes are coming out of his head, ma'am, to hear you say such things of him. Afloat he was at four this morning, and his eyes will speak to it." And so he was, well afloat in my tub, before I began to prepare him for a last appeal to the public. Only they must not float too long, or the scales will not be stiff enough.

Being up to a few of these things, and feeling very keenly how hard the public always tries to get upper hand of me, and would beat me down to half nothing a pound (if allowed altogether its own way), I fought very bravely the whole of that Monday to turn a few honest shillings. "Good old Davy, fine old Davy, brave old Davy!" they said I was every time I abated a halfpenny; and I called them generous gentlemen and Christian-minded ladies every time they wanted to smell my fish, which is not right before payment. What right has any man to disparage the property of another? When you have bought him, he is your own, and you have the title to canvas him; but when he is put in the scales, remember "nothing but good of the dead," if you remember anything.

As I sate by the cross roads in Bridgend on the bottom of a bucket, and with a four-legged dressing-table (hired for twopence) in front of me, who should come up but the well-known Brother Hezekiah? Truly tired I was getting, after plodding through Merthyr Mawr, Ogmore, and Ewenny,

Llaleston, and Newcastle, and driven at last to the town of Bridgend. For some of my fish had a gamesome odour, when first I set off in the morning; and although the rain had cooled down the air, it was now become an unwise thing to recommend what still remained to any man of unchristian spirit, or possessing the ear of the magistrates.

Now perhaps I should not say this thing, and many may think me inclined to vaunt, and call me an old coxcomb; but if any man could sell stinking fish in the times of which I am writing – and then it was ten times harder than now, because women looked after marketing – that man I verily believe was this old Davy Llewellyn; and right he has to be proud of it. But what were left on my hands that evening were beginning to get so strong, that I feared they must go over Bridgend bridge into the river Ogmore.

The big coach with the London letters, which came then almost twice a-week, was just gone on, after stopping three hours to rest the horses and feed the people; and I had done some business with them, for London folk for the most part have a kind and pleasing ignorance. They paid me well, and I served them well with fish of a fine high flavour; but now I had some which I would not offer to such kind-hearted gentry.

Hezekiah wanted fish. I saw it by his nostrils, and I knew it for certain when he pretended not to see me or my standing. He went a good bit round the corner, as if to deal with the ironmonger. But for all that, I knew as well as if I could hear his wife beginning to rake the fire, that fish for supper was the business which had

brought him across the bridge. Therefore I refused an offer which I would have jumped at before seeing Hezekiah, of twopence a-pound for the residue from an old woman who sold pickles; and I made up my mind to keep up the price, knowing the man to have ten in family, and all blessed with good appetites.

"What, Davy! Brother Davy!" he cried, being compelled to begin, because I took care not to look at him. "Has it been so ordered that I behold good brother Davy with fish upon a Monday?" His object in this was plain enough – to beat down my goods by terror of an information for Sabbath-labour.

"The Lord has been merciful to me," I answered, patting my best fish on his shoulder; "not only in sending them straight to my net, at nine o'clock this morning; but also, brother Hezekiah, in the hunger all people have for them. I would that I could have kept thee a taste; not soon wouldst thou forget it. Sweeter fish and finer fish never came out of Newton Bay" – this I said because Newton Bay is famous for high quality. "But, brother Hezekiah, thou art come too late." And I began to pack up very hastily.

"What!" cried Hezekiah, with a keen and hungrily grievous voice; "all those fish bespoken, Davy?"

"Every one of them bespoken, brother; by a man who knows a right down good bass, better almost than I do. Griffy, the 'Cat and Snuffers.'"

Now, Griffith, who kept the "Cat and Snuffers," was a very jovial man, and a bitter enemy to Hezekiah Perkins; and I knew that the latter would gladly offer a penny a-pound upon Griffy's

back, to spoil him of his supper, and to make him offend his customers.

"Stop, brother Davy," cried Hezekiah, stretching out his broad fat hands, as I began to pack my fish, with the freshest smellers uppermost; "Davy dear, this is not right, nor like our ancient friendship. A rogue like Griffy to cheat you so! What had he beaten you down to, Davy?"

"Beaten me down!" I said, all in a hurry; "is it likely I would be beaten down, with their eyes coming out of their heads like that?"

"Now, dear brother Dyo, do have patience! What was he going to give you a-pound?"

"Fourpence a-pound, and ten pound of them. Three-and-fourpence for a lot like that! Ah, the times are bad indeed!"

"Dear brother Dyo, fourpence-halfpenny! Three-and-nine down, for the lot as it stands."

"Hezekiah, for what do you take me? Cut a farthing in four, when you get it. Do I look a likely man to be a rogue for fivepence?"

"No, no, Davy; don't be angry with me. Say as much as tenpence. Four-and-twopence, ready money; and no Irish coinage."

"Brother Hezekiah," said I, "a bargain struck is a bargain kept. Rob a man of his supper for tenpence!"

"Oh, Dyo, Dyo! you never would think of that man's supper, with my wife longing for fish so! Such a family as we have, and the weakness in Hepzibah's back! Five shillings for the five,

Davy."

"There, there; take them along," I cried at last, with a groan from my chest: "you are bound to be the ruin of me. But what can I do with a delicate lady? Brother, surely you have been a little too hard upon me. Whatever shall I find to say to a man who never beats me down?"

"Tell that worldly 'Cat and Snuffers' that your fish were much too good – why, Davy, they seem to smell a little!"

"And small use they would be, Hezekiah, either for taste or for nourishment, unless they had the sea-smell now. Brother, all your money back, and the fish to poor Griffy, if you know not the smell of salt water yet."

"Now, don't you be so hot, old Davy. The fish are good enough, no doubt; and it may be from the skewer-wood; but they have a sort, not to say a smell, but a manner of reminding one – "

"Of the savoury stuff they feed on," said I; "and the thorough good use they make of it. A fish must eat, and so must we, and little blame to both of us."

With that he bade me "good-night," and went with alacrity towards his supper, scornfully sneering as he passed the door of the "Cat and Snuffers." But though it was a fine thing for me, and an especial Providence, to finish off my stock so well, at a time when I would have taken gladly a shilling for the lot of it, yet I felt that circumstances were against my lingering. Even if Hezekiah, unable to enter into the vein of my fish, should find himself too fat to hurry down the steep hill after me, still there

were many other people, fit for supper, and fresh for it, from the sudden coolness, whom it was my duty now to preserve from mischief; by leaving proper interval for consideration, before I might happen to be in front of their dining room windows another day.

Therefore, with a grateful sense of goodwill to all customers, I thought it better to be off. There I had been, for several hours, ready to prove anything, but never challenged by anybody; and my spirit had grown accordingly. But I never yet have found it wise to overlie success. Win it, and look at it, and be off, is the quickest way to get some more. So I scarcely even called so much as a pint at the "Cat and Snuffers," to have a laugh with Griffy; but set off for Newton, along the old road, with a good smart heel, and a fine day's business, and a light heart inside of me.

When I had passed Red-hill and Tythegston, and clearly was out upon Newton Down, where the glow-worms are most soft and sweet, it came upon me, in looking up from the glow-worms to the stars of heaven, to think and balance how far I was right in cheating Hezekiah. It had been done with the strictest justice, because his entire purpose was purely to cheat me. Whereupon Providence had stepped in and seen that I was the better man. I was not so ungrateful – let nobody suppose it – as to repine at this result. So far from that, that I rattled my money and had a good laugh, and went on again. But being used to watch the stars, as an old sailor is bound to do, I thought that Orion ought to be up, and I could not see Orion. This struck me as an unkindly

thing, although, when I thought of it next day, I found that Orion was quite right, and perhaps the beer a little strong which had led me to look out for him; anyhow, it threw me back to think of Hezekiah, and make the worst of him to myself for having had the best of him.

Everybody may be sure that I never would have gone out of the way to describe my traffic with that man unless there were good reason. Nay, but I wanted to show you exactly the cast and the colour of man he was, by setting forth his low attempt to get my fish for nothing.

There was no man, of course, in my native village, and very few in Bridgend perhaps, to whom I would have sold those fish, unless they were going to sell it again. But Hezekiah Perkins, a member and leading elder of the "Nicodemus-Christians," was so hard a man to cheat – except by stirring of his gall – and so keen a cheat himself; so proud, moreover, of his wit and praying, and truly brotherly, – that to lead him astray was the very first thing desired by a sound Churchman.

By trade and calling he had been – before he received his special call – no more than a common blacksmith. Now a blacksmith is a most useful man, full of news and full of jokes, and very often by no means drunk; this, however, was not enough to satisfy Hezekiah. Having parts, as he always told us – and sometimes we wished that he had no whole – cultivated parts, moreover, and taken up by the gentry, nothing of a lower order came up to his merits than to call himself as follows:

"Horologist, Gunsmith, Practical Turner, Working Goldsmith and Jeweller, Maker of all Machinery, and Engineman to the King and Queen."

The first time he put this over his door, all the neighbours laughed at him, knowing (in spite of the book he had got full of figures and shapes and crossings, which he called "Three-gun-ometry") that his education was scarcely up to the rule of three, without any guns. Nevertheless he got on well, having sense enough to guide him when to talk large (in the presence of people who love large talk, as beyond them), and when to sing small, and hold his tongue, and nod at the proper distances, if ever his business led him among gentry of any sense or science, such as we sometimes hear of. Hence it was that he got the order to keep the church-clock of Bridgend a-going by setting the hands on twice a-day, and giving a push to the pendulum; and so long as the clock would only go, nobody in the town cared a tick whether it kept right time or wrong. And if people from the country durst say anything about it, it was always enough to ask them what their own clocks had to say.

There were not then many stable-clocks, such as are growing upon us now, so that every horse has his own dinner-bell; only for all those that were, Hezekiah received, I daresay, from five to ten shillings a-month apiece in order to keep them moving. But, bless my heart! he knew less of a clock than I, old Davy Llewellyn, and once on a time I asked him, when he talked too much of his "ometries" – as a sailor might do in his simpleness –

I asked him to take an "observation," as I had seen a good deal of it. But all he did was to make a very profane and unpleasant one. As for this man's outward looks, he was nothing at all particular, but usually with dirt about him, and a sense of oiliness. Why he must needs set up for a saint the father of evil alone may tell, but they said that the clock that paid him best (being the worst in the neighbourhood) belonged to a Nicodemus-Christian, with a great cuckoo over it. Having never seen it, I cannot say; and the town is so full of gossip that I throw myself down on my back and listen, being wholly unable to vie with them in depth or in compass of story-telling, even when fish are a week on my hands.

CHAPTER XIII. THE CORONER AND THE CORONET

An officer of high repute had lately been set over us, to hold account of the mischief, and to follow evidence, and make the best he could of it when anybody chose to die without giving proper notice. He called himself "Coroner of the King;" and all the doctors, such as they were, made it a point that he must come, whenever there was a dead man or woman who had died without their help.

Now all about the storm of sand, and all about the shipwreck, was known in every part of the parish, before the church clock had contrived, in gratitude to Hezekiah, to strike the noon of Monday. Every child that went to the well knew the truth of everything; and every woman of Newton and Nottage had formed from the men her own opinion, and was ready to stand thereby, and defy all the other women.

Nevertheless some busy doctor (who had better been in the stocks) took it for a public duty to send notice and demand for the Coroner to sit upon us. The wrath of the parish (now just beginning to find some wreck, that would pay for the ropes) was so honest and so grave, that the little doctor was compelled to run and leave his furniture. And so it always ought to be with people

who are meddlesome.

It came to my knowledge that this must happen, and that I was bound to help in it, somewhere about middle-day of Tuesday; at a time when I was not quite as well as I find myself when I have no money. For, being pleased with my luck perhaps, and not content quite to smoke in the dark, and a little dry after the glow-worms, it happened (I will not pretend to say how) that I dropped into the "Jolly Sailors," to know what the people could be about, making such a great noise as they were, and keeping a quiet man out of his bed.

There I smelled a new tobacco, directly I was in the room; and somebody (pleased with my perception) gave me several pipes of it, with a thimbleful – as I became more and more agreeable – of a sort of rum-and-water. And, confining myself, as my principle is, to what the public treat me to, it is not quite out of the question that I may have been too generous. And truly full I was of grief, upon the following morning, that somebody had made me promise, in a bubbling moment, to be there again, and bring my fiddle, on the Tuesday night.

Now, since the death of my dear wife, who never put up with my fiddle (except when I was courting her), it had seemed to my feelings to be almost a levity to go fiddling. Also I knew what everybody would begin to say of me; but the landlord, foreseeing a large attendance after the Coroner's inquest, would not for a moment hear of any breach of my fiddle pledge.

Half of Newton, and perhaps all Nottage, went to Sker the

following day to see the Coroner, and to give him the benefit of their opinions. And another piece of luck there was to tempt them in that direction. For the ship which had been wrecked and had disappeared for a certain time, in a most atrocious manner, was rolled about so by the tide and a shift of the wind on Monday, that a precious large piece of her stern was in sight from the shore on Tuesday morning. It lay not more than a cable's length from low-water mark, and was heaved up so that we could see as far as the starboard mizzen-chains. Part of the taffrail was carried away, and the carving gone entirely, but the transom and transom-knees stood firm; and of the ship's name done in gold I could make out in large letters Ta Lucia; and underneath, in a curve, and in smaller letters, Ador.

Of course no one except myself could make head or tail of this; but after thinking a little while, I was pretty sure of the meaning of it – namely, that the craft was Portuguese, called the Santa Lucia, and trading from San Salvador, the capital of Brazils. And in this opinion I was confirmed by observing through my spy-glass, copper bolt-heads of a pattern such as I had seen at Lisbon, but never in any British ship. However, I resolved, for the present, to keep my opinion to myself, unless it were demanded upon good authority. For it made me feel confused in mind, and perhaps a little uneasy, when, being struck by some resemblance, I pulled from the lining of my hat a leaf of a book, upon which I copied all that could be made out of the letters, each side of the tiller of my new boat; and now I found

them to be these, – uc from the starboard side, just where they would have stood in Lucia – and dor from the further end of the line, just as in San Salvador.

The sands were all alive with people, and the rocks, and every place where anything good might have drifted. For Evan Thomas could scarcely come at a time of such affliction to assert his claims of wreck, and to belabour right and left. Therefore, for a mile or more, from where the land begins to dip, and the old stone wall, like a jagged cord, divides our parish from Kenfig, hundreds of figures might be seen, running along the grey wet sands, and reflected by their brightness. The day was going for two of the clock, and the tide growing near to the turn of ebb; and the landsprings oozing down from the beach, spread the whole of the flat sands so, with a silver overlaying, that without keen sight it was hard to tell where the shore ended and sea began. And a great part of this space was sprinkled with naked feet going pattering – boys and girls, and young women and men, who had left their shoes up high on the rocks to have better chance in the racing.

Now it is not for me to say that all or half of these good people were so brisk because they expected any fine thing for themselves. I would not even describe them as waiting in readiness for the force of fortune by the sea administered. I believe that all were most desirous of doing good, if possible. In the first case, to the poor people drowned; but if too late, then to console any disconsolate relations: failing of which, it would

be hard if anybody should blame them for picking up something for themselves.

"What! you here, mother Probyn?" I cried, coming upon a most pious old woman, who led the groaning at Zoar Chapel, and being for the moment struck out of all my manners by sight of her.

"Indeed, and so I am, old Davy," she answered, without abashment, and almost too busy to notice me; "the Lord may bless my poor endeavours to rescue them poor Injuns. But I can't get on without a rake. If I had only had the sense to bring my garden-rake. There are so many little things, scarcely as big as cockleshells; and the waves do drag them away from me. Oh, there, and there goes another! Gwenny, if I don't smack you!"

All these people, and all their doings, I left with a sort of contempt, perhaps, such as breaks out on me now and then at any very great littleness. And I knew that nothing worth wet of the knees could be found with the ebb-tide running, and ere the hold of the ship broke up.

So I went toward the great house, whose sorrows and whose desolation they took little heed of. And nothing made me feel more sad – strange as it may seem, and was – than to think of poor black Evan, thus unable to stand up and fight for his unrighteous rights.

In the great hall were six bodies, five of strong young men laid quiet, each in his several coffin; and the other of a little child in a simple dress of white, stretched upon a piece of board. Death I

have seen in all his manners, since I was a cabin-boy, and I took my hat off to the bodies, as I had seen them do abroad; but when I saw the small dead child, a thrill and pang of cold went through me. I made sure of nothing else, except that it was dear Bardie. That little darling whom I loved, for her gifts direct from God, and her ways, so out of the way to all other children – it struck my heart with a power of death, that here this lively soul was dead.

When a man makes a fool of himself, anybody may laugh at him; and this does him good, perhaps, and hardens him against more trouble. But bad as I am, and sharp as I am, in other people's opinion (and proud sometimes to think of it), I could not help a good gulp of a tear, over what I believed to be the body of poor little Bardie. For that child had such nice ways, and took such upper hand of me; that, expecting to find a Captain always, especially among women —

"Old Davy, I 'ants 'a. Old Davy, 'hen is 'a coming?"

By the union-jack, it was as good as a dozen kegs of rum to me. There was no mistaking the sweetest and clearest voice ever heard outside of a flute. And presently began pit-pat of the prettiest feet ever put in a shoe, down the great oak staircase. She held on by the rails, and showed no fear at all about it, though the least slip might have killed her. Then she saw the sad black sight after she turned the corner, and wondered at the meaning of it, and her little heart stood still. As she turned to me in awe, and held out both hands quivering, I caught her up, and spread my grey beard over her young frightened eyes, and took her out

of sight of all those cold and very dreadful things.

I had never been up the stairs before in that dark and ancient house; and the length, and the width, and the dreariness, and the creaking noises, frightened me; not so much for my own sake (being never required to sleep there), but for the tender little creature, full already of timid fancies, who must spend the dark nights there. And now the house, left empty of its noise, and strength, and boastfulness, had only five more ghosts to wander silent through the silent places. And this they began the very night after their bodies were in the churchyard.

The Coroner came on an old white pony, nearly four hours after the time for which his clerk had ordered us. Being used, for my part, to royal discipline, and everything done to the minute fixed, with the captain's voice like the crack of a gun, I was vexed and surprised; but expected him to give us some reason, good or bad. Instead of that he roared out to us, with his feet still in both stirrups, "Is there none of you Taffies with manners enough to come and hold a gentleman's horse? Here you, Davy Jones, you are long enough, and lazy enough; put your hand to the bridle, will you?"

This was to me, who was standing by, in the very height of innocence, having never yet seen any man appointed to sit upon dead bodies, and desiring to know how he could help them. I did for his Honour all I could, although his manner of speech was not in any way to my liking. But my rule has always been that of the royal navy, than which there is no wiser. If my equal insults

me, I knock him down; if my officer does it, I knock under.

Meanwhile our people were muttering "Sassenach, Sassenach!" And from their faces it was plain that they did not like an Englishman to sit upon Cymric bodies. However, it was the old, old thing. The Welsh must do all the real work; and the English be paid for sitting upon them after they are dead.

"I never sate on a black man yet, and I won't sit on a black man now," the Coroner said, when he was sure about oats enough for his pony; "I'll not disgrace his Majesty's writ by sitting upon damned niggers."

"Glory be to God, your Honour!" Stradling Williams cried, who had come as head of the jury: clerk he was of Newton Church, and could get no fees unless upon a Christian burial: "we thought your Honour would hardly put so great a disgrace upon us; but we knew not how the law lay."

"The law requires no Christian man," pronounced the Crowner, that all might hear, "to touch pitch, and defile himself. Both in body and soul, Master Clerk, to lower and defile himself!"

Hereupon a high hard screech, which is all we have in Wales for the brave hurrah of Englishmen, showed that all the jury were of one accord with the Coroner: and I was told by somebody that all had shaken hands, and sworn to strike work, rather than put up with misery of conscience.

"But, your Honour," said Mr Lewis, bailiff to Colonel Lougher, "if we hold no quest on the black men, how shall we

certify anything about this terrible shipwreck?"

"The wreck is no concern of mine," answered the Crowner, crustily: "it is not my place to sit upon planks, but upon Christian bodies. Do you attend to your own business, and leave mine to me, sir."

The bailiff, being a nice quiet man, thought it best to say no more. But some of the people who were thronging from every direction to see his Honour, told him about the little white baby found among the bladder-weed. He listened to this, and then he said, —

"Show me this little white infant discovered among the black men. My business here is not with infants, but with five young smothered men. However, if there be an infant of another accident, and of Christian colour, I will take it as a separate case, and damn the county in the fees."

We assured his lordship, as every one now began to call him (in virtue of his swearing so, which no doubt was right in a man empowered to make other people swear), we did our best at any rate to convince the Crowner, that over and above all black men, there verily was a little child, and, for all one could tell, a Christian child, entitled to the churchyard, and good enough for him to sit on. And so he entered the house to see it.

But if he had sworn a little before (and more than I durst set down for him), he certainly swore a great deal now, and poured upon us a bitter heat of English indignation. All of the jury were taken aback; and I as a witness felt most uneasy; until we came to

understand that his Honour's wrath was justly kindled on account of some marks on the baby's clothes.

"A coronet!" he cried, stamping about; "a coronet on my young lord's pinafore, and you stupid oafs never told me!"

Nobody knew except myself (who had sailed with an earl for a captain) what the meaning of this thing was; and when the clerk of the church was asked, rather than own his ignorance, he said it was part of the arms of the crown; and the Crowner was bound like a seal by it.

This explanation satisfied all the people of the parish, except a few far-going Baptists, with whom it was a point of faith always to cavil and sneer at every "wind of doctrine" as they always called it – the scent of which could be traced, anyhow, to either the parson or the clerk, or even the gravedigger. But I was content to look on and say nothing, having fish to sell, at least twice a-week, and finding all customers orthodox, until they utter bad shillings.

CHAPTER XIV. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE EVIDENCE

There is no need for me to follow all the Crowner's doings, or all that the juries thought and said, which was different altogether from what they meant to think and say. And he found himself bound to have two of them, with first right of inquest to the baby because of the stamp on his pinafore. And here I was, foreman of the jury, with fifteenpence for my services, and would gladly have served on the other jury after walking all that way, but was disabled for doing so, and only got ninepence for testimony. With that, however, I need not meddle, as every one knows all about it; only, to make clear all that happened, and, indeed, to clear myself, I am forced to put before you all that we did about that baby, as fully and emphatically as the state of our doings upon that occasion permitted me to remember it.

For the Coroner sate at the head of the table, in the great parlour of the house; and the dead child came in on his board, and we all regarded him carefully, especially heeding his coronet mark, and then set him by the window. A fine young boy enough to look at, about the age of our Bardie, and might have been her twin-brother, as everybody vowed he was, only his face was bolder and stronger, and his nose quite different, and altogether

a brave young chap, instead of funny and delicate. All this, however, might well have come from knocking about in the sea so much.

I would have given a good half-crown to have bitten off my foolish tongue, when one of the jurymen stood up and began to address the Coroner. He spoke, unluckily, very good English, and his Honour was glad to pay heed to him. And the clerk put down nearly all he said, word for word, as might be. This meddlesome fellow (being no less than brother Hezekiah's self) nodded to me for leave to speak, which I could not deny him; and his Honour lost no time whatever to put his mouth into his rummer of punch, as now provided for all of us, and to bow (whenever his mouth was empty) to that Hezekiah. For the man had won some reputation, or rather had made it, for himself, by perpetual talking, as if he were skilled in the history and antiquities of the neighbourhood. Of these he made so rare a patchwork, heads and tails, prose, verse, and proverbs, histories, and his stories, that (as I heard from a man of real teaching and learning who met him once and kept out of his way ever after) any one trusting him might sit down in the chair of Canute at King Arthur's table. Not that I or any of my neighbours would be the worse for doing that; only the thought of it frightened us, and made us unwilling to hearken him much.

However, if there was any matter on which Hezekiah deserved to be heard, no doubt it was this upon which he was now delivering his opinions – to wit, the great inroad or invasion

of the sand, for miles along our coast; of which there are very strange things to tell, and of which he had made an especial study, having a field at Candleston with a shed upon it and a rick of hay, all which disappeared in a single night, and none was ever seen afterwards. It was the only field he had, being left to him by his grandmother; and many people were disappointed that he had not slept with his cow that night. This directed his attention to the serious consideration, as he always told us at first start, being a lover of three-decked words, of the most important contemplation which could occupy the attention of any Cambrian landowner.

"Show your land," cried a wag of a tailor, with none to cross his legs upon; but we put him down, and pegged him down, till his manners should be of the pattern-book. Hezekiah went on to tell, in words too long to answer the helm of such a plain sailor as I am, how the sweep of hundreds of miles of sand had come up from the west and south-west in only two hundred and fifty years. How it had first begun to flow about the Scilly Islands, as mentioned by one Borlase, and came to the mouth of Hayle river, in Cornwall, in the early years of King Henry VIII., and after that blocked up Bude Haven, and swallowed the ploughs in the arable land. Then at Llanant it came like a cloud over the moon one winter night, and buried five-and-thirty houses with the people in them.

An Act of Parliament was passed – chapter the second of Philip and Mary – to keep it out of Glamorganshire; and good

commissioners were appointed, and a survey made along the coast, especially of Kenfig. Nevertheless the dash of sand was scarcely on their ink, when swarming, driving, darkening the air, the storm swept on their survey. At the mouths of the Tawey and Afan rivers the two sailors' chapels were buried, and then it swept up the great Roman road, a branch of the Julian way, and smothered the pillars of Gordian, and swallowed the castle of Kenfig, which stood by the side of the western road; and still rushing eastward, took Newton village and Newton old church beneath it. And so it went on for two hundred years, coming up from the sea, no doubt, carried by the perpetual gales, which always are from the south and west – filling all the hollow places, changing all bright mossy pools into hills of yellow drought, and, like a great encampment, dwelling over miles and leagues of land. And like a camp it was in this, that it was always striking tent. Six times in the last few years had the highest peak of sand – the general's tent it might be called – been shifted miles away, perhaps, and then come back towards Ogmores; and it was only the other day that, through some shift or swirl of wind, a windmill, with its sails entire, had been laid bare near Candleston, of which the last record was in Court-rolls of a hundred and fifty years ago.¹

¹ A clear and interesting account of this mighty sand-march may be found in a very learned paper by the Rev. H. H. Knight, B.D., formerly rector of Neath, Glamorgan; which paper, entitled "An Account of Newton-Nottage," was reprinted at Tenby in 1853, from the 'Archæologia Cambrensis.' Considerable movements still occur, but of late years no very great advance.

Now all this, though Hezekiah said it, was true enough, I do believe, having heard things much to the same purpose from my own old grandfather. The Coroner listened with more patience than we had given him credit for, although he told us that brother Perkins should have reserved his learned speech for the second inquiry, which was to be about the deaths of the five young men; for to him it appeared that this noble infant must lay the blame of his grievous loss not on the sand but upon the sea. Hezekiah replied, with great deference, that the cause in both cases was the same, for that the movement of sand went on under the sea even more than ashore, and hence the fatal gulping of that ship, the Andalusia, and the loss of his young lordship.

The name he had given the ship surprised me; and indeed I felt sure that it was quite wrong; and so I said immediately, without any low consideration of what might be mine own interest. But the Coroner would not hearken to me, being much impressed now with the learning and wisdom of Hezekiah Perkins. And when Hezekiah presented his card, beginning with "horologist," and ending with the "king and queen," he might have had any verdict he liked, if he himself had been upon trial.

Therefore, after calling in (for the sake of form) the two poor women who found the dead baby among the sea-weed, and had sevenpence apiece for doing so, and who cried all the while that they talked in Welsh (each having seen a dear baby like him not more than twenty years ago), we came in the most unanimous manner, under his lordship's guidance, to the following excellent

verdict: —

"Found drowned on Pool Tavan rocks, a man-child, supposed to be two years old; believed to be a young nobleman, from marks on pinafore, and high bearing; but cast away by a storm of sand from the ship Andalusia of Appledore."

Now I was as certain, as sure could be, that half of this verdict must be wrong; especially as to the name of the ship, and her belonging to Appledore, which never yet owned any craft of more than 200 tons at the utmost — a snow, or a brig at the very outside. Nevertheless I was compelled to give in to the rest of them, and most of all to the Coroner. Only I said, as many who are still alive can remember, and are not afraid to speak to, and especially my good friend Mr Lewis, "The ship was not called the Andalusia; the ship was never from Appledore; neither was she of British build. As an old seaman, it is likely that I know more of the build of a ship than a lubber of a clock-maker, or rather a clock-mauler."

But here I was put down sternly; and hearing of verdicts a great deal worse, without any mischief come of them, I was even content to sign the return, and have a new pipe of bird's-eye. And a bird's-eye view this gave me of them at the second inquest wherein I had to give evidence; and was not of the jury. They wanted to cross-examine me, because I had been unpleasant, but of that they got the worst, and dropped it. But as all our jurymen declared upon their oaths that the little nobleman was drowned in a storm of sand, so they found that the five young rabbits

came to their end of smothering through a violent sea-tempest.

In the days of my youth such judgments perhaps would have tried my patience; but now I knew that nothing ever follows truth and justice. People talk of both these things, and perhaps the idea does them good.

Be that according to God's will – as we always say when deprived of our own – at any rate, I am bound to tell one little thing more about each quest. And first about the first one. Why was I so vexed and angry with my foolish tongue when Hezekiah began to speak? Only because I knew full well that it would lead to the very thing, which it was my one desire to avoid, if possible. And this – as you may guess at once, after what happened on the stairs – was the rude fetching and exposing of the dear little maid among so many common fellows; and to show her the baby-corpse. I feared that it must come to this, through my own thoughtless blabbing about her "ickle bother" in the presence of Hezekiah: and if ever man had a hollow dry heart from over-pumping of the tongue, I had it when Hezekiah came in; bearing, in a depth of fright and wonder, and contempt of him, my own delicate Bardie. I had set my back against the door, and sworn that they should not have her; but crafty Perkins had stolen out by another door while they humoured me. Now my pretty dear was awed, and hushed beyond all crying, and even could not move her feet, as children do, in a kicking way. Trying to get as far as possible from Hezekiah's nasty face – which gave me a great deal of pleasure, because she had never done the like to me,

unless I were full of tobacco – she stretched away from his greasy shoulder, and then she saw old Davy. Her hands came toward me, and so did her eyes, and so did her lips, with great promise of kisses, such as her father and mother perhaps might have been mightily tempted by; but nobody now to care for them.

When Hezekiah, pretending to dandle this little lady in a jaunty way, like one of his filthy low children, was taking her towards that poor little corpse, so white in the light of the window; and when he made her look at it, and said, "Is that ickle bother, my dear?" and she all the time was shivering and turning her eyes away from it, and seeking for me to help her, I got rid of the two men who held me, nor hearkened I the Coroner, but gave Hezekiah such a grip as he felt for three months afterwards, and with Bardie on my left arm, kept my right fist ready.

Nobody cared to encounter this; for I had happened to tell the neighbourhood how the Frenchman's head came off at the time when he tried to injure me; and so I bore off the little one, till her chest began to pant and her tears ran down my beard. And then as I spoke softly to her and began to raise her fingers, and to tickle her frizzy hair, all of a sudden she flung both arms around my neck, and loved me.

"Old Davy, poor ickle Bardie not go to 'e back pit-hole yet?"

"No, my dear, not for ever so long. Not for eighty years at least. And then go straight to heaven!"

"Ickle bother go to 'e back pit-hole? Does 'a think, old Davy?"

This was more than I could tell, though inclined to think it

very likely. However, before I could answer, some of the jury followed us, and behind them the Coroner himself; they insisted on putting a question to her, and so long as they did not force her again to look at that which terrified her, I had no right to prevent them. They all desired to speak at once; but the clerk of the Coroner took the lead, having as yet performed no work toward the earning of his salt or rum. An innocent old man he was, but very free from cleanliness; and the child being most particular of all ever born in that matter, turned away with her mite of a nose, in a manner indescribable.

He was much too dull to notice this; but putting back his spectacles, and stooping over her hair and ears (which was all she left outside my beard), he wanted to show his skill in babies, of which he boasted himself a grandfather. And so he began to whisper, —

"My little dear, you will be a good child — a very good child; won't you, now? I can see it in your little face. Such a pretty dear you are! And all good children always do as they are told, you know. We want you to tell us a little thing about pretty little brother. I have got a little girl at home not so old as you are, and she is so clever, you can't think. Everything she does and says; everything we tell her — "

"Take away 'e nasty old man. Take away 'e bad old man; or I never tis 'a again, old Davy."

She flashed up at me with such wrath, that I was forced to obey her; while the old man put down his goggles to stare, and

all the jury laughed at him. And I was running away with her, for her little breath was hot and short; when the Coroner called out, "Stop, man; I know how to manage her." At this I was bound to pull up, and set her to look at him, as he ordered me. She sate well up in my arms, and looked, and seemed not to think very highly of him.

"Look at his Honour, my dear," said I, stroking her hair as I knew she liked; "look at his lordship, you pretty duck."

"Little child," began his Honour, "you have a duty to perform, even at this early period of your very beginning life. We are most desirous to spare your feelings, having strong reasons to believe that you are sprung from a noble family. But in our duty towards your lineage, we must require you, my little dear – we must request you, my little lady – to assist us in our endeavour to identify – "

"I can say 'dentify,' old Davy; tell 'e silly old man to say 'dentify' same as I does."

She spread her little open hand with such contempt at the Coroner, that even his own clerk could not keep his countenance from laughing. And his Honour, having good reason to think her a baby of high position before, was now so certain that he said, "God bless her! What a child she is! Take her away, old mariner. She is used to high society."

CHAPTER XV.

A VERDICT ON THE JURY

As to the second inquest, I promised (as you may remember) to tell something also. But in serious truth, if I saw a chance to escape it, without skulking watch, I would liefer be anywhere else almost – except in a French prison.

After recording with much satisfaction our verdict upon Bardie's brother – which nearly all of us were certain that the little boy must be – the Coroner bade his second jury to view the bodies of the five young men. These were in the great dark hall, set as in a place of honour, and poor young Watkin left to mind them; and very pale and ill he looked.

"If you please, sir, they are all stretched out, and I am not afraid of them;" he said to me, as I went to console him: "father cannot look at them; but mother and I are not afraid. They are placed according to their ages, face after face, and foot after foot. And I am sure they never meant it, sir, when they used to kick me out of bed: and oftentimes I deserved it."

I thought much less of those five great corpses than of the gentle and loving boy who had girt up his heart to conquer fear, and who tried to think evil of himself for the comforting of his brethren's souls.

But he nearly broke down when the jurymen came; and I

begged them to spare him the pain and trial of going before the Coroner to identify the bodies, which I could do, as well as any one; and to this they all agreed.

When we returned to the long oak parlour, we found that the dignity of the house was maintained in a way which astonished us. There had been some little refreshment before, especially for his Honour; but now all these things were cleared away, and the table was spread with a noble sight of glasses, and bottles, and silver implements, fit for the mess of an admiral. Neither were these meant for show alone, inasmuch as to make them useful, there was water cold and water hot, also lemons, and sugar, and nutmeg, and a great black George of ale, a row of pipes, and a jar of tobacco, also a middling keg of Hollands, and an anker of old rum. At first we could hardly believe our eyes, knowing how poor and desolate, both of food and furniture, that old grange had always been. But presently one of us happened to guess, and Hezekiah confirmed it, that the lord of the manor had taken compassion upon his afflicted tenant, and had furnished these things in a handsome manner, from his own great house some five miles distant. But in spite of the custom of the country, I was for keeping away from it all, upon so sad an occasion. And one or two more were for holding aloof, although they cast sheep's-eyes at it.

However, the Crowner rubbed his hands, and sate down at the top of the table, and then the foreman sate down also, and said that, being so much upset, he was half inclined to take a glass

of something weak. He was recommended, if he felt like that, whatever he did, not to take it weak, but to think of his wife and family; for who could say what such a turn might lead to, if neglected? And this reflection had such weight, that instead of mixing for himself, he allowed a friend to mix for him.

The Crowner said, "Now, gentlemen, in the presence of such fearful trouble and heavy blows from Providence, no man has any right to give the rein to his own feelings. It is his duty, as a man, to control his sad emotions; and his duty, as a family-man, to attend to his constitution." With these words he lit a pipe, and poured himself a glass of Hollands, looking sadly upward, so that the measure quite escaped him. "Gentlemen of the jury," he continued with such authority, that the jury were almost ready to think that they must have begun to be gentlemen – till they looked at one another; "gentlemen of the jury, life is short, and trouble long. I have sate upon hundreds of poor people who destroyed themselves by nothing else than want of self-preservation. I have made it my duty officially to discourage such shortcomings. Mr Foreman, be good enough to send the lemons this way; and when ready for business, say so."

Crowner Bowles was now as pleasant as he had been grumpy in the morning; and finding him so, we did our best to keep him in that humour. Neither was it long before he expressed himself in terms which were an honour alike to his heart and head. For he told us, in so many words – though I was not of the jury now, nevertheless I held on to them, and having been foreman just

now, could not be, for a matter of form, when it came to glasses, cold-shouldered, – worthy Crowner Bowles, I say, before he had stirred many slices of lemon, told us all, in so many words – and the more, the more we were pleased with them – that for a thoroughly honest, intelligent, and hard-working jury, commend him henceforth and as long as he held his Majesty's sign-manual, to a jury made of Newton parish and of Kenfig burgesses!

We drank his health with bumpers round, every man upon his legs, and then three cheers for his lordship; until his clerk, who was rather sober, put his thumb up, and said "Stop." And from the way he went on jerking with his narrow shoulders, we saw that he would recall our thoughts to the hall that had no door to it. Then following his looks, we saw the distance of the silence.

This took us all aback so much, that we had in the witnesses – of whom I the head man was there already – and for fear of their being nervous, and so confusing testimony, gave them a cordial after swearing. Everybody knew exactly what each one of them had to say. But it would have been very hard, and might have done them an injury, not to let them say it.

The Coroner, having found no need to charge (except his rummer), left his men for a little while to deliberate their verdict.

"Visitation of God, of course it must be," Stradling Williams began to say; "visitation of Almighty God."

Some of the jury took the pipes out of their mouths and nodded at him, while they blew a ring of smoke; and others nodded without that trouble; and all seemed going pleasantly.

When suddenly a little fellow, whose name was Simon Edwards, a brother of the primitive Christians, or at least of their minister, being made pugnacious by ardent spirits, rose, and holding the arm of his chair, thus delivered his sentiments; speaking, of course, in his native tongue.

"Head-man, and brothers of the jury, I-I-I do altogether refuse and deny the goodness of that judgment. The only judgment I will certify is in the lining of my hat, – 'Judgment of Almighty God, for rabbiting on the Sabbath-day.' Hezekiah Perkins, I call upon thee, as a brother Christian, and a consistent member, to stand on the side of the Lord with me."

His power of standing on any side was by this time, however, exhausted; and falling into his chair he turned pale, and shrunk to the very back of it. For over against him stood Evan Thomas, whom none of us had seen till then. It was a sight that sobered us, and made the blood fly from our cheeks, and forced us to set down the glass.

The face of black Evan was ashy grey, and his heavy square shoulders slouching forward, and his hands hung by his side. Only his deep eyes shone without moving; and Simon backed further and further away, without any power to gaze elsewhere. Then Evan Thomas turned from him, without any word, or so much as a sigh, and looked at us all; and no man had power to meet the cold quietness of his regard. And not having thought much about his troubles, we had nothing at all to say to him.

After waiting for us to begin, and finding no one ready, he

spake a few words to us all in Welsh, and the tone of his voice seemed different.

"Noble gentlemen, I am proud that my poor hospitality pleases you. Make the most of the time God gives; for six of you have seen the white horse." With these words he bowed his head, and left us shuddering in the midst of all the heat of cordials. For it is known that men, when prostrate by a crushing act of God, have the power to foresee the death of other men that feel no pity for them. And to see the white horse on the night of new moon, even through closed eyelids, and without sense of vision, is the surest sign of all sure signs of death within the twelvemonth. Therefore all the jury sate glowering at one another, each man ready to make oath that Evan's eyes were not on him.

Now there are things beyond our knowledge, or right of explanation, in which I have a pure true faith – for instance, the "Flying Dutchman," whom I had twice beheld already, and whom no man may three times see, and then survive the twelvemonth; in him, of course, I had true faith – for what can be clearer than eyesight? Many things, too, which brave seamen have beheld, and can declare; but as for landsmen's superstitions, I scarcely cared to laugh at them. However, strange enough it is, all black Evan said came true. Simon Edwards first went off, by falling into Newton Wayn, after keeping it up too late at chapel. And after him the other five, all within the twelvemonth; some in their beds, and some abroad, but all gone to their last account. And heartily glad I was for my part (as one after other they dropped

off thus), not to have served on that second jury; and heartily sorry I was also that brother Hezekiah had not taken the luck to behold the white horse.

Plain enough it will be now, to any one who knows our parts, that after what Evan Thomas said, and the way in which he withdrew from us, the only desire the jury had was to gratify him with their verdict, and to hasten home, ere the dark should fall, and no man to walk by himself on the road. Accordingly, without more tobacco, though some took another glass for strength, they returned the following verdict: —

"We find that these five young and excellent men" — here came their names, with a Mister to each — "were lost on their way to a place of worship, by means of a violent storm of the sea. And the jury cannot separate without offering their heartfelt pity" — the Crowner's clerk changed it to 'sympathy' — "to their bereaved and affectionate parents. God save the King!"

After this, they all went home; and it took good legs to keep up with them along "Priest Lane," in some of the darker places, and especially where a white cow came, and looked over a gate for the milking-time. I could not help laughing, although myself not wholly free from uneasiness; and I grieved that my joints were not as nimble as those of Simon Edwards.

But while we frightened one another, like so many children, each perceiving something which was worse to those who perceived it not, Hezekiah carried on as if we were a set of fools, and nothing ever could frighten him. To me, who was

the bravest of them, this was very irksome; but it happened that I knew brother Perkins's pet belief. His wife had lived at Longlands once, a lonely house between Nottage and Newton, on the rise of a little hill. And they say that on one night of the year, all the funerals that must pass from Nottage to Newton in the twelvemonth, go by in succession there, with all the mourners after them, and the very hymns that they will sing passing softly on the wind.

So as we were just by Longlands in the early beat of the stars, I managed to be at Perkins's side. Then suddenly, as a bat went by, I caught the arm of Hezekiah, and drew back, and shivered.

"Name of God, Davy! what's the matter?"

"Can't you see them, you blind-eye? There they go! there they go! All the coffins with palls to them. And the names upon the head-plates: – Evan, and Thomas, and Hopkin, and Rees, and Jenkin, with only four bearers! And the psalm they sing is the thirty-fourth."

"So it is! I can see them all. The Lord have mercy upon my soul! Oh Davy, Davy! don't leave me here."

He could not walk another step, but staggered against the wall and groaned, and hid his face inside his hat. We got him to Newton with much ado; but as for going to Bridgend that night, he found that our church-clock must be seen to, the very first thing in the morning.

CHAPTER XVI.

TRUTH LIES

SOMETIMES IN A WELL

The following morning it happened so that I did not get up over early; not, I assure you, from any undue enjoyment of the grand Crowner's quests; but partly because the tide for fishing would not suit till the afternoon, and partly because I had worked both hard and long at the "Jolly Sailors: " and this in fulfilment of a pledge from which there was no escaping, when I promised on the night before to grease and tune my violin, and display the true practice of hornpipe. Rash enough this promise was, on account of my dear wife's memory, and the things bad people would say of it. And but for the sad uneasiness created by black Evan's prophecy, and the need of lively company to prevent my seeing white horses, the fear of the parish might have prevailed with me over all fear of the landlord. Hence I began rather shyly; but when my first tune had been received with hearty applause from all the room, how could I allow myself to be clapped on the back, and then be lazy?

Now Bunny was tugging and clamouring for her bit of breakfast, almost before I was wide-awake, when the latch of my cottage-door was lifted, and in walked Hezekiah. Almost any other man would have been more welcome; for though he had not

spoken of it on the day before, he was sure to annoy me, sooner or later, about the fish he had forced me to sell him. When such a matter is over and done with, surely no man, in common-sense, has a right to reopen the question. The time to find fault with a fish, in all conscience, is before you have bought him. Having once done that, he is now your own; and to blame him is to find fault with the mercy which gave you the money to buy him. A foolish thing as well; because you are running down your own property, and spoiling your relish for him. Conduct like this is below contempt; even more ungraceful and ungracious than that of a man who spreads abroad the faults of his own wife.

Hezekiah, however, on this occasion, was not quite so bad as that. His errand, according to his lights, was of a friendly nature; for he pried all round my little room with an extremely sagacious leer, and then gazed at me with a dark cock of his eye, and glanced askance at Bunny, and managed to wink, like the Commodore's ship beginning to light poop-lanterns.

"Speak out, like a man," I said; "is your wife confined with a prophecy, or what is the matter with you?"

"Hepzibah, the prophetess, is well; and her prophecies are abiding the fulness of their fulfilment. I would speak with you on a very secret and important matter, concerning also her revealings."

"Then I will send the child away. Here, Bunny, run and ask mother Jones – "

"That will not do; I will not speak here. Walls are thin, and

walls have ears. Come down to the well with me."

"But the well is a lump of walls," I answered, "and children almost always near it."

"There are no children. I have been down. The well is dry, and the children know it. No better place can be for speaking."

Looking down across the churchyard, I perceived that he was right; and so I left Bunny to dwell on her breakfast, and went with Hezekiah. Among the sandhills there was no one; for fright had fallen on everybody, since the sands began to walk, as the general folk now declared of them. And nobody looked at a sandhill now with any other feeling than towards his grave and tombstone.

Even my heart was a little heavy, in spite of all scientific points, when I straddled over the stone that led into the sandy passage. After me came Hezekiah, groping with his grimy hands, and calling out for me to stop, until he could have hold of me. However, I left him to follow the darkness, in the wake of his own ideas.

A better place for secret talk, in a parish full of echoes, scarcely could be found, perhaps, except the old "Red House" on the shore. So I waited for Perkins to unfold, as soon as we stood on the bottom step, with three or four yards of quicksand, but no dip for a pitcher below us. The children knew that the well was dry, and some of them perhaps were gone to try to learn their letters.

What then was my disappointment, as it gradually came out, that so far from telling me a secret, Hezekiah's object was to

deprive me of my own! However, if I say what happened, nobody can grumble.

In the first place, he manœuvred much to get the weather-gage of me, by setting me so that the light that slanted down the grey slope should gather itself upon my honest countenance. I for my part, as a man unwarned how far it might become a duty to avoid excess of accuracy, took the liberty to prefer a less conspicuous position; not that I had any lies to tell, but might be glad to hear some. Therefore, I stuck to a pleasant seat upon a very nice sandy slab, where the light so shot and wavered, that a badly inquisitive man might seek in vain for a flush or a flickering of the most delicate light of all – that which is cast by the heart or mind of man into the face of man.

Upon the whole, it could scarcely be said, at least as concerned Hezekiah, that truth was to be found, just now, at the bottom of this well.

"Dear brother Dyo," he gently began, with the most brotherly voice and manner; "it has pleased the Lord, who does all things aright, to send me to you for counsel now, as well as for comfort, beloved Dyo."

"All that I have is at your service," I answered very heartily; looking for something about his wife, and always enjoying a thing of that kind among those righteous fellows; and we heard that Hepzibah had taken up, under word of the Lord, with the Shakers.²

² These fine fellows are talked of now as if we had found a novelty. They came

"Brother David, I have wrestled hard in the night-season, about that which has come to pass. My wife – "

"To be sure," I said.

"My wife, who was certified seven times as a vessel for the Spirit – "

"To be sure – they always are; and then they gad about so – "

"Brother, you understand me not; or desire to think evil. Hepzibah, since her last confinement, is a vessel for the Spirit to the square of what she was. Seven times seven is forty-nine, and requires no certificate. But these are carnal calculations."

All this took me beyond my depth, and I answered him rather crustily; and my word ended with both those letters which, as I learned from my Catechism, belong to us by baptism.

"Unholy David, shun evil words. Pray without ceasing, but swear not at all. In a vision of the night, Hepzibah hath seen terrible things of thee."

"Why, you never went home last night, Hezekiah. How can you tell what your wife dreamed?"

"I said not when it came to pass. And how could I speak of it yesterday before that loose assembly?"

"Well, well, out with it! What was this wonderful vision?"

"Hepzibah, the prophetess, being in a trance, and deeply inspired of the Lord, beheld the following vision: A long lonely sea was spread before her, shining in the moonlight smoothly,

through South Wales on a "starring" tour thirty years ago, and they seemed to be on their last legs then. Under the moon is there anything new?

and in places strewed with gold. A man was standing on a low black rock, casting a line, and drawing great fish out almost every time he cast. Then there arose from out the water a dear little child all dressed in white, carrying with both hands her cradle, and just like our little maiden, Martha – "

"Like your dirty Martha indeed!" I was at the very point of saying, but snapped my lips, and saved myself.

"This small damsel approached the fisherman, and presented her cradle to him, with a very trustful smile. Then he said, 'Is it gold?' And she said, 'No, it is only a white lily.' Upon which he shouted, 'Be off with you!' And the child fell into a desolate hole, and groped about vainly for her cradle. Then all the light faded out of the sea, and the waves and the rocks began moaning, and the fisherman fell on his knees, and sought in vain for the cradle. And while he was moaning, came Satan himself, bearing the cradle red-hot and crackling; and he seized the poor man by his blue woollen smock, and laid him in the cradle, and rocked it, till his shrieks awoke Hepzibah. And Hepzibah is certain that you are the man."

To hear all this in that sudden manner quite took my breath away for a minute, so that I fell back and knocked my head, purely innocent as I was. But presently I began to hope that the prophetess might be wrong this time; and the more so because that vile trance of hers might have come from excessive enjoyment of those good fish of mine. And it grew upon me more and more, the more I disliked her prediction about me, that if

she had such inspiration, scarcely would she have sent Hezekiah to buy her supper from my four-legged table. Therefore I spoke without much loss of courage.

"Brother Hezekiah, there is something wrong with Hepzibah. Send her, I pray you, to Dr Ap-Yollup before she prophesies anything more. No blue woollen smock have I worn this summer, but a canvas jacket only, and more often a striped jersey. It is Sandy Macraw she has seen in her dream, with the devil both roasting and rocking him. Glory be to the Lord for it!"

"Glory be to Him, Dyo, whichever of you two it was! I hope that it may have been Sandy. But Hepzibah is always accurate, even among fishermen."

"Even fishermen," I answered (being a little touched with wrath), "know the folk that understood them, and the folk that cannot. Even fishermen have their right, especially when reduced to it, not to be blasphemed in that way, even by a prophetess."

"Dyo, you are hot again. What makes you go on so? A friend's advice is such a thing, that I nearly always take it; unless I find big obstacles. Dyo, now be advised by me."

"That depends on how I like it," was the best thing I could say.

"David Llewellyn, the only chance to save thy sinful soul is this. Open thine heart to the chosen one, to the favoured of the Lord. Confess to Hepzibah the things that befell thee, and how the tempter prevailed with thee. Especially bring forth, my brother, the accursed thing thou hast hid in thy tent, the wedge of gold, and the shekels of silver, and the Babylonish garment.

Thou hast stolen, and dissembled also; and put it even among thine own stuff. Cast it from thee, deliver it up, lay it before the ark of the Lord, and Hepzibah shall fall down and pray, lest thou be consumed and burnt with fire, like the son of Carmi the son of Zabdi, and covered over with a great heap of stones, even such as this is."

My wrath at this foul accusation, and daring attempt to frighten me, was kindled so that I could not speak; and if this had happened in the open air, I should have been certain to knock him down. However, I began to think, for Perkins was a litigious fellow; and however strict a man's conduct is, he does not want his affairs all exposed. Therefore I kept my knit knuckles at home, but justly felt strong indignation. Perkins thought he had terrified me, for perhaps in that bad light I looked pale; and so he began to triumph upon me, which needs, as everybody knows, a better man than Hezekiah.

"Come, come, brother Dyo," he said, in a voice quite different from the Chapel-Scriptural style he had used; "you see, we know all about it. Two dear children come ashore, one dead, and the other not dead. You contrive to receive them both, with your accustomed poaching skill. For everybody says that you are always to be found everywhere, except in your chapel, on Sabbath-day. Now, David, what do our good people, having families of their own, find upon these children? Not so much as a chain, or locket, or even a gold pin. I am a jeweller, and I know that children of high position always have some trinket on them,

when their mothers love them. A child with a coronet, and no gold! David, this is wrong of wrong. And worse than this, you conceal the truth, even from me your ancient friend. There must be a great deal to be made, either from those who would hold them in trust, or from those in whose way they stood. For the family died out, very likely, in all male inheritance. Think what we might make of it, by acting under my direction. And you shall have half of it all, old Davy, by relieving your mind, and behaving in a sensible and religious manner."

This came home to my sense of experience more than all Hepzibah's divine predictions or productions. At the same time I saw that Hezekiah was all abroad in the dark, and groping right and left after the bodily truth. And what call had he to cry shares with me, because he had more reputation, and a higher conceit of himself, of course? But it crossed my mind that this nasty fellow, being perhaps in front of me in some little tricks of machinery, might be useful afterwards in getting at the real truth, which often kept me awake at night. Only I was quite resolved not to encourage roguery, by letting him into partnership. Perceiving my depth of consideration – for it suited my purpose to hear him out, and learn how much he suspected – it was natural that he should try again to impress me yet further by boasting.

"Dyo, I have been at a Latin school for as much as three months together. My father gave me a rare education, and I made the most of it. None of your ignorance for me! I am up to the moods and the tenses, the accidents and the proselytes. The

present I know, and the future I know; the Peter-perfection, and the hay-roost – "

"I call that stuff gibberish. Talk plain English if you can."

"Understand you then so much as this? I speak in a carnal manner now. I speak as a fool unto a fool. I am up to snuff, good Dyo; I can tell the time of day."

"Then you are a devilish deal cleverer than any of your clocks are. But now thou speakest no parables, brother. Now I know what thou meanest. Thou art up for robbing somebody; and if I would shun Satan's clutches, I must come and help thee."

"Dyo, this is inconsistent, nor can I call it brotherly. We wish to do good, both you and I, and to raise a little money for works of love; you, no doubt, with a good end in view, to console you for much tribulation; and I with a single eye to the advancement of the cause which I have at heart, to save many brands from the burning. Then, Dyo, why not act together? Why not help one another, dear brother; thou with the good-luck, and I with the brains?"

He laid his hand on my shoulder kindly, with a yearning of his bowels towards me, such as true Nonconformists feel at the scent of any money. I found myself also a little moved, not being certain how far it was wise to throw him altogether over.

But suddenly, by what means I know not, except the will of Providence, there arose before me that foul wrong which the Nicodemus-Christian had committed against me some three years back. I had forborne to speak of it till now, wishing to give

the man fair-play.

"Hezekiah, do you remember," I asked, with much solemnity "do you remember your twentieth wedding-day?"

"Davy, my brother, how many times – never mind talking about that now."

"You had a large company coming, and to whom did you give a special order to catch you a turbot at tenpence a-pound?"

"Nay, nay, my dear friend Dyo; shall I never get that thing out of your stupid head?"

"You had known me for twenty years at least as the very best fisherman on the coast, and a man that could be relied upon. Yet you must go and give that order, not to a man of good Welsh blood – with ten Welshmen coming to dinner, mind – not to a man that was bred and born within five miles of your dirty house – not to a man that knew every cranny and crinkle of sand where the turbot lie; but to a tag-rag Scotchman! It was spoken of upon every pebble from Briton Ferry to Aberthaw. David Llewellyn put under the feet of a fellow like Sandy Macraw – a beggarly, interloping, freckled, bitter weed of a Scotchman!"

"Well, Davy, I have apologised. How many times more must I do it? It was not that I doubted your skill. You tell us of that so often, that none of us ever question it. It was simply because – I feared just then to come near your excellent and lamented – "

"No excuses, no excuses, Mr Perkins, if you please! You only make the matter worse. As if a man's wife could come into the question, when it comes to business! Yours may, because you

don't know how to manage her; but mine – "

"Well, now she is gone, Dyo; and very good she was to you, And in your heart, you know it."

Whether he said this roguishly, or from the feeling which all of us have when it comes to one another, I declare I knew not then, and I know not even now. For I did not feel so sharply up to look to mine own interest, with these recollections over me. I waited for him to begin again, but he seemed to stick back in the corner. And in spite of all that turbot business, at the moment I could not help holding out my hand to him.

He took it, and shook it, with as much emotion as if he had truly been fond of my wife; and I felt that nothing more must be said concerning that order to Sandy Macraw. It seemed to be very good reason also, for getting out of that interview; for I might say things to be sorry for, if I allowed myself to go on any more with my heart so open. Therefore I called in my usual briskness, "Lo, the water is rising! The children must be at the mouth of the well. What will the good wife prophesy if she sees thee coming up the stairs with thy two feet soaking wet, Master Hezekiah?"

CHAPTER XVII.

FOR A LITTLE CHANGE OF AIR

On the very next day, I received such a visit as never had come to my house before. For while I was trimming my hooks, and wondering how to get out of all this trouble with my conscience sound and my pocket improved; suddenly I heard a voice not to be found anywhere.

"I 'ants to yalk, I tell 'a, Yatkin. Put me down derekkerly. I 'ants to see old Davy."

"And old Davy wants to see you, you beauty," I cried, as she jumped like a little wild kid, and took all my house with a glance, and then me.

"Does 'a know, I yikes this house, and I yikes 'a, and I yikes Yatkin, and ickle Bunny, and evelybody?"

She pointed all round for everybody, with all ten fingers spread everyway. Then Watkin came after her, like her slave, with a foolish grin on his countenance, in spite of the undertaking business.

"If you please, sir, Mr Llewellyn," he said, "we was forced to bring her over; she have been crying so dreadful, and shivering about the black pit-hole so. And when the black things came into the house, she was going clean out of her little mind, ever so many times almost. No use it was at all to tell her ever so much

a-yard they was. 'I don't yike back, and I 'on't have back. Yite I yikes, and boo I yikes; and my dear papa be so very angy, when I tells him all about it.' She went on like that, and she did so cry, mother said she must change the air a bit."

All the time he was telling me this, she watched him with her head on one side and her lips kept ready in the most comic manner, as much as to say, "Now you tell any stories at my expense, and you may look out." But Watkin was truth itself, and she nodded, and said "Ness," at the end of his speech.

"And, if you please, sir, Mr Llewellyn, whatever is a 'belung,' sir? All the way she have been asking for 'belung, belung, belung.' And I cannot tell for the life of me whatever is 'belung.'"

"Boy, never ask what is unbecoming," I replied, in a manner which made him blush, according to my intention. For the word might be English for all I knew, and have something of high life in it. However, I found, by-and-by, that it meant what she was able to call "Ummibella," when promoted a year in the dictionary.

But now anybody should only have seen her, who wanted a little rousing up. My cottage, of course, is not much to boast of, compared with castles, and so on; nevertheless there is something about it pleasant and good, like its owner. You might see ever so many houses, and think them larger, and grander, and so on, with more opportunity for sitting down, and less for knocking your head perhaps; and after all you would come back to mine. Not for the sake of the meat in the cupboard – because I seldom had any, and far inferior men had more; but because – well, it

does not matter. I never could make you understand, unless you came to see it.

Only I felt that I had found a wonderful creature to make me out, and enter almost into my own views (of which the world is not capable) every time I took this child up and down the staircase. She would have jumps, and she made me talk in a manner that quite surprised myself; and such a fine feeling grew up between us, that it was a happy thing for the whole of us, not to have Bunny in the way just then. Mother Jones was giving her apple-party; as she always did when the red streaks came upon her "Early Margarets." But I always think the White Juneating is a far superior apple: and I have a tree of it. My little garden is nothing grand, any more than the rest of my premises, or even myself, if it comes to that; still you might go for a long day's walk, and find very few indeed to beat it, unless you were contradictory. For ten doors at least, both west and east, this was admitted silently; as was proved by their sending to me for a cabbage, an artichoke, or an onion, or anything choice for a Sunday dinner. It may suit these very people now to shake their heads and to run me down, but they should not forget what I did for them, when it comes to pronouncing fair judgment.

Poor Bardie appeared as full of bright spirit, and as brave as ever, and when she tumbled from jumping two steps, what did she do but climb back and jump three, which even Bunny was afraid to do. But I soon perceived that this was only a sort of a flash in the pan, as it were. The happy change from the gloom

of Sker House, from the silent corners and creaking stairs, and long-faced people keeping watch, and howling every now and then – also the sight of me again (whom she looked upon as her chief protector), and the general air of tidiness belonging to my dwelling – these things called forth all at once the play and joyful spring of her nature. But when she began to get tired of this, and to long for a little coaxing, even the stupidest gaffer could see that she was not the child she had been. Her little face seemed pinched and pale, and prematurely grave and odd; while in the grey eyes tears shone ready at any echo of thought to fall. Also her forehead, broad and white, which marked her so from common children, looked as if too much of puzzling and of wondering had been done there. Even the gloss of her rich brown poll was faded, with none to care for it; while the dainty feet and hands, so sensitive as to a speck of dirt, were enough to bring the tears of pity into a careful mother's eyes.

"Gardy la! 'Ook 'e see, 'hot degustin' naily pailies! And poor Bardie nuffin to kean 'em with!"

While I was setting this grief to rest (for which she kissed me beautifully), many thoughts came through my mind about this little creature. She and I were of one accord, upon so many important points; and when she differed from me, perhaps she was in the right almost: which is a thing that I never knew happen in a whole village of grown-up people. And by the time I had brushed her hair and tied up the bows of her frock afresh, and when she began to dance again, and to play every kind of trick

with me, I said to myself, "I must have this child. Whatever may come of it, I will risk – when the price of butcher's-meat comes down."

This I said in real earnest; but the price of butcher's-meat went up, and I never have known it come down again.

While I was thinking, our Bunny came in, full of apples, raw and roasted, and of the things the children said. But at the very first sight of Bardie, everything else was gone from her. All the other children were fit only to make dirt-pies of. This confirmed and held me steadfast in the opinions which I had formed without any female assistance.

In spite of all her own concerns (of which she was full enough, goodness knows), Bunny came up, and pulled at her, by reason of something down her back, which wanted putting to rights a little – a plait, or a tuck, or some manner of gear; only I thought it a clever thing, and the little one approved of it. And then, our Bunny being in her best, these children took notice of one another, to settle which of them was nearer to the proper style of clothes. And each admired the other for anything which she had not got herself.

"Come, you baby-chits," said I, being pleased at their womanly ways, so early; "all of us want some food, I think. Can we eat our dresses?" The children, of course, understood me not; nevertheless, what I said was sense.

And if, to satisfy womankind – for which I have deepest regard and respect – I am forced to enter into questions higher

than reason of men can climb – of washing, and ironing, and quilling, and gaufreing, and setting up, and styles of transparent reefing, and all our other endeavours to fetch this child up to her station – the best thing I can do will be to have mother Jones in to write it for me; if only she can be forced to spell.

However, that is beyond all hope; and even I find it hard sometimes to be sure of the royal manner. Only I go by the Bible always, for every word that I can find; being taught (ever since I could read at all) that his Majesty, James I., confirmed it.

Now this is not all the thing which I wanted to put before you clearly; because I grow like a tombstone often, only fit to make you laugh, when I stand on my right to be serious. My great desire is to tell you what I did, and how I did it, as to the managing of these children, even for a day or two, so as to keep them from crying, or scorching, or spoiling their clothes, or getting wet, or having too much victuals or too little. Of course I consulted that good mother Jones five or six times every day; and she never was weary of giving advice, though she said every time that it must be the last. And a lucky thing it was for me in all this responsibility to have turned enough of money, through skilful catch and sale of fish, to allow of my staying at home a little, and not only washing and mending of clothes, but treating the whole of the household to the delicacies of the season. However, it is not my habit to think myself anything wonderful; that I leave to the rest of the world: and no doubt any good and clever man might have done a great part of what I did. Only if anything should befall us, out of

the reach of a sailor's skill and the depth of Bunny's experience, mother Jones promised to come straight in, the very moment I knocked at the wall; and her husband slept with such musical sound that none could be lonely in any house near, and so did all of her ten children who could crack a lollipop.

Upon the whole, we passed so smoothly over the first evening, with the two children as hard at play as if they were paid fifty pounds for it, that having some twenty-five shillings in hand after payment of all creditors, and only ten weeks to my pension-day, with my boat unknown to anybody, and a very good prospect of fish running up from the Mumbles at the next full moon, I set the little one on my lap, after a good bout of laughing at her very queer ins and outs – for all things seem to be all alive with, as well as to, her.

"Will you stay with me, my dear?" I said, as bold as King George and the Dragon; "would you like to live with old Davy and Bunny, and have ever so many frocks washed, soon as ever he can buy them?" For nothing satisfied her better than to see her one gown washed. She laid her head on one side a little, so that I felt it hot to my bosom, being excused of my waistcoat; and I knew that she had overworked herself.

"Ness," she said, after thinking a bit. "Ness, I live with 'a, old Davy, till my dear mama come for me. Does 'e know, old Davy, 'hot I thinks?"

"No, my pretty; I only know that you are always thinking." And so she was; no doubt of it.

"I tell 'a, old Davy, 'hot I thinks. No – I can't tell 'a; only sompfin. 'Et me go for more pay with Bunny."

"No, my dear, just stop a minute. Bunny has got no breath left in her; she is such a great fat Bunny. What you mean to say is, that you don't know how papa and mama could ever think of leaving you such a long, long time away."

She shook her curly pate as if each frizzle were a puzzle; and her sweet white forehead seemed a mainsail full of memory; and then gay presence was in her eyes, and all the play which I had stopped broke upon her mind again.

"Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor," she began, with her beautiful fingers crawling, like white carnelian compasses, up the well-made buttons of my new smock-guernsey; for though I had begged my hot waistcoat off, I never was lax of dress in her presence as I would be in Bunny's – or, in short, with anybody except this little lady. I myself taught her that "tinker, tailor," and had a right to have it done to me. And she finished it off with such emphasis upon button No. 7, which happened to be the last of them, "gentleman, ploughboy, fief," looking straight into my eyes, and both of us laughing at the fine idea that I could possibly be called a thief! But fearing to grow perhaps foolish about her, as she did these charming things to me, I carried her up to bed with Bunny, and sung them both away to sleep with a melancholy dirge of sea.

Into whatever state of life it may please God to call me – though I fear there cannot be many more at this age of writing

– it always will be, as it always has been, my first principle and practice to do my very utmost (which is far less than it was, since the doctor stopped my hornpipes) to be pleasant and good company. And it is this leading motive which has kept me from describing – as I might have done, to make you tingle and be angry afterwards – the state of Sker House, and of Evan Thomas, and Moxy his wife, and all their friends, about those five poor rabbits. Also other darkish matters, such as the plight of those obstinate black men when they came ashore at last, three together, and sometimes four, as if they had fought in the water. And, after all, what luck they had in obtaining proper obsequies, inasmuch as, by order of Crowner Bowles, a great hole in the sand was dug in a little sheltered valley, and kept open till it was fairly thought that the sea must have finished with them; and then, after being carefully searched for anything of value, they were rolled in all together and kept down with stones, like the parish mangle, and covered with a handsome mound of sand. And not only this, but in spite of expense and the murmuring of the vestry, a board well tarred (to show their colour) was set up in the midst of it, and their number "35" chalked up; and so they were stopped of their mischief awhile, after shamefully robbing their poor importer.

But if this was conducted handsomely, how much more so were the funerals of the five young white men! The sense of the neighbourhood, and the stir, and the presence of the Coroner (who stopped a whole week for sea air and freshness, after seeing so many good things come in, and perceiving so many ways

home that night, that he made up his mind to none of them); also the feeling (which no one expressed, but all would have been disappointed of) that honest black Evan, after knocking so many men down in both parishes and the extra-parochial manor, was designed, by this downright blow from above, to repent and to entertain every one; and most of all, the fact that five of a highly respectable family were to be buried at once, to the saving of four future funerals, all of which must have been fine ones, – these universal sympathies compelled the house and the people therein to exert themselves to the uttermost.

Enough that it gave satisfaction, not universal, but general; and even that last is a hard thing to do in such great outbursts of sympathy. Though Moudlin church is more handy for Sker, and the noble Portreeve of Kenfig stood upon his right to it, still there were stronger reasons why old Newton should have the preference. And Sker being outside either parish, Crowner Bowles, on receipt of a guinea, swore down the Portreeve to his very vamps. For Moxy Thomas was a Newton woman, and loved every scrape of a shoe there; and her uncle, the clerk, would have ended his days if the fees had gone over to Kenfig. Our parson, as well, was a very fine man, and a match for the whole of the service; while the little fellow at Moudlin always coughed at a word of three syllables.

There was one woman in our village who was always right. She had been disappointed, three times over, in her early and middle days; and the effect of this on her character was so lasting and

so wholesome, that she never spoke without knowing something. When from this capital female I heard that our churchyard had won the victory, and when I foresaw the demented condition of glory impending upon our village (not only from five magnificent palls, each with its proper attendance of black, and each with fine hymns and good howling, but yet more than that from the hot strength of triumph achieved over vaunting Kenfig), then it came into my mind to steal away with Bardie.

A stern and sad sacrifice of myself, I assured myself that it was, and would be; for few even of our oldest men could enjoy a funeral more than I did, with its sad reflections and junketings. And I might have been head-man of all that day, entitled not only to drop the mould, but to make the speech afterwards at the Inn.

But I abandoned all these rights, and braved once more the opinions of neighbours (which any man may do once too often); and when the advance of sound came towards us, borne upon the western wind from the end of Newton Wayn, slowly hanging through the air, as if the air loved death of man – the solemn singing of the people who must go that way themselves, and told it in their melody; and when the Clevice rock rung softly with the tolling bell, as well as with the rolling dirges, we slipped away at the back of it – that is to say, pretty Bardie and I. For Bunny was purer of Newton birth than to leave such a sight without tearing away. And desiring some little to hear all about it, I left her with three very good young women, smelling strongly of southernwood, who were beginning to weep already, and

promised to tell me the whole of it.

As we left this dismal business, Bardie danced along beside me, like an ostrich-feather blown at. In among the sandhills soon I got her, where she could see nothing, and the thatch of rushes deadened every pulse of the funeral bell. And then a strange idea took me, all things being strange just now, that it might prove a rich wise thing to go for a quiet cruise with Bardie. In that boat, and on the waves, she might remember things recovered by the chance of semblance. Therefore, knowing that all living creatures five miles either way of us were sure to be in Newton churchyard nearly all the afternoon, and then in the public-houses, I scrupled not to launch my boat and go to sea with the little one. For if we steered a proper course no funeral could see us. And so I shipped her gingerly. The glory of her mind was such that overboard she must have jumped, except for my Sunday neck-tie with a half-hitch knot around her. And the more I rowed the more she laughed, and looked at the sun with her eyes screwed up, and at the water with all wide open. "'Hare is 'a going, old Davy?" she said, slipping from under my Sunday splice, and coming to me wonderfully, and laying her tiny hands on mine, which beat me always, as she had found out; "is 'a going to my dear papa, and mama, and ickle bother?"

"No, my pretty, you must wait for them to come. We are going to catch some fish, and salt them, that they may keep with a very fine smell, till your dear papa brings your mama and all the family with him; and then what a supper we will have!"

"Ill 'a," she said; "and poor Bardie too?"

But the distance of the supper-time was a very sad disappointment to her, and her bright eyes filled with haze. And then she said "Ness" very quietly, because she was growing to understand that she could not have her own way now. I lay on my oars and watched her carefully, while she was shaking her head and wondering, with her little white shoulders above the thwart, and her innocent and intelligent eyes full of the spreading sky and sea. It was not often one had the chance, through the ever-flitting change, to learn the calm and true expression of that poor young creature's face. Even now I could not tell, except that her playful eyes were lonely, and her tender lips were trembling, and a heartful of simple love could find no outlet, and lost itself. These little things, when thinking thus, or having thought flow through them, never ought to be disturbed, because their brains are tender. The unknown stream will soon run out, and then they are fit again for play, which is the proper work of man. We open the world, and we close the world, with nothing more than this; and while our manhood is too grand (for a score and a half of years, perhaps), to take things but in earnest, the justice of our birth is on us, — we are fortune's plaything.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PUBLIC APPROBATION

If that child had no luck herself (except, of course, in meeting me), at any rate she never failed to bring me wondrous fortune. The air was smooth, and sweet, and soft, the sky had not a wrinkle, and the fickle sea was smiling, proud of pleasant manners. Directly I began to fish at the western tail of the Tuskar, scarcely a fish forebore me. Whiting-pollacks run in shoals, and a shoal I had of them; and the way I split and dried them made us long for breakfast-time. And Bardie did enjoy them so.

The more I dwelled with that little child, the more I grew wrapped up in her. Her nature was so odd and loving, and her ways so pretty. Many men forego their goodness, so that they forget the nature of a little darling child. Otherwise, perhaps, we might not, if we kept our hearts aright, so despise the days of loving, and the time of holiness. Now this baby almost shamed me, and I might say Bunny too, when, having undressed her, and put the coarse rough night-gown on her, which came from Sker with the funerals, my grandchild called me from up-stairs, to meet some great emergency.

"Granny, come up with the stick dreckly moment, granny dear! Missy 'ont go into bed. Such a bad wicked child she is."

I ran up-stairs, and there was Bunny all on fire with noble

wrath, and there stood Bardie sadly scraping the worm-eaten floor with her small white toes.

"T'se not a yicked shild," she said, "T'se a yae good gal, I is; I 'ont go to bed till I say my payers to 'Mighty God, as my dear mama make me. She be very angry with 'a, Bunny, 'hen she knows it."

Hereupon I gave Bunny a nice little smack, and had a great mind to let her taste the stick which she had invoked so eagerly. However, she roared enough without it, because her feelings were deeply hurt. Bardie also cried for company, or, perhaps, at my serious aspect, until I put her down on her knees and bade her say her prayers, and have done with it. At the same time it struck me how stupid I was not to have asked about this before, inasmuch as even a child's religion may reveal some of its history.

She knelt as prettily as could be, with her head thrown back, and her tiny palms laid together upon her breast, and thus she said her simple prayer.

"Pay God bless dear papa, and mama, and ickle bother. Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, 'ook upon a ickle shild, and make me a good gal. Amen."

Then she got up and kissed poor Bunny, and was put into bed as good as gold, and slept like a little dormouse till morning.

Take it altogether now, we had a happy time of it. Every woman in Newton praised me for my kindness to the child; and even the men who had too many could not stand against Bardie's smile. They made up, indeed, some scandalous story,

as might have been expected, about my relationship to the baby, and her sudden appearance so shortly after my poor wife's death. However, by knocking three men down, I produced a more active growth of charity in our neighbourhood.

And very soon a thing came to pass, such as I never could have expected, and of a nature to lift me (even more than the free use of my pole) for a period of at least six months, above the reach of libel, from any one below the rank of a justice of the peace. This happened just as follows: – One night the children were snug in bed, and finding the evenings long, because the days were shortening in so fast – which seemed to astonish everybody – it came into my head to go no more than outside my own door, and into the "Jolly Sailors." For the autumn seemed to be coming on, and I like to express my opinions upon that point in society; never being sure where I may be before ever another autumn. Moreover, the landlord was not a man to be neglected with impunity. He never liked his customers to stay too long away from him, any more than our parson did; and pleasant as he was when pleased, and generous in the way of credit to people with any furniture, nothing was more sure to vex him, than for a man without excuse, to pretend to get on without him.

Now when I came into the room, where our little sober proceedings are – a narrow room, and dark enough, yet full of much good feeling, also with hard wooden chairs worn soft by generations of sitting – a sudden stir arose among the excellent people present. They turned and looked at me, as if they had

never enjoyed that privilege, or, at any rate, had failed to make proper use of it before. And ere my modesty was certain whether this were for good or harm, they raised such a clapping with hands and feet, and a clinking of glasses in a line with it, that I felt myself worthy of some great renown. I stood there and bowed, and made my best leg, and took off my hat in acknowledgment. Observing this, they were all delighted, as if I had done them a real honour; and up they arose with one accord, and gave me three cheers, with an Englishman setting the proper tune for it.

I found myself so overcome all at once with my own fame and celebrity, that I called for a glass of hot rum-and-water, with the nipple of a lemon in it, and sugar the size of a nutmeg. My order was taken with a speed and deference hitherto quite unknown to me; and better than that, seven men opened purses, and challenged the right to pay for it. Entering into so rare a chance of getting on quite gratis, and knowing that such views are quick to depart, I called for six oz. of tobacco, with the Bristol stamp (a red crown) upon it. Scarce had I tested the draught of a pipe – which I had to do sometimes for half an hour, with all to blow out, and no drawing in – when the tobacco was at my elbow, served with a saucer, and a curtsy. "Well," thought I, "this is real glory." And I longed to know how I had earned it.

It was not likely, with all those people gazing so respectfully, that I would deign to ask them coarsely, what the deuce could have made them do it. I had always felt myself unworthy of obscure position, and had dreamed, for many years, of having

my merits perceived at last. And to ask the reason would have been indeed a degradation, although there was not a fibre of me but quivered to know all about it. Herein, however, I overshot the mark, as I found out afterwards; for my careless manner made people say that I must have written the whole myself – a thing so very far below me, that I scorn to answer it. But here it is; and then you can judge from the coarse style, and the three-decked words, whether it be work of mine.

Felix Farley's Bristol Journal, Saturday, July 24, 1782. – "*Shipwreck and loss of all hands—Heroism of a British tar.* – We hear of a sad catastrophe from the coast of Glamorganshire. The season of great heat and drought, from which our readers must have suffered, broke up, as they may kindly remember, with an almost unprecedented gale of wind and thunder, on Sunday, the 11th day of this month. In the height of the tempest a large ship was descried, cast by the fury of the elements upon a notorious reef of rocks, at a little place called Sker, about twenty miles to the east of Swansea. Serious apprehensions were entertained by the spectators for the safety of the crew, which appeared to consist of black men. Their fears were too truly verified, for in less than an hour the ill-fated bark succumbed to her cruel adversaries. No adult male of either colour appears to have reached the shore alive, although a celebrated fisherman, and heroic pensioner of our royal navy, whose name is David Llewellyn, and who traces his lineage from the royal bard of that patronymic, performed prodigies of valour, and proved himself

utterly regardless of his own respectable and blameless life, by plunging repeatedly into the boiling surges, and battling with the raging elements, in the vain hope of extricating the sufferers from a watery grave. With the modesty which appears to be, under some inscrutable law of nature, inseparable from courage of the highest order, this heroic tar desires to remain in obscurity. This we could not reconcile with our sense of duty; and if any lover of our black brethren finds himself moved by this narration, we shall be happy to take charge of any remittance marked 'D. L.' It grieves us to add that none escaped except an intelligent young female, who clung to the neck of Llewellyn. She states that the ship was the Andalusia, and had sailed from Appledore, which is, we believe, in Devonshire. The respected Coroner Bowles held an inquest, which afforded universal satisfaction."

Deeply surprised as I was to find how accurately, upon the whole, this paper had got the story of it – for not much less than half was true – it was at first a puzzle to me how they could have learned so much about myself, and the valiant manner in which I intended to behave, but found no opportunity. Until I remembered that a man, possessing a very bad hat, had requested the honour of introducing himself to me, in my own house, and had begged me by all means to consider myself at home, and to allow him to send for refreshment, which I would not hear of twice, but gave him what I thought up to his mark, according to manners and appearance. And very likely he made a mistake between my description of what I was ready, as well as desirous,

to carry out, and what I bodily did go through, ay, and more, to the back of it. However, I liked this account very much, and resolved to encourage yet more warmly the next man who came to me with a bad hat. What, then, was my disgust at perceiving, at the very foot of that fine description, a tissue of stuff like the following!

"Another account [from a highly-esteemed correspondent]. – The great invasion of sand, which has for so many generations spread such wide devastation, and occasioned such grievous loss to landowners on the western coast of Glamorganshire, made another great stride in the storm of Sabbath-day, July 11. A vessel of considerable burthen, named the Andalusia, and laden with negroes, most carefully shipped for conversion among the good merchants of Bristol, appears to have been swallowed up by the sand; and our black fellow-creatures disappeared. It is to be feared, from this visitation of an ever-benign Providence, that few of them had been converted, and that the burden of their sins disabled them from swimming. If one had been snatched as a brand from the burning, gladly would we have recorded it, and sent him forward prayerfully for sustenance on his way to the Lord. But the only eyewitness (whose word must never be relied upon when mammon enters into the conflict), a worn-out but well-meaning sailor, who fattens upon the revenue of an overburdened country – this man ran away so fast that he saw hardly anything. The Lord, however, knoweth His own in the days of visitation. A little child came ashore alive, and a dead

child bearing a coronet. Many people have supposed that the pusillanimous sailor aforesaid knows much more than he will tell. It is not for us to enter into that part of the question. Duty, however, compels us to say, that any one desiring to have a proper comprehension of this heavy but righteous judgment – for He doeth all things well – cannot do better than apply to the well-known horologist of Bridgend, Hezekiah Perkins, also to the royal family."

The above yarn may simply be described as a gallow's-rope spun by Jack Ketch himself from all the lies of all the scoundrels he has ever hanged, added to all that his own vile heart can invent, with the devil to help him. The cold-blooded, creeping, and crawling manner in which I myself was alluded to – although without the manliness even to set my name down – as well as the low hypocrisy of the loathsome white-livered syntax of it, made me, – well, I will say no more – the filthiness reeks without my stirring, and, indeed, no honest man should touch it; only, if Hezekiah Perkins had chanced to sneak into the room just then, his wife might have prophesied shrouds and weeds.

For who else was capable of such lies, slimed with so much sanctimony, like cellar slugs, or bilge-hole rats, rolling in Angelica, while all their entrails are of brimstone, such as Satan would scorn to vomit? A bitter pain went up my right arm, for the weakness of my heart, when that miscreant gave me insult, and I never knocked him down the well. And over and over again I have found it a thorough mistake to be always forgiving. However,

to have done with reflections which must suggest themselves to any one situated like me – if, indeed, any one ever was – after containing myself, on account of the people who surrounded me, better than could have been hoped for, I spoke, because they expected it.

"Truly, my dear friends, I am thankful for your goodwill towards me. Also to the unknown writer, who has certainly made too much of my poor unaided efforts. I did my best; it was but little: and who dreams of being praised for it? Again, I am thankful to this other writer, who has overlooked me altogether. For the sake of poor Sandy Macraw, we must thank him that he kindly forbore to make public the name."

You should have seen the faces of all the folk around the table when I gave them this surprise.

"Why," said one, "we thought for sure that it was you he was meaning, Dyo dear. And in our hearts we were angry to him, for such falsehoods large and black. Indeed and indeed, true enough it may be of a man outlandish such as Sandy Macraw is."

"Let us not hasten to judge," I replied; "Sandy is brave enough, I daresay, and he can take his own part well. I will not believe that he ran away; very likely he never was there at all. If he was, he deserves high praise for taking some little care of himself. I should not have been so stiff this night, if I had only had the common-sense to follow his example."

All our people began to rejoice; and yet they required, as all of us do, something more than strongest proof.

"What reason is to show then, Dyo, that this man of letters meant not you, but Sandy Macraw, to run away so?"

"Hopkin, read it aloud," I said; "neither do I know, nor care, what the writer's meaning was. Only I thought there was something spoken about his Majesty's revenue. Is it I, or is it Sandy, that belongs to the revenue?"

This entirely settled it. All our people took it up, and neglected not to tell one another. So that in less than three days' time, my name was spread far and wide for the praise, and the Scotchman's for the condemnation. I desired it not, as my friends well knew; but what use to beat to windward, against the breath of the whole of the world? Therefore I was not so obstinate as to set my opinion against the rest; but left it to Mr Macraw to rebut, if he could, his pusillanimity.

As for Hezekiah Perkins, all his low creations fell upon the head from which they sprang. I spoke to our rector about his endeavour to harm a respectable Newton man – for you might call Macraw that by comparison, though he lived at Porthcawl, and was not respectable – and everybody was struck with my kindness in using such handsome terms of a rival. The result was that Perkins lost our church-clock, which paid him as well as a many two others, having been presented to the parish, and therefore not likely to go without pushing. For our rector was a peppery man, except when in the pulpit, and what he said to Hezekiah was exactly this.

"What, Perkins! another great bill again! 'To repair of church-

clock, seven-and-sixpence; to ten miles' travelling, at threepence per mile,' – and so on, and so on! Why, you never came further than my brother the Colonel's, the last three times you have charged for. Allow me to ask you a little question: to whom did you go for the keys of the church?"

"As if I should want any keys of the church! There is no church-lock in the county that I cannot open, as soon as whistle."

"Indeed! So you pick our lock. Do you ever open a church-door honestly, for the purpose of worshipping the Lord? I have kept my eye upon you, sir, because I hear that you have been reviling my parishioners. And I happen to know that you never either opened the lock of our church or picked it, for the last three times you have charged for. But one thing you have picked for many years, and that is the pocket of my ratepayers. Be off, sir – be off with your trumpery bill! We will have a good churchman to do our clock – a thoroughly honest seaman, and a regular church-goer."

"Do you mean that big thief, Davy Llewellyn? Well, well, do as you please. But I will thank you to pay my bill first."

"Thank me when you get it, sir. You may fall down on your canting knees, and thank the Lord for one thing."

"What am I to thank the Lord for? For allowing you to cheat me thus?"

"For giving me self-command enough not to knock you down, sir." With that the rector came so nigh him, that brother Perkins withdrew in haste; for the parson had done that sort of thing to

people who ill-used him; and the sense of the parish was always with him. Hence the management of the church-clock passed entirely into my hands, and I kept it almost always going, at less than half Hezekiah's price; and this reunited me to the Church (from which my poor wife perhaps had led me astray some little), by a monthly arrangement which reflected equal credit on either party.

And even this was not the whole of the blessings that now rolled down upon me, for the sake, no doubt, of little Bardie, as with the ark in the Bible. For this fine Felix Farley was the only great author of news at that time prevalent among us. It is true that there was another journal nearer to us, at Hereford, and a highly good one, but for a very clear reason it failed to have command of the public-houses. For the customers liked both their pipes and their papers to be of the same origin, and go together kindly. And Hereford sent out no tobacco; while Bristol was more famous for the best Virginian birdseye, than even for rum, or intelligence.

Therefore, as everybody gifted with the gift of reading came to the public-houses gradually, and to compare interpretation over those two narratives, both of which stirred our county up, my humble name was in their mouths as freely and approvingly as the sealing-wax end of their pipe stems. Unanimous consent accrued (when all had said the same thing over, fifty times in different manners, and with fine-drawn argument) that after all, and upon the whole, David Llewellyn was an honour to county

and to country.

After that, for at least a fortnight, no more dogs were set at me. When I showed myself over a gentleman's gate, in the hope of selling fish to him, it used to be always, "At him, Pincher!" "Into his legs, Growler, boy!" so that I was compelled to carry my conger-rod to save me. Now, however, and for a season till my fame grew stale, I never lifted the latch of a gate without hearing grateful utterance, "Towser, down, you son of a gun! Yelp and Vick, hold your stupid tongues, will you?" The value of my legs was largely understood by gentlemen. As for the ladies and the housemaids, if conceit were in my nature, what a run it would have had! Always and always the same am I, and above even women's opinions. But I know no other man whose head would not have been turned with a day of it. For my rap at the door was scarcely given (louder, perhaps, than it used to be) before every maid in the house was out, and the lady looking through the blinds. I used to dance on the step, and beat my arms on my breast, with my basket down between my legs, and tremble almost for a second rap; and then it was, "Like your imperence!" "None of your stinking stuff!" and so on. But now they ran down beautifully, and looked up under their eyelids at me, and left me to show them what I liked, and never beat down a halfpenny, and even accepted my own weight. Such is the grand effect of glory; and I might have kissed every one of them, and many even of the good plain cooks, if I could have reconciled it with my sense of greatness.

CHAPTER XIX.

A CRAFT BEYOND THE LAW

Colonel Lougher, of Candleston Court, was one of the finest and noblest men it was ever my luck to come across. He never would hear a word against me, any more than I would against him; and no sooner did I see him upon the Bench than I ceased to care what the evidence was. If they failed to prove their falsehoods (as nearly always came to pass), he dismissed them with a stern reprimand for taking away my character; and if they seemed to establish anything by low devices against me, what did he say? Why, no more than this: "David, if what they say be true, you appear to have forgotten yourself in a very unusual manner. You have promised me always to improve; and I thought that you were doing it. This seems to be a trifling charge – however, I must convict you. The penalty is one shilling, and the costs fifteen."

"May it please your worship," I always used to answer, "is an honest man to lose his good name, and pay those who have none for stealing it?"

Having seen a good deal of the world, he always felt the force of this, but found it difficult to say so with prejudiced men observing him. Only I knew that my fine and costs would be slipped into my hand by-and-by, with a glimpse of the Candleston livery.

This was no more than fair between us; for not more than seven generations had passed since Griffith Llewellyn, of my true stock, had been the proper and only bard to the great Lord Lougher of Coity, whence descended our good Colonel. There had been some little mistake about the departure of the title, no doubt through extremes of honesty, but no lord in the county came of better blood than Colonel Lougher. To such a man it was a hopeless thing for the bitterest enemy – if he had one – to impute one white hair's breadth of departure from the truth. A thoroughly noble man to look at, and a noble man to hearken to, because he knew not his own kindness, but was kind to every one. Now this good man had no child at all, as generally happens to very good men, for fear of mankind improving much. And the great king of Israel, David, from whom our family has a tradition – yet without any Jewish blood in us – he says (if I am not mistaken) that it is a sure mark of the ungodly to have children at their desire, and to leave the rest of their substance to ungodly infants.

Not to be all alone, the Colonel, after the death of his excellent wife, persuaded his only sister, the Lady Bluett, widow of Lord Bluett, to set up with him at Candleston. And this she was not very loath to do, because her eldest son, the present Lord Bluett, was of a wild and sporting turn, and no sooner became of age but that he wanted no mother over him. Therefore she left him for a while to his own devices, hoping every month to hear of his suddenly repenting.

Now this was a lady fit to look at. You might travel all day among people that kept drawing-rooms, and greenhouses, and the new safe of music, well named from its colour "grand pæony," and you might go up and down Bridgend, even on a fair-day, yet nobody would you set eyes on fit to be looked at as a lady on the day that you saw Lady Bluett.

It was not that she pretended anything; that made all the difference. Only she felt such a thorough knowledge that she was no more than we might have been, except for a width of accidents. And nothing ever parted her from any one with good in him. For instance, the first time she saw me again (after thirty years, perhaps, from the season of her beauty-charm, when I had chanced to win all the prizes in the sports given at Candleston Court, for the manhood of now Colonel Lougher), not only did she at once recognise me, in spite of all my battering, but she held out her beautiful hand, and said, "How are you, Mr Llewellyn?" Nobody had ever called me "Mr Llewellyn" much till then; but, by good luck, a washerwoman heard it and repeated it; and since that day there are not many people (leaving out clods and low enemies) with the face to accost me otherwise.

However, this is not to the purpose, any more than it is worthy of me. How can it matter what people call me when I am clear of my fish-basket? as, indeed, I always feel at the moment of unstrapping. No longer any reputation to require my fist ready. I have done my utmost, and I have received the money.

These are the fine perceptions which preserve a man of my

position from the effects of calumny. And, next to myself, the principal guardian of my honour was this noble Colonel Lougher. Moreover, a fine little chap there was, Lady Bluett's younger son, Honourable Rodney Bluett by name; for his father had served under Admiral Rodney, and been very friendly with him, and brought him to church as a godfather. This young Rodney Bluett was about ten years old at that time, and the main delight of his life was this, to come fishing with old Davy. The wondrous yarns I used to spin had such an effect on his little brain, that his prospects on dry land, and love of his mother, and certain inheritance from the Colonel, were helpless to keep him from longing always to see the things which I had seen. With his large blue eyes upon me, and his flaxen hair tied back, and his sleeves tucked up for paddling, hour by hour he would listen, when the weather was too rough to do much more than look at it. Or if we went out in a boat (as we did when he could pay for hiring, and when his mother was out of the way), many and many a time I found him, when he should have been quick with the bait, dwelling upon the fine ideas which my tales had bred in him. I took no trouble in telling them, neither did I spare the truth when it would come in clumsily (like a lubber who cannot touch his hat), but they all smelled good and true, because they had that character.

However, he must bide his time, as every one of us has to do, before I make too much of him. And just at the period now in hand he was down in my black books for never coming near

me. It may have been that he had orders not to be so much with me, and very likely that was wise; for neither his mother nor his uncle could bear the idea of his going to sea, but meant to make a red herring of him, as we call those poor land-soldiers. Being so used to his pretty company, and his admiration, also helping him as I did to spend his pocket-money, I missed him more than I could have believed; neither could I help sorrowing at this great loss of opportunity; for many an honest shilling might have been turned ere winter by the hire of my boat to him when he came out with me fishing. I had prepared a scale of charges, very little over Captain Bob's, to whom he used to pay 4d. an hour, when I let him come after the whiting with me. And now, for no more than 6d. an hour, he should have my very superior boat, and keep her head by my directions, for he understood a rudder, and bait my hooks, and stow my fish, and enjoy (as all boys should) the idea of being useful.

For, as concerns that little barkie, I had by this time secured myself from any further uneasiness, or troublesome need of concealment, by a bold and spirited facing of facts, which deserve the congratulation of all honest fishermen. The boat, like her little captain, was at first all white – as I may have said – but now, before her appearance in public, I painted her gunwale and strakes bright blue, even down to her water-mark; and then, without meddling with her name, or rather that of the ship she belonged to, I retraced very lightly, but so that any one could read it, the name of the port from which she hailed, and which (as I

felt certain now, from what I had seen on the poor wrecked ship) must have been San Salvador; and the three last letters were so plain, that I scarcely had to touch them.

Now this being done, and an old worn painter shipped instead of the new one, which seemed to have been chopped off with an axe, I borrowed a boat and stood off to sea from Porthcawl Point, where they beach them, having my tackle and bait on board, as if for an evening off the Tuskar, where turbot and whiting-pollack are. Here I fished until dusk of the night, and as long as the people ashore could see me; but as soon as all was dark and quiet, I just pulled into Newton Bay, and landed opposite the old "Red house," where my new boat lay in ordinary, snug as could be, and all out of sight. For the ruins of this old "Red house" had such a repute for being haunted, ever since a dreadful murder cast a ban around it, that even I never wished to stop longer than need be there at night; and once or twice I heard a noise that went to the marrow of my back; of which, however, I will say no more, until it comes to the proper place. Enough that no man, woman, or child, for twenty miles round, except myself, had a conscience clear enough to go in there after dark, and scarcely even by daylight. My little craft was so light and handy, that, with the aid of the rollers ready, I led her down over the beach myself, and presently towed her out to sea, with the water as smooth as a duck-pond, and the tide of the neap very silent. The weather was such as I could not doubt, being now so full of experience. Therefore, I had no fear to lie in a very dangerous berth indeed,

when any cockle of a sea gets up, or even strong tides are running. This was the west-end fork of the Tuskar, making what we call "callipers;" for the back of the Tuskar dries at half-ebb, and a wonderful ridge stops the run of the tide, not only for weeds but for fish as well. Here with my anchor down, I slept, as only a virtuous man can sleep.

In the grey of the morning, I was up, ere the waning moon was done with, and found the very thing to suit me going on delightfully. The heavy dew of autumn, rising from the land by perspiration, spread a cloud along the shore. A little mist was also crawling on the water here and there; and having slept with a watch-coat and tarpaulin over me, I shook myself up, without an ache, and like a good bee at the gate of the hive, was brisk for making honey.

Hence I pulled away from land, with the heavy boat towing the light one, and even Sandy Macraw unable to lay his gimlet eye on me. And thus I rowed, until quite certain of being over three miles from land. Then with the broad sun rising nobly, and for a moment bowing, till the white fog opened avenues, I spread upon my pole a shirt which mother Jones had washed for me. It was the time when Sandy Macraw was bound to be up to his business; and I had always made a point of seeing that he did it. To have a low fellow of itchy character, and no royal breed about him, thrust by a feeble and reckless government into the berth that by nature was mine, and to find him not content with this, but even in his hours of duty poaching, both day and night,

after my fish; and when I desired to argue with him, holding his tongue to irritate me, – satisfaction there could be none for it; the only alleviation left me was to rout up this man right early, and allow him no chance of napping.

Therefore, I challenged him with my shirt, thus early in the morning, because he was bound to be watching the world, if he acted up to his nasty business, such as no seaman would deign to; and after a quarter of an hour perhaps, very likely it was his wife that answered. At any rate there was a signal up, and through my spy-glass I saw that people wanted to launch a boat, but failed. Therefore I made a great waving of shirt, as much as to say, "extreme emergency; have the courage to try again." Expecting something good from this, they laid their shoulders, and worked their legs, and presently the boat was bowing on the gently-fluted sea.

Now it was not that I wanted help, for I could have managed it all well enough; but I wanted witnesses. For never can I bear to seem to set at nought legality. And these men were sure, upon half-a-crown, to place the facts before the public in an honest manner. So I let them row away for the very lives of them, as if the salvage of the nation hung upon their thumbs and elbows; only I dowsed my shirt as soon as I found them getting eager. And I thought that they might as well hail me first, and slope off disappointment.

"Hoy there! Boat ahoy! What, old Davy Llewellyn!"

What man had a right to call me "old"? There I was as fresh

as ever. And I felt it the more that the man who did it was grey on the cheeks with a very large family, and himself that vile old Sandy! Nevertheless I preserved good manners.

"Ship your starboard oars, you lubbers. Do you want to run me down? What the devil brings you here, at this time of the morning?" Hereupon these worthy fellows dropped their oars, from wonder; until I showed them their mistake, and begged them to sheer off a little. For if I had accepted rope, such as they wished to throw me, they might have put in adverse claims, and made me pay for my own boat!

"When a poor man has been at work all night," said I, to break off their officiousness; "while all you lazy galley-rakers were abed and snoring, can't he put his shirt to dry, without you wanting to plunder him?"

To temper off what might appear a little rude, though wholesome, I now permitted them to see a stoneware gallon full of beer, or at least I had only had two pints out. Finding this to be the case, and being hot with rowing so rapidly to my rescue, they were well content to have some beer, and drop all further claims. And as I never can bear to be mean, I gave them the two and sixpence also.

Sandy Macraw took all this money; and I only hope that he shared it duly; and then, as he never seemed at all to understand my contempt of him, he spoke in that dry drawl of his, which he always droned to drive me into very dreadful words, and then to keep his distance.

"I am heartily glad, ma mon, to see the loock ye have encoontered. Never shall ye say agin that I have the advantage of ye. The boit stud me in mickle siller; but ye have grappit a boit for nort."

I cannot write down his outlandish manner of pronouncing English; nor will I say much more about it; because he concealed his jealousy so, that I had no enjoyment of it, except when I reasoned with myself. And I need have expected nothing better from such a self-controlling rogue. But when we came to Porthcawl Point – where some shelter is from wind, and two public-houses, and one private – the whole affair was so straightforward, and the distance of my boat from shore, at time of capture, so established and so witnessed, that no steward of any manor durst even cast sheep's-eyes at her. A paper was drawn up and signed; and the two public-houses, at my expense, christened her "Old Davy." And indeed, for a little spell, I had enough to do with people, who came at all hours of the day, to drink the health of my boat and me; many of whom seemed to fail to remember really who was the one to pay. And being still in cash a little, and so generous always, I found a whole basket of whiting, and three large congers, and a lobster, disappear against chalk-marks, whereof I had no warning, and far worse, no flavour. But what I used to laugh at was, that when we explained to one another how the law lay on this question, and how the craft became legally mine, as a derelict from the Andalusia, drifting at more than a league from land, – all our folk being short and

shallow in the English language, took up the word, and called my boat, all over the parish, my "Relict;" as if, in spite of the Creator's wisdom, I were dead and my wife alive!

CHAPTER XX.

CONFIDENTIAL INTERCOURSE

But everybody must be tired of all this trouble about that boat. It shows what a state of things we live in, and what a meddlesome lot we are, that a good man cannot receive a gift straight into his hands from Providence, which never before rewarded him, though he said his prayers every night almost, and did his very best to cheat nobody; it proves, at least to my mind, something very rotten somewhere, when a man of blameless character must prove his right to what he finds. However, I had proved my right, and cut in Colonel Lougher's woods a larger pole than usual, because the law would guarantee me, if at all assaulted.

And truly, after all my care to be on the right side of it, such a vile attack of law was now impending on me, that with all my study of it, and perpetual attempts to jam its helm up almost into the very eye of reason, my sails very nearly failed to draw, and left me shivering in the wind. But first for what comes foremost.

At that particular moment all things seemed to be most satisfactory. Here was my property duly secured and most useful to me, here was a run of fish up from the Mumbles of a very superior character, here was my own reputation spread by the vigilance of the public press, so that I charged three farthings a-pound more than Sandy Mac did, and here was my cottage once

more all alive with the mirth of our Bunny and Bardie. To see them playing at hide-and-seek with two chairs and a table; or "French and English," which I taught them; or "come and visit my grandmother;" or making a cat of the kettle-holder, with a pair of ears and a tail to it; or giving a noble dinner-party with cockles and oyster-shells, and buttons, and apple-peel chopped finely; or, what was even a grander thing, eating their own dinners prettily, with their dolls beside them, – scarcely any one would have believed that these little ones had no mothers.

And yet they did not altogether seem to be forgetful, or to view the world as if there were no serious side to it. Very grave discourse was sometimes held between their bouts of play, and subjects of great depth and wonder introduced by doll's clothes. For instance: —

"Hasn't 'a got no mama, poor Bunny, to thread 'e needle?"

"No, my dear," I answered, for my grandchild looked stupid about it; "poor Bunny's mother is gone to heaven."

"My mama not gone to heaven. My mama come demorrow-day. I'se almost tired of yaiting, old Davy, but she sure to come demorrow-day."

But as the brave little creature spoke, I saw that "the dust was in her eyes." This was her own expression always, to escape the reproach of crying, when her lonely heart was working with its misty troubles, and sent the tears into her eyes, before the tongue could tell of them. "Demorrow-day, demorrow-day," all her loss was to be recovered always on "demorrow-day."

Not even so much as a doll had been saved from the total wreck of her fortunes; and when I beheld her wistful eyes set one day upon Bunny's doll – although only fit for hospital, having one arm and one leg and no nose, besides her neck being broken – I set to at once and sharpened my knife upon a piece of sandstone. Then I sought out a piece of abele, laid by from the figure-head of a wrecked Dutchman, and in earnest I fell to, and shaped such a carving of a doll as never was seen before or since. Of course the little pet came, and stood, and watched every chip as I sliced it along, with sighs of deep expectancy, and a laugh when I got to the tail of it; and of course she picked up every one, not only as neatest of the neat, but also accounting them sacred offsets of the mysterious doll unborn. I could not get her to go to bed; and it was as good as a guinea to me to see the dancing in her eyes, and the spring of her body returning.

"'E can make a boofely doll, old Davy; but 'e doesn't know the yai to dess a doll."

"You are quite wrong there," said I, perceiving that I should go up, or down, according to my assertion; and it made her open her eyes to see me cut out, with about five snips, a pair of drawers quite good enough for any decent woman. And she went to bed hugging the doll in that state, and praying to have her improved to-morrow.

At breakfast-time mother Jones dropped in, for she loved a good salt-herring, and to lay down the law for the day almost; as if I knew scarce anything. And I always let her have her talk,

and listened to it gravely; and clever women, as a rule, should not be denied of this attention; for if they are, it sours them. While she was sucking the last of the tail, and telling me excellent scandal, my little lady marched in straight, having finished her breakfast long ago, and bearing her new doll pompously. The fly-away colour in her cheeks, which always made her beautiful, and the sparkle of her gleeful eyes, were come again with pleasure, and so was the lovely pink of her lips, and the proper aspect of her nose. Also she walked with such motherly rank, throwing her legs with a female jerk – it is enough for me to say that any newly-married woman would have kissed her all round the room.

Now, mother Jones, having ten fine children (five male and five female) going about with clothes up to their forks, need not have done what she did, I think, and made me so bashful in my own house. For no sooner did she see this doll, than she cried, "Oh, my!" and covered up her face. The little maid looked up at me in great wonder, as if I were leading her astray; and I felt so angry with Mrs Jones, after all the things I had seen abroad, and even in English churches, that I would not trust myself to speak. However, to pay her out for that, I begged her to cure the mischief herself, which she could not well decline; and some of the green blind still remaining, Dolly became a most handsome sight, with a crackle in front and a sweeping behind, so that our clerk, a good natured man, was invited to christen her; and "Patty Green" was the name he gave: and Bunny's doll was nobody. Such a baby-like thing might seem almost below my dignity, and that of all

the rest of us; only this child had the power to lead us, as by a special enchantment, back to our own childhood. Moreover, it was needful for me to go through with this doll's birth (still more so with her dress, of course, having her a female), because through her I learned a great deal more of Bardie's history than ever our Bunny could extract.

Everybody who has no patience with the ways of childhood, may be vexed, and must be vexed, with our shipwrecked maid for knowing many things, but not the right; but I think she was to blame, only for her innocence. In her tiny brain was moving some uncertain sense of wrong; whether done by herself, or to her, was beyond her infant groping. If she could have made her mind up, in its little milky shell, that the evil had befallen, without harm on her part, doubtless she had done her best to let us know the whole of it. Her best, of course, would be but little, looking at her age and so on; and perhaps from some harsh word or frown, stamped into the tender flux of infantile memory, a heavy dread both darkened and repressed much recollection. Hence, if one tried to examine her, in order to find out who she was, she would shake her head, and say, "No! sompfin;" as she always did when puzzled or unable to pronounce a word. The only chance of learning even any little things she knew, was to leave her to her own way, and not interrupt her conversation with wooden or crockery playmates. All of these she endowed with life, having such power of life herself, and she reckoned them up for good behaviour, or for bad, as the case might be. And often was I

touched at heart, after a day of bitter fighting with a world that wronged me, by hearing her in baby-prattle tell her playthings of their unkindness to a little thing with none to love her.

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