

Richards Laura Elizabeth Howe

Isla Heron



Laura Richards

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Laura E. Richards
Isla Heron

TO MY HUSBAND

AFTER TWENTY-FIVE HAPPY YEARS

1871-1896

CHAPTER I. THE PREACHER

THE morning service was over, and the congregation gone home. The preacher was to dine with Captain Maynard, but there was an hour and more to dinner-time, and she had begged permission to stroll about for half an hour, promising to find her way to the comfortable white cottage, perched on a point of rock overlooking the little bay.

Now she was standing on the lower rocks, looking about her; a trim, quiet figure in a black gown, with a close straw bonnet set on her smooth brown hair. She “didn’t handsome much,” the people decided, but she had a taking way with her, and preached good, sound Advent doctrine. They were glad she had come, and would be sorry when the schooner should take her on her way the next day, to preach at other places along the coast.

The young woman seemed to be looking for some one, for she shaded her eyes with her hand, and gazed earnestly up and down the line of rocks. So absorbed was she, that she almost stumbled over a figure sitting on the rocks, which now rose and confronted her. A strange figure enough; so rough and gray and battered that it was hardly to be wondered at that she had not distinguished it from the rock itself. The face it turned upon her was red and brown in patches, as if the skin were moth-eaten; the mouth was huge and misshapen; only the blue eyes, bright and kindly, redeemed, in some degree, the hideousness of the other features.

“Mornin’, preacher!” said this strange being. “You preached good this mornin’. Joe heard you; you might not have seen him, for he stood in the doorway, but Joe heard you, and it done him good.”

“I am glad to hear that!” said the preacher, smiling. “No, I did not see you. What is your other name, beside Joe? I could hardly call you by that, could I?”

“Brazybone; Joe Brazybone. Sculpin Joe, the boys call me. They don’t think Joe’s handsome, round here; but he’s got an uglier one to home, he tells ’em. Ma’am Brazybone, she beats Joe, preacher, I tell you.”

“Your – your wife?” asked the preacher, hardly knowing what to say.

“Brother’s wife,” said Joe. “Widder, I should say. Brother died ten year ago, effects of lookin’ at her too much. He was tender, Joe’s tough. I hope to wear her out fust, lookin’ at me, but ther’s no sayin’. There she is now, out searchin’ for me. Don’t you say a word, preacher, don’t you say a word! She can’t see none too well, and I ain’t goin’ in yet for a spell.”

He crouched down against the rock, and again seemed almost a part of it. The preacher, half amused, half embarrassed, stood still, as a woman came out of a tiny hut near by, and peered about her with angry, short-sighted eyes. Mrs. Brazybone was a vast woman, with a face like a comic nightmare, and a set of misfit features that might have been picked up at a rag and bottle shop. Her hair was untidy, her dress awry, and her little eyes gleamed with ill-humour. “Decidedly,” thought the preacher, “Joe is right, and she is the worse of the two.”

“Joe Brazybone!” called the sister-in-law. “Joseph! you comin’ in to dinner?”

There was no answer.

“Joe Brazybone, will you speak to me? I know you are there somewheres, if I can’t see you. Now you come in, or you won’t get no dinner this day. Skulkin’ round those rocks, as if you was a seal! I wish ’t you was!”

She went into the house and shut the door with a bang.

“Is this wise?” asked the preacher, looking down at Joe, who was shaking with silent laughter. “Why do you want to make her angry, Joseph? and you will be hungry presently, if you are not now.”

“Joe cooks his own dinner, whenever he gets a chance, preacher. He’s a good cook, Joe is, and Mother Brazybone ain’t, you see. She’ll go off a-visitin’ pretty soon, and then Joe’ll get him some

dinner. What was you lookin' for, preacher, when you come out here on my rocks? You was lookin' for some one, and it wasn't Joe."

"You are right," said the preacher, "I saw a young girl in the hall, – or rather, she stood outside, leaning in at the window, – whose face interested me greatly. She disappeared before the service was over, and I wondered if I might see her somewhere. I – I hardly know why I came down here to look for her. She was a beautiful girl, about fourteen, I should think, with long hair of a strange colour, and very brilliant eyes."

She paused, for Joe Brazybone was nodding and blinking with every appearance of delight.

"You saw her, did you?" he said. "Yes! yes! anybody would notice Isly. She'd be queen of this hull island, if folks had their rights, and if other folks knowed a queen when they saw her. Not governor, I don't mean, nor yet anything of that sort, but a real queen, with a crown on her head, and all the folks down on their marrer-bones every time she set her foot out-o'-doors."

"I don't understand you," said the preacher. "Do you mean that the island belongs by right to that young girl?"

Joe nodded like a mandarin.

"It does, by the rights of it. Every step and foot of land belongs to the Herons, and she's the only Heron left alive, save and except the boy, as he don't count, bein' deaf-dummy. But Isly Heron she's the born queen, and you may believe what Joseph says about that, preacher. I knowed Herons all my life. Herons was master folks over on the main, before ever they come here. When they come over, they brought Brazybones with 'em, to clean their fish and wash out their boats. Long ago that was, way back among the gret-grets, and 't hes been so ever since, till it come down to Giles and Joe. Joe done it, too, as long as Giles would let him. Old Joe would ha' done it to the last, but Giles sent him away. He was sick and sufferin', Giles was, and he didn't want old Joe to know it, but Joe did know. Joe would have died when Giles did, preacher, if it hadn't ha' been for Isly and the boy."

The strange creature was brushing his ragged gray sleeve across his eyes, and his voice quavered curiously.

"You never saw Giles?" he said, looking up presently.

"Giles was Isly's father, but he's dead now. You might never have seen him formerly, when he was over on the main some time?"

The preacher shook her head.

"He was another!" Joe went on, half to himself. "Like a king, Giles was, for all his smilin', pleasant ways. Most folks didn't know it, but Joe knowed it. Many's the time I've hid down against the rock, after Giles wouldn't see me no more, and waited so I could touch him when he went by. It done me good to touch his coat; I felt good come out to me, every time I done it."

He stared at the preacher, and she stared back at him, thinking him out of his wits. Probably he was, or, more likely still, he had never had his full share of intelligence. Yet, if the preacher had been a seer – if she had had powers of vision that could pierce the veil of past as of future years – she might have called up scenes and figures that from century to century should seem to justify some of Joe Brazybone's ideas, fantastic as they were. She might see, in generation after generation, two figures side by side, one masterful, dominant, the other crouching, serving, loving, coming to heel when called, like a dog, springing like a man to action at the master's word. One might almost, even now, fancy a dim scene, half hidden by rolling clouds of dust and smoke. A battle-field. Gilles Tête d'Airain, the fair-haired Norman, stands wiping his bloody sword, and calls back his men from the pursuit, for the enemy is scattered beyond redemption. The half-savage soldiers come trooping back with wild gestures, with great shouts of triumph. Among them the chief singles out one, an ugly fellow of enormous strength, who twice, since the bloody morning, has stood between his master and death. He kneels, a serf, bound for life and for death; he is bidden to rise a free man, with henceforth a name and a station of his own.

"Brave et bon tu t'es montré; Brave-et-Bon sera ton nom, d'ici à jamais!"

The clouds roll forward, the vision is gone. But was this true? and has Tête d’Airain sunk to mere Heron, and has Brave-et-Bon, good and brave, drawled itself away into Brazybone? If this were so, it might account for poor Joe’s attitude, at which all the villagers laugh.

“You’d like to see Isly, preacher? You was meanin’ to speak to her?”

“I – yes, if you think she would like to see me. Her face interested me greatly; I should like to see her nearer, and make her acquaintance.”

“This way, preacher! this way! you’re the right sort; a lady yourself, and knowin’ a lady when you see one. Mother Brazybone, she would have taken Isly home, when her mother died; but I wouldn’t hear to it. I know’d how ’twould be. She’d ha’ set her to work, and tried to make a servant of her; Isly Heron doin’ Mother Brazybone’s work! Guess the solid rocks would ha’ come down to do the cookin’ fust, ’fore they allowed any such doin’s. These rocks know Herons, I tell you, most as well as old Joe does. They laid soft under Giles, that day he was up yonder.” He nodded upward, toward a huge mass of rock that towered across the narrow bay, the younger sister of the Island of the Wild Rocks.

The preacher, more and more puzzled, followed her strange guide, as he led the way toward a point of rock not far distant.

“She’ll be here, likely!” he said. “She often stops here on her way home, Isly does, to look about her, and see the lay of the land. She thinks, too, Isly does! A power of thinkin’ she keeps up! Wonderful, for one of her size, if she warn’t a Heron, and thinkin’ natural to ’em all, – wonderful!”

They turned the point of rock, and came directly upon the person of whom they were in search. She was standing still, with her hands folded, looking out to sea; a slender, youthful figure, lonely as the rocks around her. This was Isla Heron. And while Joe Brazybone, in his clumsy way, is presenting the preacher to her, as if the crown he fancied were shining in actual gold on her head, let us go back a little, and see who the child is, and who her father was, the Giles Heron who was so faithfully loved, and who is now gone to his own place.

CHAPTER II. THE HERONS

THE child Isla might have been twelve years old when her father died. Giles Heron was the last man of his people, unless you counted the boy, and no one did count him. The Herons had owned the whole island once, but, bit by bit, it had passed away from the name, if not from the blood; they had no gift for keeping, it was said. A roving people, the Herons mostly died at sea, or, if women, married into families on the main, as we call the shore that on fine days can be dimly seen from the Island of the Wild Rocks. Giles had been a wild lad, and held himself, as all his people had done, above the fishing-folk in the village at the north end. Few of them knew him well; there was only Joe Brazybone, Sculpin Joe, who from babyhood had been his humble and loving servant, and who still clung to him, until that strange affair of the marriage. To most of the villagers it seemed “all of a piece,” and “Heron doings,” when Giles brought home from some foreign port a handsome deaf-mute, a “dummy,” as a wife. Joe would have been her servant, too, gladly enough; but, when he came shambling along the rocks to make his first visit, the young woman turned and ran from him; and Giles laughed, and told him he would best keep away for a time. Poor Joe did not come again.

Giles built a house, – you might look long for it now, – at the wild south end of the island, which still belonged to him. Neither Joe nor any one else would visit him there, he knew, for it was considered an unlucky place, and no one knew what things might be met with there. But Giles loved it, and as for his wife, the Wild Rocks bounded the world for her, once Giles told her it was her home. Here their two children were born. The first was a daughter, and Giles named her Isla, in fanciful remembrance of the savage island which was her birthplace and his. When the boy came, four years later, the dumb wife would have given him his father’s name; but Giles said “No!” It was no chancy name, and the boy should be called Jacob, after a grandfather over on the main, who had no Heron blood in him. “See if we can’t make him a farmer,” he said, laughing. “There’s good farming land here; and the sea is hungry for folks named Giles Heron.” Mary Heron yielded, as she would yield to anything that Giles wished. She was passionately loving, in her silent way. Her husband would have filled her world full enough, had there been no children; she had hardly the mother look in her eyes; but the children were his, and she loved and cared for them; most for the boy, who should have borne his father’s name, and whom she still called “little Giles,” in her heart.

Alas! but he bore his mother’s curse. Isla learned speech readily from her father; but little Jacob was mute from birth. No sound came into his quiet world, but he missed nothing; the sign language spoke for his every need, and his eyes were filled with beauty all day long.

It was a black day for Giles Heron when he found the boy was deaf. For the first time his heart hardened toward the woman he had chosen. She felt the chill of his averted face, of the eyes that would not meet hers; felt it, and cried to God in her dumbness, that He would take her and her stricken child away, out of sight of her husband’s changed face.

But Heron was a kind man. He had wedded his wife for her wild beauty; he had grown to love her simple goodness and truth. He smiled again, but neither forgot; do people ever forget? He set himself busily to teach the girl all he knew, – not much, perhaps, reading and writing, ciphering, odd scraps of history and geography. He had a few tattered books by him, – there were not many books on the Island in those days, but Giles had picked them up here and there in his wanderings, – and the two pored over these hour by hour. The dumb mother sat near, nursing her dumb child, and longing for death; but not to her was death coming.

It was Giles Heron who, still in mid-prime, felt his strength going from him. His people had never had the sturdy, four-square constitution that was the birthright of most of the islanders. They were slender, the Herons, wiry and tough as a rule, but with here and there a narrow chest that could

not answer year after year to the call for struggle against the icy winds of winter. One March the north wind raged for a week without ceasing. Heron never thought of staying within doors, but he felt the cold strike deeper and deeper, till it had him by the heart; a cough fastened upon him, and fatalism did the rest.

“I’ve got my call!” he said. “If they’ll let me stay till spring, I’d as lief go as not.”

He turned with feverish earnestness to Isla’s lessons, and racked his brains for forgotten rules of his school-days. Hour after hour they sat in the still sunny cove which was their schoolroom, and he mapped the globe and the different countries on the fine, white sand, – he had always been a fair draughtsman, – and told her how he had visited this city and that, and how the people looked and spoke and moved.

“I like Greece best!” said the child. “Shall we go there, Giles, when I am big, and live in one of those white things – temples – where the roof is broken, and the sky comes through? I hate roofs!”

“Greece is a good way off,” said Giles. “Bellton is nearer, little girl; you shall go to Bellton. See! here it would be, not three days’ sail. I was there a couple of times; there was a place with trees, and a pond, might be the size of this cove here. Like to go there?”

“Are there rocks?” asked the child. “Can you see the sky?”

“Well, no; not much. The people live in brick houses, joined together in rows, this way,” and he drew a street, with neat sidewalks, and people passing up and down.

“I’ll never go there!” said Isla with decision. “It’s like the jail you told me of, over on the main.”

“Just!” said her father, nodding. “Only folks build these jails and live in them, because they like ’em. Some stay in ’em all winter, I believe, and never go out from October to May. And call that living! I’ll take my way every time, thank you, if it is shorter.”

“Are they white folks?”

“White? yes, child! white as anybody is; whiter, too, like a cellar-plant, because they get no sun.”

“I didn’t know!” said Isla. “I thought maybe they turned black. But I’ll never go there.”

Her father mused; then he drew a larger building at the end of the street, with towers and pinnacles.

“Here’d be a church!” he said. “You’d like that, Isla. There’d be music, an organ, likely, and lots of singing. The windows are coloured red and blue, and the light comes in like sunset all day.”

“That’s pretty!” the child nodded, approvingly. “What do they do there, Giles?”

“Like a meeting-house; say prayers, and preach, and sing hymns and things.”

“Oh!” she paused, and the brightness passed from her face.

“Do you think He likes that, Giles?”

She nodded upward. Her father made no reply. He was not a religious man, but had thought it right to tell the child that there was some one called God, who lived above the sky, and who knew when people did wrong.

“He has all outdoors,” Isla went on. “I should think He would hate a house, even if it was big. Do you suppose they try to fool Him with the coloured windows, Giles?”

Giles thought this unlikely; perhaps they supposed He might feel more at home where ’twas coloured and pretty, he added, trying to fall into the child’s mood.

The girl was silent. “Is He dumb, Giles, do you think?” she asked presently.

“I don’t know,” said Giles. “He never spoke to me. What are you thinking of, Isla Heron?”

“Oh – only I hear like voices sometimes in the wind, and down by the shore more times; and I wondered, that was all. Do you suppose ever He would speak to a girl, Giles?”

“Sooner than any one else!” said Giles Heron.

“He’s good, you’re sure?”

“Yes, they all say He’s good.”

Then Giles made the sign for silence, for his heart seemed to lie cold and beat heavily; and Isla fell a-dreaming, feeling the stillness as home.

CHAPTER III. SPRING AND THE CHILDREN

SPRING came at last, waking slowly, as it does on the rocks out at sea. Giles Heron, from his doorway, watched the green creeping slowly through the dry, russet grass, and felt a faint stirring at his heart; this was his last spring on the pleasant earth, and he could think of nothing homelike that he might look forward to. God was good, probably, and 'twas likely things were going as they should; but it looked cold and dark ahead. He liked to feel the bones of the rocks warming through, as the sun rose higher, and the yellow beams grew stronger. He hailed every waking smell of leaves, of new grass, of wet, softening mould. His chief delight was to lie down on the dense carpet of trailing yew that spread a few yards from his cottage door, and feel it curl and close round him thick and fragrant; he smiled as he remembered the island legend of the yew's closing so once round a man who had landed on the south rocks with some evil intent, – Giles, in his weakness, could not remember what evil, – closing round him and holding him so a prisoner, till the fishermen heard his starving cries, and rescued him, and carried him over to the main with a warning, scarcely needed, never to set foot on the island again.

Such tales they told, such foolery! He supposed it was the wind got into their heads, when it blew all winter, and beat their brains about. One tale brought another, however, and he found himself thinking of a story they told of his own people. What was it about the scarlet sorrel over on Toluma? Toluma is the sister island, a huge rock, bare and gray for the most part, but with a great mantle of sorrel flung over one shoulder, which blossoms blood-red in the season. What was the story Giles had heard when he was a boy, about the red sorrel taking its colour from the blood of the Herons? He had not thought of all these old stories for years, but now they came back to him, vague and dim, yet homelike as nothing else was. The first Heron, he who came over to the island because he could not stay on the main, having slain his enemy there; that first Giles Heron of whom any record remained, had taken his life, over there on the high shoulder of Toluma. It was in June, when the sorrel was blossoming, and ever since then, the colour of it had not been tawny-red, as in most places, but blood-red. That was what they used to say, when he was a boy; and surely the sorrel was redder there than he had ever seen it elsewhere. Was it the colour of blood, however? It would be curious to see now. Suppose when one got a little weaker, – seeing that even now it was hard to get about, hard to get down to the boat and push her out, so that he had to lie for some time half faint, floating about, before he could gather up the oars and pull a little way out from the shore, – suppose that, while he still could move, he should pull over to the other rock, and climb up, – taking plenty of time, one ought to be able to do it, – and take a last rest on the red sorrel. And, – if one should help oneself a little, seeing the end was so near anyway, and breathing so hard as it was, – why, then one would know just whether there was any truth in the story, and if it was the same colour. And it was not likely it would be laid up against a fellow, so tired as he was, and not good for anything in this place.

These dreams floated through the mind of the dying man, as he lay in his boat, sometimes for hours at a time, in the soft spring days. He always took his lines and bait with him, but no one looked for him to bring in fish. He had to keep away, that was all. He could not bear the pain in his wife's eyes; he fancied she would suffer less while he was away; at least she would not shiver every time he coughed. She heard nothing, but each paroxysm shook her with anguish. Isla had never seen sickness, and knew not what ailed her father, but she grew anxious, and asked why he did not eat, and why he was so thin. In animated talk with her mother, hands flying too swift for common eyes to follow, she besought for new dishes, this or that that might tempt his palate; she hunted the young wintergreen leaves, that he liked for flavouring. And the dumb woman would nod and smile at the child, and would make this dish or that, knowing it would not be tasted.

And so the spring ran on towards summer, and the sunshine lay broad and strong over the island; only in one spot the shadow still lay, and crept darker and thicker every day.

But little Jacob saw no shadow, only the light that turned the world to green and gold, and made the rocks grow hot to the touch. He was a pretty little fellow, fair-haired and blue-eyed like the Herons; he might be eight years old at this time, and Isla twelve. It was pretty to see the two playing together. Hand in hand they strayed over the Wild Rocks, talking their silent talk, gathering berries or shells. It was all their own, the south end of the island; the people of the village near the farther end never came here. They were superstitious folk, and had their own ideas about the Wild Rocks, and the dumb woman who dwelt there. Some held it was no mortal wife that Giles Heron had brought home with him those years ago; and they whispered that the first Heron had been banished for witchcraft from parts further south, before he came to our main, and that he had come to escape the burning in Massachusetts. Then he had taken another life and his own, and was it likely such a race as that would go down peacefully like other folks? So there was no one to interfere with Isla and Jacob, and they could be happy in their own way. They had a castle in every rock, a watch-tower in every gnarled and stunted tree. They had playmates, too, in the wild sheep that scampered about the rocky hill-pastures, leaving their shaggy fleece on bush and briar as they ran. Many of these sheep belonged to the people in the fishing village, and were caught once a year and sheared, and let loose again; but some were wholly wild, and could never be caught; and their fleece hung heavy and broad, blackened with wind and weather. Now they knew, these sheep, that the Heron children carried no shears, and that they never tried to drive a sheep except in play, and for play they themselves were quite ready. So many a game went on in the deep, little, green valleys among the Wild Rocks, where the buttercups hide like fairy gold, and the ferns curl and uncurl year by year, unbroken and uncrushed. Jacob might ride on the back of the old black ram, the leader of the wild flock, and Isla could pull his horns, and lead him about, and dress him up with flowers, as if he were a cosset lamb, instead of a fierce old fellow who would knock down a tame sheep as soon as look at him, and whom no other human being save these two had ever dared approach.

There were other friends, too. Sometimes, as the children were sitting at their play on the rocks, there would rise, from the ragged crest of an old fir-tree hard by, a great black bird; would hover an instant, uttering a hoarse croak, which yet had a friendly sound, as of greeting; then, beating his broad wings, would sail out over the water. A second followed him, and the two circled and swung together above the playing children, above the waking, laughing sea. Two ancient ravens, living apart from the noisy crows and the song-sparrows. They knew Isla Heron well, in their age-long wisdom, and loved her in their way. She was not of the same mould as the boys who now and then strayed to the south end of the island, half timid, half defiant; who called them crows, and dared one another to throw stones at them. No stone was ever thrown, however. There was a story on the island of a boy who had once stoned the ravens, – these very birds, or their forbears, and had been set upon by them, and driven backward, shrieking, over the verge of Black Head, to be dashed to pieces on the rocks below. The ravens had taken note of this child since her babyhood, and found her ways much like their own. Sometimes they would sit on a rock near by and watch her, with bright eyes cocked aside, as she strung berries or shells, or plaited garlands of seaweed. Once or twice they had brushed her hair, floating past on outspread wing; and she rightly interpreted this as a token of friendship.

“You might tame them,” her father said when she told him. “Ravens are easy tamed; I read a book once about one.”

“They would not like me any more if I did,” said Isla. “I should hate any one who tried to tame me.” And Giles laughed, and thought it would be no easy task.

Other moods and hours took the children down to the shore; this was especially their delight in the morning, when the simple housework was done, and the mother sat at the spinning by the door (for wherever she came from, she brought her wheel with her, and was a thrifty, hard-working housewife), and the father out in his boat.

Their bathing-place was such as no king ever had. Among the rocks by the water's edge was one of enormous size and strange form. One might think that some mammoth of forgotten ages had been overtaken by the tide as he lay asleep; had slept into death, and so turned to stone. Seen from a distance, he looked all smooth and gray; but, when one came to climb his vast flanks they were rent and seamed and scarred, and by his shoulder there was tough climbing enough. Near by, a huge, formless mass of rock had fallen off into the sea, and between this and the side of the sleeping monster was a pool of clear shining water. Brown tresses of rockweed, long ribbons of kelp, swung gently to and fro; sprays of emerald green floated through the water; the rocks could be seen at the bottom, and they were green and crimson, with here and there fringes of delicate rose-colour. In and out among the rockweed darted brown shrimps and tiny fish; on the rocks the barnacles opened, waved a plume of fairy feathers, and closed again.

Here the children came to bathe, swimming about as free and gracefully as the fishes that hardly feared them, or lying at length in the shallows that stretched gold and crystal in the sun, caressed by soft fingers, swept by long, brown tresses; only weeds, were they? who could tell?

Isla loved to lie so, in the summer heat, when the water seemed warm to her hardy limbs, though a landsman might still think it cold. She would tether little Jacob to a rock with a long kelp-ribbon, and he would play contentedly at being a horse, that creature he had never seen save in a picture. There are no horses on the Island of the Wild Rocks.

There the girl would float and dream, her body at rest, her mind out and away with the clouds, or the sea-gulls that hovered and wheeled above the blue sparkling water, till there came a low murmur on the outer reef, a white break against the seaward side of the rock, and she knew that the tide was rising. Then, taking the child by the hand, she would leave the water, and climb up to a great boulder, where the barnacles lay dry in the sun. Only the great spring tides came here; and she would lie on the warm rock, one hand supporting her chin, the other holding Jacob's hand, and watch the ancient miracle that was always new.

With a swing and a swirl the waters rushed into their pool of peace; the foam sprang high, then fell, and crept up the rock, up, up. Now back, strongly, with a wrench that tugged at the streaming locks, scattering them loose, unrolling the kelp-ribbons to their utmost length. It was gone, and for an instant there was stillness again; then once more came the roar, the inward rush, the snowy column tossed aloft, the white seeking hands creeping up along the rock, till now all the water was a white churn of foam, all the air was filled with driving spray, and the reef thundered with wild artillery. The seas hove bodily over it, and broke only in the cove itself; the place where the children had paused and lingered in their upward climb now boiled like a pot, and even on the top of the great boulder the spray beat in their faces, stinging, burning. A black wing struck athwart the white smoke, and a raven floated past on the wind, one eye cast aside on the children. Isla cried out with glee, and shook her wet hair, and broke into a chant, such as she loved to croon to the wind; but Jacob was timid, and did not like the spray in his face, and, though he heard no sound, shivered at every vibration of the rock as the seas dashed themselves at it; he pulled his sister's hand, and begged to be gone; so home they went over the mammoth's back, and left the raven to his own.

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