

# ROBERT MICHAEL BALLANTYNE

FREAKS ON THE FELS:  
THREE MONTHS'  
RUSTICATION

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Months' Rustication**

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# R. M. Ballantyne

## Freaks on the Fells: Three Months' Rustication

### Story 1

#### Story 1—Chapter 1. Mr Sudberry in his Counting-House

Mr John Sudberry was a successful London merchant. He was also a fat little man. Moreover, he was a sturdy little man, wore spectacles, and had a smooth bald head, over which, at the time we introduce him to the reader, fifty summers had passed, with their corresponding autumns, winters, and springs. The passage of so many seasons over him appeared to have exercised a polishing influence on the merchant, for Mr Sudberry's cranium shone like a billiard-ball. In temperament Mr Sudberry was sanguine, and full of energy. He could scarcely have been a successful merchant without these qualities. He was also extremely violent.

Now, it is necessary here to guard the reader from falling into a mistake in reference to Mr Sudberry's character. We have said that he was violent, but it must not be supposed that he was *passionate*. By no means. He was the most amiable and sweet-tempered of men. His violence was owing to physical rather than mental causes. He was hasty in his volitions, impulsive in his actions, madly reckless in his personal movements. His moral and physical being was capable of only two conditions—deep repose or wild activity.

At his desk Mr Sudberry was wont to sit motionless like a statue, with his face buried in his hands and his thoughts busy. When these thoughts culminated, he would start as if he had received an electric shock, seize a pen, and, with pursed lips and frowning brows, send it careering over the paper with harrowing rapidity, squeaking and chirping, (the pen, not the man), like a small bird with a bad cold. Mr Sudberry used quills. He was a *tremendous* writer. He could have reported the debates of the "House" in long-hand.

The merchant's portrait is not yet finished. He was a peculiar man, and men of this sort cannot be sketched off in a few lines. Indeed, had he not been a peculiar man, it would not have been worth while to drag him thus prominently into notice.

Among other peculiarities in Mr Sudberry's character, he was afflicted with a chronic tendency to *dab* his pen into the ink-bottle and split it to the feather, or double up its point so as to render it unserviceable. This infirmity, coupled with an uncommon capacity for upsetting ink-bottles, had induced him to hire a small clerk, whose principal duties were to mend pens, wipe up ink, and, generally, to attend to the removal of *débris*.

When Mr Sudberry slept he did it profoundly. When he awoke he did it with a start and a stare, as if amazed at having caught himself in the very act of indulging in such weakness. When he washed he puffed, and gasped, and rubbed, and made such a noise, that one might have supposed a walrus was engaged in its ablutions. How the skin of his head, face, and neck stood the towelling it received is incomprehensible! When he walked he went like an express train; when he sauntered he relapsed into the slowest possible snail's-pace, but he did not graduate the changes from one to the other. When he sat down he did so with a crash. The number of chairs which Mr Sudberry broke in the course of his life would have filled a goodly-sized concert-room; and the number of tea-cups which he had swept off tables with the tails of his coat might, we believe, have set up a moderately ambitious man in the china trade.

There was always a beaming smile on the merchant's countenance, except when he was engaged in deep thought; then his mouth was pursed and his brows knitted.

The small clerk was a thin-bodied, weak-minded, timid boy, of about twelve years of age and of humble origin. He sat at Mr Sudberry's double desk in the office, opposite and in dangerous proximity to his master, whom he regarded with great admiration, alarm, and awe.

On a lovely afternoon towards the middle of May, when city men begin to thirst for a draught of fresh air, and to long for an undignified roll on the green fields among primroses, butter-cups, and daisies, Mr Sudberry sat at his desk reading the advertisements in the *Times*.

Suddenly he flung the paper away, hit the desk a sounding blow with his clinched fist, and exclaimed firmly—

“I'll do it!”

Accustomed though he was to nervous shocks, the small clerk leaped with more than ordinary tremor off his stool on this occasion, picked up the paper, laid it at his master's elbow, and sat down again, prepared to look out—nautically speaking—for more squalls.

Mr Sudberry seized a quill, dabbed it into the ink-bottle, and split it. Seizing another he dabbed again; the quill stood the shock; the small clerk ventured a sigh of relief and laid aside the inky napkin which he had pulled out of his desk expecting an upset, and prepared for the worst. A note was dashed off in two minutes,—signed, sealed, addressed, in half a minute, and Mr Sudberry leaped off his stool. His hat was thrown on his head by a species of sleight of hand, and he appeared in the outer office suddenly, like a stout Jack-in-the-box.

“I'm away, Mr Jones,” (to his head clerk), “and won't be back till eleven to-morrow morning. Have you the letters ready? I am going round by the post-office, and will take charge of them.”

“They are here, sir,” said Mr Jones, in a mild voice.

Mr Jones was a meek man, with a red nose and a humble aspect. He was a confidential clerk, and much respected by the firm of Sudberry and Company. In fact, it was generally understood that the business could not get on without him. His caution was a most salutary counteractive to Mr Sudberry's recklessness. As for “Co,” he was a sleeping partner, and an absolute nonentity.

Mr Sudberry seized the letters and let them fall, picked them up in haste, thrust them confusedly into his pocket, and rushed from the room, knocking over the umbrella-stand in his exit. The sensation left in the office was that of a dead calm after a sharp squall. The small clerk breathed freely, and felt that his life was safe for that day.

## Story 1—Chapter 2. Mr Sudberry at Home

"My dear," cried Mr Sudberry to his wife, abruptly entering the parlour of his villa, near Hampstead Heath, "I have done the deed!"

"Dear John, you *are* so violent; my nerves—really—*what* deed?" said Mrs Sudberry, a weak-eyed, delicate woman, of languid temperament, and not far short of her husband's age.

"I have written off to secure a residence in the Highlands of Scotland for our summer quarters this season."

Mrs Sudberry stared in mute surprise. "John! my dear! are you in earnest? Have you not been precipitate in this matter? You know, love, that I have always trusted in your prudence to make arrangements for the spending of our holiday; but really, when I think—"

"Well, my dear, 'When you think,'—pray, go on."

"Don't be hasty, dear John; you know I have never objected to any place you have hitherto fixed on. Herne Bay last year was charming, and the year before we enjoyed Margate *so* much. Even Worthing, though rather too long a journey for a family, was delightful; and, as the family was smaller then, we got over the journey on the whole better than could have been expected. But Scotland!—the Highlands!"—Mr Sudberry's look at this point induced his wife to come to a full stop. The look was not a stern look,—much less a savage look, as connubial looks sometimes are. It was an aggrieved look; not that he was aggrieved at the dubious reception given by his spouse to the arrangement he had made;—no, the sore point in his mind was that he himself entertained strong doubts as to the propriety of what he had done; and to find these doubts reflected in the mind of his faithful better half was perplexing.

"Well, Mary," said the worthy merchant, "go on. Do you state the *cons*, and I'll enumerate the *pros*, after which we will close the account, and see on which side the balance lies."

"You know, dear," said Mrs Sudberry, in a remonstrative tone, "that the journey is fearfully long. I almost tremble when I think of it. To be sure, we have the railroad to Edinburgh now; but beyond that we shall have to travel by stage, I suppose, at least I hope so; but perhaps they have no stage-coaches in Scotland?"

"Oh, yes, they have a few, I believe," replied the merchant, with a smile.

"Ah! that is fortunate; for wagons are fearfully trying. No, I really think that I could *not* stand a wagon journey after my experience of the picnic at Worthing some years ago. Think of our large family—seven of us altogether—in a wagon, John—"

"But you forget, I said that there *are* stage-coaches in Scotland."

"Well; but think of the slow and wearisome travelling among great mountains, over precipices, and through Scotch mists. Lady Knownothing assures me she has been told that the rain never ceases in Scotland, except for a short time in autumn, just to give the scanty crops time to ripen. You know, dear, that our darling Jacky's health could never stand the Scotch mists, he is so *very*, delicate."

"Why, Mary!" exclaimed Mr Sudberry, abruptly; "the doctor told me only yesterday that for a boy of five years old he was a perfect marvel of robust health—that nothing ailed him, except the result of over-eating and the want of open-air exercise; and I am sure that I can testify to the strength of his legs and the soundness of his lungs; for he kicks like a jackass, and roars like a lion."

"It is *very* wrong, *very* sinful of the doctor," said Mrs Sudberry, in a languidly indignant manner, "to give such a false report of the health of our darling boy."

At this moment the door burst open, and the "darling boy" rushed into the room—with a wild cheer of defiance at his nurse, from whom he had escaped, and who was in full pursuit—hit his head on the corner of the table, and fell flat on the floor, with a yell that might have sent a pang of jealousy to the heart of a Chippeway Indian!

Mr Sudberry started up, and almost overturned the tea-table in his haste; but before he could reach his prostrate son, nurse had him kicking in her arms, and carried him off howling.

“Darling child!” said Mrs Sudberry, with her hand on her heart. “How you do startle me, John, with your violence! That is the fifteenth tea-cup this week.”

The good lady pointed to a shattered member of the set that lay on the tray beside her.

“I have just ordered a new set, my dear,” said her husband, in a subdued voice. “Our poor dear boy would benefit, I think, by mountain air. But go on with the *cons*.”

“Have I not said enough?” replied Mrs Sudberry, with an injured look. “Besides, they have no food in Scotland.”

This was a somewhat staggering assertion. The merchant looked astonished.

“At least,” pursued his wife, “they have nothing, I am told, but oatmeal. Do you imagine that Jacky could live on oatmeal? Do you suppose that your family would return to London in a condition fit to be looked at, after a summer spent on food such as we give to our horses? No doubt you will tell me they have plenty of milk,—buttermilk, I suppose, which I abhor. But do you think that I could live with pleasure on sawdust, just because I had milk to take to it?”

“But milk implies cream, my dear,” interposed the merchant, “and buttermilk implies butter, and both imply cows, which are strong presumptive evidence in favour of beef. Besides—”

“Don’t talk to me, Mr Sudberry. *I* know better; and Lady Knownothing, who went to Scotland last year, in the most unprejudiced state of mind, came back absolutely horrified by what she had seen. Why, she actually tells me that the natives still wear the kilt! The very day she passed through Edinburgh she met five hundred men without trousers! To be sure, they had guns on their shoulders, and someone told her they were soldiers; but the sight was so appalling that she could not get rid of the impression; she shut her eyes, and ordered the coachman to drive straight through the town, and let her know when she was quite beyond its walls. She has no doubt whatever that most, if not all, of the other inhabitants of that place were clothed—perhaps I should say unclothed—in the same way. What surprised poor Lady Knownothing most was, that she did not see nearly so many kilts in the Highlands as she saw on that occasion in Edinburgh, from which she concluded that the natives of Scotland are less barbarous in the north than they are in the south. But she *did* see a few. One man who played those hideous things called the pipes—which, she says, are so very like little pigs being killed—actually came into her presence one day, sat down before her with bare knees, and took a pinch of snuff with a salt-spoon!”

“That is a dreadful account, no doubt,” said Mr Sudberry, “but you must remember that Lady Knownothing is given to exaggerating, and is therefore not to be depended on. Have you done with the *cons*?”

“Not nearly done, John, but my nervous system cannot stand the sustained contemplation of such things. I should like to recover breath, and hear what you have to say in favour of this temporary expatriation, I had almost said, of your family.”

“Well, then, here goes for the *pros*,” cried Mr Sudberry, while a gleam of excitement shot from his eyes, and his clinched hand came heavily down on the table.

“The sixteenth cup—as *near as possible*,” observed his wife, languidly.

“Never mind the cups, my dear, but listen to me. The air of the Highlands is salubrious and bracing—”

“And piercingly cold, my dear John,” interrupted Mrs Sudberry.

“In summer,” pursued her husband, regardless of the interruption, “it is sometimes as clear and warm as it is in Italy—”

“And often foggy, my dear.”

“The mountain scenery is grand and majestic beyond description—”

“Then why attempt to describe it, dear John?”

“The hotels in most parts of the Highlands, though rather expensive—”



“Ah! think of *that*, my dear.”

“Though rather expensive, are excellent; the food is of the best quality, and the wines are passable. Beds—”

“*Have* they beds, my dear?”

“Beds are generally found to be well aired and quite clean, though of course in the poorer and more remote districts they are—”

“Hush! pray spare my feelings, my dear John.”

“Remote districts, they are not so immaculate as one would wish. Then there are endless moors covered with game, and splendid lakes and rivers full of fish. Just think, Mary, what a region for our dear boys to revel in! Think of the shooting—”

“And the dreadful accidents, my dear.”

“Think of the fishing—”

“And the wet feet, and the colds. Poor darling Jacky, what a prospect!”

“Think of the glorious sunrises seen from the mountain-tops before breakfast—”

“And the falling over precipices, and broken necks and limbs, dear John.”

“Think of the shaggy ponies for our darling Lucy to ride on—”

“Ah! and to fall off.”

“And the dew of early morning on the hills, and the mists rolling up from the lakes, and the wild uncultivated beauty of all around us, and the sketching, and walking, and driving—”

“Dreadful!”

“And bathing and boating—”

“And drowning!”

“Not to mention the—”

“Dear John, have pity on me. The *pros* are too much for me. I cannot stand the thought—”

“But, my dear, the *place is taken*. The thing is *fixed*,” said Mr Sudberry, with emphasis. Mrs Sudberry was a wise woman. When she was told by her husband that a thing was *fixed*, she invariably gave in with a good grace. Her powers of dissuasion having failed,—as they always did fail,—she arose, kissed Mr Sudberry’s forehead, assured him that she would try to make the most of it, since it *was* fixed, and left the room with the comfortable feeling, of having acted the part of a dutiful wife and a resigned martyr.

It was towards the close of a doubtful summer’s evening, several weeks after the conversation just detailed, that a heavy stage-coach, of an old-fashioned description, toiled slowly up the ascent of one of those wild passes by which access is gained into the highlands of Perthshire.

The course of the vehicle had for some time lain along the banks of a turbulent river, whose waters, when not brawling over a rocky bed in impetuous velocity, or raging down a narrow gorge in misty spray, were curling calmly in deep pools or caldrons, the dark surfaces of which were speckled with foam, and occasionally broken by the leap of a yellow trout or a silver salmon.

To an angler the stream would have been captivating in the extreme, but his ardour would have been somewhat damped by the sight of the dense copsewood which overhung the water, and, while it added to the wild beauty of the scenery, suggested the idea of fishing under difficulties.

When the coach reached the narrowest part of the pass, the driver pulled up, and intimated that, “she would be obleeged if the leddies and gentlemen would get down and walk up the brae.”

Hereupon there descended from the top of the vehicle a short, stout, elderly gentleman, in a Glengarry bonnet, green tartan shooting-coat, and shepherd’s-plaid vest and pantaloons; two active youths, of the ages of seventeen and fifteen respectively, in precisely similar costume; a man-servant in pepper and salt, and a little thin timid boy in blue, a sort of confidential page without the buttons. All of them wore drab gaiters and shoes of the thickest conceivable description. From the inside of the coach there issued a delicate elderly lady, who leaned, in a helpless manner, on the arm of a young, plain, but extremely fresh and sweet-looking girl of about sixteen, whom the elder lady called

Lucy, and who was so much engrossed with her mother, that some time elapsed before she could attend to the fervent remarks made by her father and brothers in regard to the scenery. There also came forth from the interior of the coach a large, red-faced angry woman, who dragged after her a little girl of about eight, who might be described as a modest sunbeam, and a little boy of about five, who resembled nothing short of an imp incarnate. When they were all out, the entire family and household of Mr Sudberry stood in the centre of that lovely Highland pass, and the coach, which was a special one hired for the occasion, drove slowly up the ascent.

What the various members of the family said in the extravagance of their excited feelings on this occasion we do not intend to reveal. It has been said that the day was doubtful: in the south the sky was red with the refulgent beams of the setting sun, which gleamed on the mountain peaks and glowed on the purple heather. Towards the north dark leaden clouds obscured the heavens, and presaged stormy weather. A few large drops began to fall as they reached the crest of the road, and opened up a view of the enclosed valley or amphitheatre which lay beyond, with a winding river, a dark overshadowed loch, and a noble background of hills. In the far distance a white house was seen embedded in the blue mountains.

"Yonder's ta hoose," said the driver, as the party overtook the coach, and resumed their places—the males on the top and the females inside.

"Oh, my dear! look! look!" cried Mr Sudberry, leaning over the side of the coach; "there is our house—the white house—our Highland home!"

At this moment a growl of distant thunder was heard. It was followed by a scream from Mrs Sudberry, and a cry of—

"You'd better send Jacky inside, my dear."

"Ah, he may as well remain where he is," replied Mr Sudberry, whose imperfect hearing led him to suppose that his spouse had said, "Jacky's inside, my dear!" whereas the real truth was that the boy was neither out nor inside.

Master Jacky, be it known, had a remarkably strong will of his own. During the journey he preferred an outside seat in all weathers. By dint of much coaxing, his mother had induced him to get in beside her for one stage; but he had made himself so insufferably disagreeable, that the good lady was thereafter much more disposed to let him have his own way. When the coach stopped, as we have described, Jacky got out, and roundly asserted that he would never get in again.

When the attention of the party was occupied with the gorgeous scenery at the extremity of the pass, Jacky, under a sudden impulse of wickedness, crept stealthily into the copse that lined the road, intending to give his parents a fright. In less than five minutes these parents were galloping away at the rate of ten miles an hour, each happy in the belief that the sweet boy was with the other.

Somewhat surprised at the prolonged and deathlike silence that reigned around him, Jacky returned to the road, where he actually gasped with horror on finding himself the solitary tenant of an apparently uninhabited wilderness. Sitting down on a stone, he shut his eyes, opened wide his mouth, and roared vehemently.

At the end of about five minutes he ventured to re-open his eyes. His face instantly assumed an expression of abject terror, and the roar was intensified into a piercing shriek when he beheld a fierce little black cow staring at him within a yard of his face.

A drove of shaggy Highland cattle had come suddenly round a turn in the pass while Jacky's eyes had been shut. They now filed slowly and steadily past the transfixed boy, as if they were a regiment and he a reviewing general. Each animal as it came up, stopped, stared for a few seconds, and passed slowly on with its head down, as if saddened by the sight of such a melancholy spectacle.

There were upwards of a hundred animals in the drove; the prolonged and maddening agony which Jacky endured may therefore be conceived but cannot be described.

Last of all came the drover, a kilted, plaided, and bonneted Highlander, quite as shaggy as the roughest of his cattle, and rather fiercer in aspect. He was not so in reality however, for, on coming to the place where the poor boy sat, he stopped and stared as his predecessors had done.

“Fat is she doin’ there?” said he.

Jacky paused, and gazed for one moment in mute surprise, then resumed his roar with shut eyes and with tenfold vigour.

As it was evident that any farther attempt at conversation must prove fruitless, the drover took Jacky in his arms, carried him to the extremity of the pass, set him down, and, pointing to the white house in the blue distance, said—

“Yonder’s ta hoose; let her see how she can rin.”

Jacky fixed his eyes on the house with the stare of one who regarded it as his last and only refuge, and ran as he had never done before, roaring while he ran.

“She’s a clever callant,” observed the drover with a grim smile, as he turned to follow his cattle.

Meanwhile the Sudberry Family reached the White House in the midst of increasing rain and mists and muttering thunder. Of course Jacky’s absence was at once discovered. Of course the females screamed and the males shouted, while they turned the mail-coach entirely inside out in a vain search for the lost one. The din was increased by nine shepherd dogs, which rushed down the mountain-side, barking furiously with delight, (probably), and with excitement, (certainly), at the unwonted sight of so many strangers in that remote glen. Presently the coach was turned round, and the distracted father galloped back towards the pass. Of course he almost ran over his youngest son in less than five minutes! Five minutes more placed the recovered child in its mother’s arms. Then followed a scene of kissing, crying, laughing, barking, and excitement, which is utterly indescribable, accompanied by thunder, lightning, and rain, in the midst of which tempestuous mental and elemental commotion, the Sudberry Family took possession of their Highland home.

## Story 1—Chapter 3.

### First Impressions

Next morning the Sudberrys were awakened to a sense of the peculiar circumstances into which they had plunged, by the lowing of cattle, the crowing of cocks, and the furious barking of collie dogs, as the household of Donald McAllister commenced the labours of a new day.

Of course every member of the Sudberry Family, with the exception of “mamma,” rushed to his or her respective window.

“Oh! how beautiful!” gushed from the heart and lips of Lucy, as she gazed in wonder through the casement, and a shriek burst from Jacky, as he stared in wild delight upon the gorgeous scene that met his view.

We have said that the White House was embedded among the blue hills. It was an old and extremely simple building, having an oblong front, two sides, and a back; two stories, six windows, and one door; which last, imbued, apparently, with a dislike to being shut, was always open. The house appeared to have an insatiable thirst for mountain air, and it was well supplied with this fresh and exhilarating beverage; for it stood in an elevated position on the slope of a mountain, and overlooked a wide tract of flood and fell, on which latter there was little wood, but a luxuriant carpet of grass and heather.

The weather had evidently resolved to make amends for its surly reception of the strangers the previous evening, by greeting them with one of its sweetest Highland smiles in the morning.

When Mr Sudberry, in the exuberance of his delight, ran without hat or coat to a neighbouring knoll, accompanied by all his children, the scene that met his eye was one of surpassing grandeur and beauty. The mists of early morning were rolling up from the loch in white, fleecy clouds, which floated over and partly concealed the sides of the mountains. The upper wreaths of these clouds, and the crags and peaks that pierced through them were set on fire by the rising sun. Great fissures and gorges in the hills, which at other times lay concealed in the blue haze of distance, were revealed by the mists and the slanting rays of the sun, and the incumbent cliffs, bluff promontories, and capes, were in some places sharply defined, in others luminously softened, so that the mountains displayed at once that appearance of solid reality, mingled with melting mystery, which is seen at no period of the day but early morning. The whole scene—water, earth, and sky—was so involved, that no lines of demarcation could be traced anywhere; only bold startling points, melting into blue and white masses that mingled with each other in golden and pearly greys of every conceivable variety. Having said thus much, we need scarcely add that the scene cannot be adequately described.

A light fragrant air met the stout Englishman as he crested the hill, and filled his unaccustomed nostrils with sensations that could not have been excelled had he been greeted by one of “Afric’s spicy gales.” The same air, with telegraphic speed, conveyed to the collie dogs of the place the information that the Sudberrys were abroad; whereupon the whole pack—nine in number—bounded open-mouthed up the hill, with noise and ferocity enough to have alarmed the bravest of the brave. No wonder then that poor Jacky rushed into his father’s knees, being too small to run into his arms. But these seemingly ferocious dogs were in reality the gentlest and meekest of animals.

“Down, Topper, down! down, Lively, lass; come into heel, Swaney,” cried Donald McAllister, as he approached his tenants. “Good-mornin’, miss; mornin’, gentlemen. The Ben has on its nightcap, but I’m thinkin’ it’ll soon take it off.”

Donald McAllister’s English was excellent, but he spoke in a slow, deliberate manner, and with a slightly nasal drawl, which sounded very peculiar in the ears of the Sudberrys,—just as peculiar, in fact, as their speech sounded in the ears of McAllister.

"Ah! you call the white cloud on the mountain-top a nightcap?—good, very good," cried Mr Sudberry, rubbing his hands. "What a charming place this is, a paradisaical place, so to speak. The dogs won't bite, will they?" said he, patting the alarmed Jacky on the head.

"No fear o' the dogs, sir," returned McAllister; "they're like lambs. It's just their way. Ye'll be for a row on the loch the day, no doot." The Highlander addressed this remark to George and Fred.

"What!" exclaimed the former, "is there a boat that we can have the use of?"

"Deed is there, a good safe boat too, that can hold the whole of ye. I'll show you where the oars lie after breakfast."

"Capital," cried Mr Sudberry, rubbing his hands.

"Charming," exclaimed Lucy, with sparkling eyes.

Master Jacky expressed his glee with a characteristic cheer or yell, that at once set fire to the easily inflamed spirits of the dogs, causing them to resume their excited gambols and furious barking. This effectually stopped the conversation for five minutes.

"I delight in boating," observed Fred, when McAllister had quelled the disturbance.

"So do I," said his father; "but fishing is the thing for me. There's nothing like fishing. You have fine trout in the lake, I believe?"

"Ay, an' salmon too," answered McAllister.

"So I've heard, so I've heard," said Mr Sudberry, with a glow of excitement and pleasure on his round visage. "We must get our rods and tackle unpacked at once, George. You are a great fisher, no doubt, Mr McAllister?"

"Well, not just that, but I do manage to fill a basket now and then, an' whiles to land a g'ilse."

"A gilse!" cried George in surprise, "what is that?"

"It is a small salmon—"

"Oh! you mean a grilse," interposed Mr Sudberry.

"Yes, I mean that, an' I said that," returned McAllister, slowly and with emphasis. "Scienteefic men are not agreed whether the g'ilse is a small salmon or not; I'm of opeenion that it is. But whether or not, it's a famous fish on the table, and lively enough on the line to delight the heart of every true disciple of Isaac Walton."

"What, you have read that charming book?" exclaimed Mr Sudberry, looking at the rugged Highlander in some surprise.

"Yes," replied the other, in the grave quiet manner that was peculiar to him; "I took to it one winter as a sort o' recreation, after readin' through 'Paley's Evidences.'"

"What!" cried Mr Sudberry, "whose Evidences did you say?"

"Paley's; ye've heard o' him, dootless."

"Why, yes," replied Mr Sudberry, "I have heard of him, but I—I must confess that I have not read him."

At this point, Jacky's eye fell on a shaggy little cow which had strayed near to the party, and stood regarding him with a stern inquisitive glance. Remembering the fright he had received so recently from a similar creature, he uttered a tremendous roar, and again sought refuge in his father's knees. The discussion on Paley was thus cut short; for the dogs—whose chief delight was to bark, though *not* to bite, as has been libellously asserted of all dogs by Dr Watts—sprang to their feet, divided their forces, and, while two of the oldest kept frisking round and leaping upon the party in a promiscuous manner, as if to assure them of protection in the event of danger, the remainder ran open-mouthed and howling at the cow. That curly-headed, long-horned creature received them at first with a defiant look and an elevated tail, but ultimately took to her heels, to the immense delight of Jacky, whose soul was imbued with a deep and altogether unutterable horror of cattle, especially black cows.

The service which the dogs rendered to him on this occasion induced the boy to make advances of a friendly nature, which were met more than halfway, and the result was the establishment of a

good understanding between the Sudberrys and the collie dogs, which ultimately ripened into a lasting friendship, insomuch that when the family quitted the place, Lucy carried away with her a lock of Lively's hair, cut from the pendent tip of her right ear.

Presently Mr Sudberry pulled out his watch, and, exclaiming that it was breakfast-time, trotted down the hill, followed by his family and escorted by the dogs.

We will pause here to describe Mr Sudberry's family briefly.

George was the merchant's eldest son. He was bold, stout, active, middle-sized, and seventeen years of age; full of energy and life, a crack rower, a first-rate cricketer, and generally a clever fellow. George was always jolly.

Fred was about the same height as his brother, two years younger, slender in form, and gentle in disposition, but active, too, when occasion required it. His forte was drawing and painting. Fred was generally quiet and grave. Both brothers were musical.

Lucy had reached the interesting age of sixteen. She was plain, decidedly, but sweet-tempered in the extreme. Her mouth was good, and her eyes were good, and her colour was good, but her nose was a snub,—an undeniable and incurable snub. Her mother had tried to amend it from the earliest hours of Lucy's existence by pulling the point gently downwards and pinching up the bridge,—or, rather, the hollow where the bridge ought to have been,—but all in vain; the infant turned up its eyes when the operation was going on, and still turned up its nose when it was over. Yes, although there were many of the elements of beauty about Lucy, she was plain—but sweet; always bear that in mind. She was funny too. Not that she made fun of her own free will; but she appreciated fun in others so intensely that she looked funny herself; and she giggled. This was her only fault, she giggled. When the spirit of fun was roused, nothing could stop her. But don't suppose that she was always giggling; by no means. She was always good and amiable, often grave, and sometimes deeply serious.

Matilda, commonly called Tilly, was a meek, delicate, pretty little girl of eight years old. She was charmingly innocent and ignorant. In the last respect she resembled her mother, who was the only other stupid member of Mr Sudberry's family. Being deeply impressed with the fact of her ignorance and stupidity, Mrs Sudberry went on the tack of boldly admitting the same, and holding, or affecting to hold, ability and general acquirements in contempt.

Mrs Brown was a female dragon, nurse to Master Jacky and Miss Tilly; she tormented the former, whom she disliked, and spoiled the latter, whom she loved.

Hobbs was the man-servant of the family. He was characterised chiefly by a tendency to drop his h's in conversation, out of words to which they naturally belonged, and to pick them up and insert them in the most contradictory manner in words with which they had no connection whatever. He was also marked by the strong regard and esteem which he had for his master and family; the stronger regard and esteem which he had for himself; and the easy, good-humoured way in which he regarded the remainder of the world at large as an inferior order of beings.

As for Peter, he has already been described as the timid clerk of humble origin, whose chief duties, while in London, were to wipe up ink and clear away *débris*. He had been taken with the family to act the part of a page in buttons without the buttons—and to make himself generally useful. Hitherto the page's bosom had, since leaving London, been a chamber of indescribable terrors. Truly, if, as is said, the anticipation of death be worse than the reality, poor Peter must have suffered a prolonged and continuous death during the last few days. Never having been on a railway before, the first shriek of the whistle pierced him like a knife, the shock of starting rent him, (figuratively), like a thunderbolt. Thereafter, every passing train was an excruciating arrow in his quivering heart, every tunnel was a plunge into the horrible anticipation that "here it was coming at last!" But Peter's trials were now, for a time, he fondly hoped, at an end. Poor boy! he little knew what was in store for him.

## Story 1—Chapter 4.

### First Comers served first, etcetera

When Mr Sudberry reached the breakfast parlour, and put his head in at the door to see whether his faithful wife were there, he was struck absolutely dumb by the amazing *tableau vivant* that met his vision.

There was nothing in the aspect of the room itself to surprise him. It was homely and neat. The table was spread with a clean white cloth, on which the breakfast equipage was displayed with a degree of care and precision that betrayed the master-hand of Hobbs; but on the edge of the table sat a large black cat, calmly breakfasting off a pat of delicious fresh butter. Beside the table, with its fore-legs thereon and its hind-legs on the floor, stood a large nanny-goat, which was either looking in vain for something suited to its own particular taste, or admiring with disinterested complacency the energy with which two hens and a bantam cock pecked out the crumb of a wheaten loaf. If the latter were the goat's occupation, it must have been charmed beyond expression; for the half of the loaf had been devoured by the audacious trio, and, just at the moment of Mr Sudberry's appearance, the bantam's body was buried over the shoulders, and nothing of it was visible to the horrified master of the house save its tail, appearing over the edge of the loaf.

"She-ee-ew!" roared Mr Sudberry, rushing into the room and whirling his arms like the sails of a windmill. The cat vanished through the window like a black vision galvanised and made awfully real. The poultry, thrown into convulsions of terror, flew screaming round the room in blind haste, searching for a door or window of escape; while the goat, true to its nature, ran at the enemy on its hind-legs, and, with its head down, attempted to punch him on the stomach. By an active leap to one side, the enemy escaped this charge; but the goat, nothing daunted, turned to renew the attack; next moment George, Fred, and Hobbs, rushing into the room, diverted its attention. Intimidated by overwhelming numbers, the animal darted through the doorway, along the passage and out at the front door, where it met Peter unexpectedly, and wreaked its disappointed vengeance on him by planting on his chest the punch which had been intended for his master. By this means that timid and hapless youth was laid flat on the green grass.

"Is Jacky safe?" cried Mrs Sudberry, running into the room with terror on her countenance, and falling down on the sofa in a semi-swoon on being informed that he was. She was followed by Lucy and Tilly, with scent-bottles, and by nurse, who exhibited a tendency to go off into hysterics; but who, in consequence of a look from her master, postponed that luxury to a more convenient season.

Thus the "expatriated" family assembled to morning prayers, and to partake of their first Highland breakfast.

Of course that day, being their first, was spent in an excited and rambling endeavour to master the localities and ascertain the most interesting points about their new home.

Mrs Sudberry and her daughters examined the interior accommodation of the White House minutely, and, with the assistance of Mrs Brown, Hobbs, and the page, disposed their goods and chattels to the best advantage; while her husband and sons went out to introduce themselves to the farmer and his family. They lived in a small cottage, or off-shoot, at the back of the principal dwelling, in close proximity to which were the byre, stable, and barns.

It would occupy too much space to relate in detail all the things and sights that called forth the delight and surprise of the excitable Mr Sudberry. How he found to his amazement that the byre was under the same roof with the farmer's kitchen, and only separated therefrom by a wooden partition with a door in it. How he was assailed by the nine collie dogs the moment he entered the kitchen, with threats of being torn to pieces, yet was suffered to pass unscathed. How he and his sons were introduced by Mr McAllister to his mother, a grave, mild old woman, who puzzled them beyond measure; because, although clad in homely and unfashionable garments, and dwelling in a hut little

better than the habitation of the cattle, except in point of cleanliness, she conversed and conducted herself towards them with a degree of unaffected ease and urbanity that might have graced any lady in the land. How this old lady astonished them with the amount of general knowledge that leaked out in the course of a few minutes' talk. How she introduced the dogs by name, one by one, to Jacky, which delighted him immensely; and how, soon after that, Jacky attempted to explore out-of-the-way corners of the farm-yard, and stepped suddenly up to the knees in a mud-hole, out of which he emerged with a pair of tight-fitting Wellington boots, which filled him with ecstasy and his father with disgust.

All this and a great deal more might be dilated on largely; but we are compelled to dismiss it summarily, without further remark.

In the course of that day Mr Sudberry and his boys learned a great deal about their new home from McAllister, whom they found intelligent, shrewd, and well-informed on any topic they chose to broach; even although he was, as Mr Sudberry said in surprise, "quite a common man, who wore corduroy and wrought in his fields like a mere labourer." After dinner they all walked out together, and had a row on the lake under his guidance; and in the evening they unexpectedly met Mr Hector Macdonald, who was proprietor of the estate on which the White House stood, and who dwelt in another white house of much larger size at the head of the loch, distant about two miles. Mrs Sudberry had expected to find this Highland gentleman a very poor and proud sort of man, with a rough aspect, a superabundance of red hair, and, possibly, a kilt. Judge, then, her surprise when she found him to be a young gentleman of refined mind, prepossessing manners, elegant though sturdy appearance, and clad in grey tweed shooting-coat, vest, and trousers, the cut of which could not have been excelled by her own George's tailor, and George was particular in respect to cut.

Mr Macdonald, who carried a fishing-rod, introduced himself; and accompanied his new friends part of the way home; and then, saying that he was about to take a cast in the river before sunset, offered to show the gentlemen the best pools. "The gentlemen" leaped at the offer more eagerly than ever trout leaped at an artificial fly; for they were profoundly ignorant of the gentle art, except as it is practised on the Thames, seated on a chair in a punt, and with bait and float.

Hector Macdonald not only showed his friends where to fish, but *how* to fish; and the whole thing appeared so easy as practised and explained by him, that father and sons turned their steps homeward about dusk, convinced that they could "do it" easily, and anticipating triumph on the morrow.

On the way home, after parting from Hector, they passed a solitary hut of the rudest description, which might have escaped observation had not a bright stream of light issued from the low doorway and crossed their path.

"I would like to peep into this cottage, father," said Fred, who cherished strong sympathies with poor people.

"Come then," cried Mr Sudberry, "let us explore."

Jacky, who was with them, felt timid, and objected; but being told that he might hang about outside, he gave in.

They had to bend low on entering the hovel, which was mean and uncomfortable in appearance. The walls were built of unhewn stones, gathered from the bed of the river hard by; and the interstices were filled up with mud and straw. Nothing graced these walls in the shape of ornament; but a few mugs and tin pots and several culinary implements hung from rusty nails and wooden pegs. The floor was of hard mud. There was no ceiling, and the rafters were stained black by the smoke of the peat fire which burned in the middle of the floor, and the only chimney for which was a small hole in the roof. A stool, a broken chair, and a crooked table, constituted the entire furniture of the miserable place; unless we may include a heap of straw and rags in a corner, which served for a bed.

Seated on the stool, and bending over the fire,—was an old woman, so wild and shrivelled in her appearance that a much less superstitious urchin than Jacky might have believed her to be a



witch. Her clothing may be described as a bundle of rags, with the exception of a shepherd's-plaid on her shoulders, the spotless purity of which contrasted strangely with the dirtiness of every thing else around. The old creature was moaning and moping over the fire, and drawing the plaid close round her as if she were cold, although the weather was extremely warm. At first she took no notice whatever of the entrance of her visitors, but kept muttering to herself in the Gaelic tongue.

"A fine evening, my good woman," said Fred, laying his hand gently on her shoulder.

"How do ye know I'm good?" she cried, turning her gleaming eyes sharply on her questioner.

"Don't be angry, granny," put in Mr Sudberry, in a conciliatory tone.

The effect of this remark on the old woman was the reverse of what had been expected.

"Granny! granny!" she shrieked fiercely, holding up her skinny right arm and shaking her fist at Mr Sudberry, "who dares to ca' me granny?"

"My dear woman, I meant no offence," said the latter, much distressed at having unwittingly roused the anger of this strange creature, who continued to glare furiously at the trio.

Jacky kept well in the background, and contented himself with peeping round the door-post.

"No offence! no offence! an' you dare to ca' me granny! Go! go! go!"

As she uttered these three words with increasing vehemence, the last syllable was delivered in a piercing scream. Rising suddenly from her stool, she pointed to the door with an air of command that would have well become the queen of the witches.

Not wishing to agitate the poor woman, whom he now regarded as a lunatic, Mr Sudberry turned to go, but a wonderful change in the expression of her face arrested him. Her eye had fallen on the round visage of Jacky, and a beaming smile now lighted up and beautified the countenance which had so recently been distorted with passion. Uttering some unintelligible phrase in Gaelic, she held out her skinny arms towards the child, as if entreating him to come to her. Strange to say, Jacky did not run away or scream with fright as she approached him and took him in her arms. Whether it was that he was too much petrified with horror to offer any resistance, or that he understood the smile of affection and reciprocated it, we cannot tell; but certain it is that Jacky suffered her to place him on her knee, stroke his hair, and press him to her old breast, as unresistingly and silently as if she had been his own mother, instead of a mad old woman.

Fred availed himself of this improved state of things to attempt again to open an amicable conversation; but the old woman appeared to have turned stone deaf; for she would neither look at nor reply to him. Her whole attention was devoted to Jacky, into whose wondering ears she poured a stream of Gaelic, without either waiting for, or apparently expecting, a reply.

Suddenly, without a word of warning, she pushed Jacky away from her, and began to wring her hands and moan as she bent over the fire. Mr Sudberry seized the opportunity to decamp. He led Jacky quietly out of the hut, and made for the White House at as rapid a pace as the darkness of the night would allow. As they walked home, father and sons felt as if they had recently held familiar converse with a ghost or an evil spirit.

But that feeling passed away when they were all seated at tea in the snug parlour, relating and listening to the adventure; and Jacky swelled to double his size, figuratively, on finding himself invested with sudden and singular importance as the darling of an "old witch." Soon, however, matters of greater interest claimed the attention of Mr Sudberry and his sons; for their bosoms were inflamed with a desire to emulate the dexterous Hector Macdonald.

Rods and tackle were overhauled, and every preparation made for a serious expedition on the morrow. That night Mr Sudberry dreamed of fishing.

## Story 1—Chapter 5.

### Some Account of a Great Fishing Expedition

There was an old barometer of the banjo type in the parlour of the White House, which, whatever might have been its character for veracity in former days, had now become such an inveterate story-teller, that it was pretty safe to accept as true exactly the reverse of what it indicated. One evening Mr Sudberry kept tapping that antique and musical-looking instrument, with a view to get it to speak out its mind freely. The worthy man's efforts were not in vain, for the instrument, whether out of spite or not, we cannot say, indicated plainly "much rain."

Now, it must be known that Mr Sudberry knew as much about trout and salmon-fishing as that celebrated though solitary individual, "the man in the moon." Believing that bright, dry, sunny weather was favourable to this sport, his heart failed him when the barometer became so prophetically depressed, and he moved about the parlour with quick, uneasy steps, to the distress of his good wife, whose work-box he twice swept off the table with his coat-tails, and to the dismay of George, whose tackle, being spread out for examination, was, to a large extent, caught up and hopelessly affixed to the same unruly tails.

Supper and repose finally quieted Mr Sudberry's anxious temperament; and when he awoke on the following morning, the sun was shining in unclouded splendour through his window. Awaking with a start, he bounced out of bed, and, opening his window, shouted with delight that it was a glorious fishing-day.

The shout was addressed to the world at large, but it was responded to only by Hobbs.

"Yes, sir, it *is* a hexquisite day," said that worthy; "what a day for the Thames, sir! It does my 'art good, sir, to think of that there river."

Hobbs, who was standing below his master's window, with his coat off, and his hands in his waistcoat-pockets, meant this as a happy and delicate allusion to things and times of the past.

"Ah! Hobbs," said Mr Sudberry, "you don't know what fishing in the Highlands is, yet; but you shall see. Are the rods ready?"

"Yes, sir."

"And the baskets and books?"

"Yes, sir."

"And, ah! I forgot—the flasks and sandwiches—are they ready, and the worms?"

"Yes, sir; Miss Lucy's a makin' of the san'wiches in the kitchen at this moment, and Maclister's a diggin' of the worms."

Mr Sudberry shut his window, and George, hearing the noise, leaped out of bed with the violence that is peculiar to vigorous youth. Fred yawned.

"What a magnificent day!" said George, rubbing his hands, and slapping himself preparatory to ablutions; "I will shoot."

"Will you—a-ow?" yawned Fred: "I shall sketch. I mean to begin with the old woman's hut."

"What! do you mean to have your nose plucked off and your eyes torn out at the beginning of our holiday?"

"Not if I can help it, George; but I mean to run the risk—I mean to cultivate that old woman."

"Hallo! hi!" shouted their father from below, while he tapped at the window with the end of a fishing-rod. "Look alive there, boys, else we'll have breakfast without you."

"Ay, ay, father!" Fred was up in a moment.

About two hours later, father and sons sallied out for a day's sport, George with a fowling-piece, Fred with a sketch-book, and Mr Sudberry with a fishing-rod, the varnish and brass-work on which, being perfectly new, glistened in the sun.

“We part here, father,” said George, as they reached a rude bridge that spanned the river about half a mile distant from the White House. “I mean to clamber up the sides of the Ben, and explore the gorges. They say that ptarmigan and mountain hares are to be found there.”

The youth's eye sparkled with enthusiasm; for, having been born and bred in the heart of London, the idea of roaming alone among wild rocky glens up among the hills, far from the abodes of men, made him fancy himself little short of a second Crusoe. He was also elated at the thought of firing at *real* wild birds and animals—his experiences with the gun having hitherto been confined to the unromantic practice of a shooting-gallery in Regent Street.

“Success to you, George,” cried Mr Sudberry, waving his hand to his son, as the latter was about to enter a ravine.

“The same to you, father,” cried George, as he waved his cap in return, and disappeared.

Five minutes' walk brought them to the hut of the poor old woman, whose name they had learned was Moggy.

“This, then, is my goal,” said Fred, smiling. “I hope to scratch in the outline of the interior before you catch your first trout.”

“Take care the old woman doesn't scratch out your eyes, Fred,” said the father, laughing. “Dinner at five—*sharp*, remember.”

Fred entered the hovel, and Mr Sudberry, walking briskly along the road for a quarter of a mile, diverged into a foot-path which conducted him to the banks of the river, and to the margin of a magnificent pool where he hoped to catch his first trout.

And now, at last, had arrived that hour to which Mr Sudberry had long looked forward with the most ardent anticipation. To stand alone on a lovely summer's day, rod in hand, on the banks of a Highland stream, had been the ambition of the worthy merchant ever since he was a boy. Fate had decreed that this ambition should not be gratified until his head was bald; but he did not rejoice the less on this account. His limbs were stout and still active, and his enthusiasm was as strong as it was in boyhood. No one knew the powerful spirit of angling which dwelt in Mr Sudberry's breast. His wife did not, his sons did not. He was not fully aware of it himself, until opportunity revealed it in the most surprising manner. He had, indeed, known a little of the angler's feelings in the days of his youth, but he had a soul above punts, and chairs, and floats, and such trifles; although, like all great men, he did not despise little things. Many a day had he sat on old Father Thames, staring, with eager expectation, at a gaudy float, as if all his earthly hopes were dependent on its motions; and many a struggling fish had he whipped out of the muddy waters with a shout of joy. But he thought of those days, now, with the feelings of an old soldier who, returning from the wars to his parents' abode, beholds the drum and pop-gun of his childhood. He recalled the pleasures of the punt with patronising kindness, and gazed majestically on crag, and glen, and bright, glancing stream, while he pressed his foot upon the purple heath, and put up his fishing-rod!

Mr Sudberry was in his element now. The deep flush on his gladsome countenance indicated the turmoil of combined romance and delight which raged within his heaving chest, and which he with difficulty prevented from breaking forth into an idiotic cheer. He was alone, as we have said. He was purposely so. He felt that, as yet, no member of his family could possibly sympathise with his feelings. It was better that they should not witness emotions which they could not thoroughly understand. Moreover, he wished to surprise them with the result of his prowess—in regard to which his belief was unlimited. He felt, besides, that it was better there should be no witness to the trifling failures which might be expected to occur in the first essay of one wholly unacquainted with the art of angling, as practised in these remote glens.

The pool beside which Mr Sudberry stood was one which Hector Macdonald had pointed out as being one of the best in the river. It lay at the tail of a rapid, had an eddy in it, and a rippling, oily surface. The banks were in places free from underwood, and only a few small trees grew near them. The shadow of the mountain, which reared its rugged crest close to it, usually darkened the surface,

but, at the time we write of, a glowing sun poured its rays into the deepest recesses of the pool—a fact which filled Mr Sudberry, in his ignorance, with delight; but which, had he known better, would have overwhelmed him with dismay. In the present instance it happened that “ignorance was bliss,” for as every fish in the pool was watching the angler with grave upturned eyes while he put up his rod, and would as soon have attempted to swallow Mr Sudberry’s hat as leap at his artificial flies, it was well that he was not aware of the fact, otherwise his joy of heart would have been turned into sorrow sooner than there was any occasion for.

Musing on piscatorial scenes past, present, and to come, Mr Sudberry passed the line through the rings of his rod with trembling and excited fingers.

While thus engaged, he observed a break on the surface of the pool, and a fish caused a number of rings to form on the water; those floated toward him as if to invite him on. Mr Sudberry was red-hot now with hope and expectation. It was an *enormous* trout that had risen. Most trouts that are seen, but not caught, are enormous!

There is no pleasure without its alloy. It could not be expected that the course of true sport, any more than that of true love, should run smooth. Mr Sudberry’s ruddy face suddenly turned pale when he discovered that he had forgotten his fishing book! Each pocket in his coat was slapped and plunged into with vehement haste, while drops of cold perspiration stood on his forehead. It was not to be found. Suddenly he recollected the basket at his back: wrenching it open, he found the book there, and joy again suffused his visage.

Selecting his best line and hooks—as pointed out to him by Hector—Mr Sudberry let out a few yards of line, and prepared for action. Remembering the advice and example of his friend, he made his first cast.

Ha! not so bad. The line fell rather closer to the bank on which he stood than was consistent with the vigour of the cast; but never mind, the next would be better! The next *was* better. The line went out to its full extent, and came down on the water with such a splash that no trout in its senses would have looked at the place for an hour afterwards. But Mr Sudberry was ignorant of this, so he went on hopefully.

As yet the line was short, so he let out half a dozen yards boldly, and allowed the stream to draw it straight. Then, making a violent effort, he succeeded in causing it to descend in a series of circles close to his feet! This, besides being unexpected, was embarrassing. Determined to succeed, he made another cast, and caught the top branch of a small tree, the existence of which he had forgotten. There the hooks remained fixed.

A deep sigh broke from the excited man, as he gazed ruefully up at the tree. Under a sudden and violent impulse, he tried to pull the tackle forcibly away. This would not do. He tried again till the rod bent almost double, and he was filled with amazement to find that the casting-line, though no thicker than a thread, could stand such a pull. Still the hooks held on. Laying down his rod, he wiped his forehead and sighed again.

But Mr Sudberry was not a man to be easily thwarted. Recalling the days of his boyhood, he cast off his coat and nimbly shinned up the trunk of the tree. In a few minutes he reached the top branch and seized it. At that moment the bough on which he stood gave way, and he fell to the ground with a terrible crash, bringing the top branch with him! Gathering himself up, he carefully manipulated his neck, to ascertain whether or not it was broken. He found that it was not; but the line was, so he sat down quietly on the bank and replaced it with a new one.

Before Mr Sudberry left that spot on the bank beside the dark pool, he had caught the tree four times and his hat twice, but he had caught no trout. “They’re not taking to-day, that’s it,” he muttered sadly to himself; “but come, cheer up, old fellow, and try a new fly.”

Thus encouraged by himself, Mr Sudberry selected a large blue fly with a black head, red wings, and a long yellow tail. It was a gorgeous, and he thought a tempting creature; but the trout were evidently not of the same opinion. For several hours the unfortunate piscator flogged the water

in vain. He became very hot during this prolonged exertion, stumbled into several holes, and wetted both legs up to the knees, had his cap brushed off more than once by overhanging branches, and entangled his line grievously while in the act of picking it up, bruised his shins several times, and in short got so much knocked about, battered, and worried, that he began to feel in a state of mental and physical dishevelment.

Still his countenance did not betray much of his feelings. He found fishing more difficult in all respects than he had expected; but what then? Was he going to give way to disgust at the first disappointment? Certainly not. Was he going to fail in perseverance now, after having established a reputation for that quality during a long commercial life in the capital of England? Decidedly not. Was that energy, that vigour, that fervour of character for which he was noted, to fail him here—here, in an uncivilised country, where it was so much required—after having been the means of raising him from a humble station to one of affluence; after having enabled him to crush through all difficulties, small or great, as well as having caused him to sweep hecatombs of crockery to destruction with his coat tails? Indubitably not!

Glowing with such thoughts, the dauntless man tightened his cap on his brow, pressed his lips together with a firm smile, frowned good-humouredly at fate and the water, and continued his unflagging, though not unflogging, way.

So, the hot sun beat down upon him until evening drew on apace, and then the midges came out. The torments which Mr Sudberry endured after this were positively awful, and the struggles that he made, in the bravery of his cheerful heart, to bear up against them, were worthy of a hero of romance. His sufferings were all the more terrible and exasperating, that at first they came in the shape of an effect without a cause. The skin of his face and hands began to inflame and to itch beyond endurance—to his great surprise; for the midges were so exceedingly small and light, that, being deeply intent on his line, he did not observe them. He had heard of midges, no doubt; but never having seen them, and being altogether engrossed in his occupation, he never thought of them for a moment. He only became aware of ever-increasing uneasiness, and exhibited a tendency to rub the backs of his hands violently on his trousers, and to polish his countenance with his cuffs.

It must be the effect of exposure to the sun, he thought—yes, that was it; of course, that would go off soon, and he would become case-hardened, a regular mountaineer! Ha! was that a trout? Yes, that must have been one at last; to be sure, there were several stones and eddies near the spot where it rose, but he knew the difference between the curl of an eddy now and the splash of a trout; he would throw over the exact spot, which was just a foot or two above a moss-covered stone that peeped out of the water; he did so, and caught it—the stone, not the trout—and the hooks remained fixed in the slimy green moss.

Mr Sudberry scratched his head and felt inclined to stamp. He even experienced a wild desire to cast his rod violently into the river, and walk home with his hands in his pockets; but he restrained himself. Pulling on the line somewhat recklessly, the hook came away, to his immense delight, trailing a long thread of the green moss along with it.

Mr Sudberry now took to holding a muttered conversation with himself—a practice which was by no means new to him, and in the course of which he was wont to address himself in curiously disrespectful terms. “Come, come, John, my boy, don’t be cast down! Never say die! Hope, ay, hope told a flatter—Hallo! was that a rise? No, it must have been another of these—what can be the matter with your skin to-day, John? I don’t believe it’s the sun, after all. The sun never drove anyone frantic. Never mind; cheer up, old cock! That seems a very likely hole—a beautiful—beau-ti—steady! That was a good cast—the best you’ve made to-day, my buck; try it again—ha! s-s-us! caught again, as I’m a Dutchman. This is too bad. Really, you know—well, you’ve come off easier than might have been expected. Now then, softly. What *can* be the matter with your face?—surely—it cannot be,” (Mr Sudberry’s heart palpitated as he thought), “the *measles*! Oh! impossible, pooh! pooh! you had the measles when you were a baby, of course—d’ye know, John, you’re not quite sure of that. Fevers, too,

occasionally come on with extreme—dear me, how hot it is, and what a time you have been fishing, you stupid fellow, without a rise! It must be getting late.”

Mr Sudberry stopped with a startled look as he said this. He glanced at the sun, pulled out his watch, gazed at it with unutterable surprise, put it to his ear, and groaned.

“Too late! half-past five; dinner at five—punctually! Oh! Mary, Mary, won’t I catch it to-night!”

A cloud passed over the sun as he spoke. Being very susceptible to outward influences, the gloom of the shadow descended on his spirits as well as his person, and for the first time that day a look of deep dejection overspread his countenance.

Suddenly there was a violent twitch at the end of the rod, the reel spun round with a sharp whirr—r, and every nerve in Mr Sudberry’s system received an electric shock as he bent forward, straddled his legs, and made a desperate effort to fling the trout over his head.

The slender rod would not, however, permit of such treatment. It bent double, and the excited piscator was fain to wind up—an operation which he performed so hastily that the line became entangled with the winch of the reel, which brought it to a dead-lock. With a gasp of anxiety he flung down the rod, and seizing the line with his hands, hauled out a beautiful yellow trout of about a quarter of a pound in weight, and five or six inches long.

To describe the joy of Mr Sudberry at this piece of good fortune were next to impossible. Sitting down on his fishing-basket, with the trout full in view, he drew forth a small flask of sherry, a slice of bread, and a lump of cheese, and proceeded then and there to regale himself. He cared nothing now for the loss of his dinner; no thought gave he to the anticipated scold from neglected Mrs Sudberry. He gave full scope to his joy at the catching of this, his first trout. He looked up at the cloud that obscured the sun, and forgave it, little thinking, innocent man, that the said cloud had done him a good turn that day. He smiled benignantly on water, earth, and sky. He rubbed his face, and when he did so he thought of the measles and laughed—laughed heartily, for by that time he had discovered the true cause of his misery; and although we cannot venture to say that he forgave the midges, sure we are that he was greatly mollified towards them.

Does any ignorant or cynical reader deem such an extravagance of delight inconsistent with so trifling an occasion? Let him ponder before he ventures to exclaim, “Ridiculous!” Let him look round upon this busy, whirling, incomprehensible world, and note how its laughing and weeping multitudes are oft-times tickled to uproarious merriment, or whelmed in gloomy woe, by the veriest trifles, and then let him try to look with sympathy on Mr Sudberry and his first trout.

Having carefully deposited the fish in his basket, he once more resumed his rod and his expectations.

But if the petty annoyances that beset our friend in the fore part of that day may be styled harassing, those with which he was overwhelmed towards evening may be called exasperating. First of all he broke the top of his rod, a misfortune which broke his heart entirely. But recollecting suddenly that he had three spare top-pieces in the butt, his heart was cemented and bound up, so to speak, in a rough and ready manner. Next, he stepped into a hole, which turned out to be three feet deep, so that he was instantly soaked up to the waist. Being extremely hot, besides having grown quite reckless, Mr Sudberry did not mind this; it was pleasantly cooling. He was cheered, too, at the moment, by the re-appearance of the sun, which shone out as bright as ever, warming his heart, (poor, ignorant man!) and, all unknown to him, damaging his chance of catching any more fish at that time.

Soon after this he came to a part of the river where it flowed through extremely rugged rocks, and plunged over one or two precipices, sending up clouds of grey mist and a dull roar which overawed him, and depressed his spirits. This latter effect was still further increased by the bruising of his shins and elbows, which resulted from the rough nature of the ground. He became quite expert now in hanking on bushes and disentangling the line, and experienced a growing belief in the truth of the old saying that “practice makes perfect.” He cast better, he hanked oftener, and he disentangled

more easily than he had done at an earlier period of the day. The midges, too, increased as evening advanced.

Presently he came upon a picturesque portion of the stream where the waters warbled and curled in little easy-going rapids, miniature falls, and deep oily pools. Being an angler by nature, though not by practice, (as yet), he felt that there must be *something* there. A row of natural stepping-stones ran out towards a splendid pool, in which he felt assured there must be a large trout—perhaps a grilse. His modesty forbade him to hint “a salmon,” even to himself.

It is a very difficult thing, as everyone knows, to step from one stone to another in a river, especially when the water flowing between runs swift and deep. Mr Sudberry found it so. In his effort to approach the pool in question, which lay under the opposite bank, he exhibited not a few of the postures of the rope-dancer and the acrobat; but he succeeded, for Mr Sudberry was a man of indomitable pluck.

Standing on a small stone, carefully balanced, and with his feet close together, he made a beautiful cast. It was gracefully done; it was vigorously, manfully done—considering the difficulty of the position, and the voracity of the midges—and would have been undoubtedly successful but for the branch of a tree which grew on the opposite bank and overhung the stream. This branch Mr Sudberry, in his eagerness, did not observe. In casting, he thrust the end of his rod violently into it; the line twirled in dire confusion round the leaves and small boughs, and the drag hook, as if to taunt him, hung down within a foot of his nose.

Mr Sudberry, in despair, made a desperate grasp at this and caught it. More than that—it caught him, and sunk into his forefinger over the barb, so that he could not get it out. The rock on which he stood was too narrow to admit of much movement, much less to permit of his resting the butt of his rod on it, even if that had been practicable—which it was not, owing to the line being fast to the bough, and the reel in a state of dead-lock from some indescribable manoeuvre to which it had previously been subjected.

There he stood, the very personification of despair; but while standing there he revolved in his mind the best method of releasing his line without breaking it or further damaging his rod. Alas! fortune, in this instance, did not favour the brave. While he was looking up in rueful contemplation of the havoc above, and then down at his pierced and captured finger, his foot slipped and he fell with a heavy plunge into deep water. That settled the question. The whole of his tackle remained attached to the fatal bough excepting the hook in his finger, with which, and the remains of his fishing-rod, he floundered to the shore.

Mr Sudberry's first act on gaining the land was to look into his basket, where, to his great relief, the trout was still reposing. His next was to pick up his hat, which was sailing in an eddy fifty yards down the stream. Then he squeezed the water out of his garments, took down his rod, with a heavy sigh strangely mingled with a triumphant smile, and turned his steps home just as the sun began to dip behind the peaks of the distant hills.

To his surprise and relief; Mrs Sudberry did *not* scold when, about an hour later, he entered the hall or porch of the White House with the deprecatory air of a dog that knows he has been misbehaving, and with the general aspect of a drowned rat. His wife had been terribly anxious about his non-arrival, and the joy she felt on seeing him safe and well, induced her to forget the scold.

“Oh! John dear, quick, get off your clothes,” was her first exclamation.

As for Jacky, he uttered a cheer of delight and amazement at beholding his father in such a woeful plight; and he spent the remainder of the evening in a state of impish triumph; for, had not his own father come home in the same wet and draggled condition as that in which he himself had presented himself to Mrs Brown earlier in the day, and for which he had received a sound whipping? “Hooray!” and with that the amiable child went off to inform his worthy nurse that “papa was as bad a boy as himself—badder, in fact; for he, (Jacky), had only been in the water up to the waist, while papa had gone into it head and heels!”

## Story 1—Chapter 6. The Picnic

A Vision of beauty now breaks upon the scene! This vision is tall, graceful, and commanding in figure. It has long black ringlets, piercing black eyes, a fair delicate skin, and a bewitching smile that displays a row of—of “pearls!” The vision is about sixteen years of age, and answers to the romantic name of Flora Macdonald. It is sister to that stalwart Hector who first showed Mr Sudberry how to fish; and stately, sedate, and beautiful does it appear, as, leaning on its brother’s arm, it ascends the hill towards the White House, where extensive preparations are being made for a picnic.

“Good-morning, Mr Sudberry,” cries Hector, doffing his bonnet and bowing low to Lucy. “Allow me to introduce my sister, Flora; but,” (glancing at the preparations), “I fear that my visit is inopportune.”

Mr Sudberry rushes forward and shakes Hector and sister heartily by the hand.

“My dear sir, my dear madam, inopportune! impossible! I am charmed. We are just going on a picnic, that is all, and you will go with us. Lucy, my dear, allow me to introduce you to Miss Macdonald—”

“*Flora*, my good sir; pray do not let us stand upon ceremony,” interposes Hector.

Lucy bows with a slight air of bashful reserve; Flora advances and boldly offers her hand. The blue eyes and the black meet; the former twinkle, the latter beam, and the knot is tied; they are fast friends for life!

“Glorious day,” cries Mr Sudberry, rubbing his hands.

“Magnificent,” assents Hector. “You are fortunate in the weather, for, to say truth, we have little enough of sunshine here. Sometimes it rains for three or four weeks, almost without cessation.”

“Does it indeed?”

Mr Sudberry’s visage elongates a little for one moment. Just then George and Fred come out of the White House laden with hampers and fishing-baskets full of provisions. They start, gaze in surprise at the vision, and drop the provisions.

“These are my boys, Miss Macdonald—Hector’s sister, lads,” cries Mr Sudberry. “You’ll join us I trust?” (to Hector.)

Hector assents “with pleasure.” He is a most amiable and accommodating man. Meanwhile George and Fred shake hands with Flora, and express their “delight, their pleasure, etcetera, at this unexpected meeting which, etcetera, etcetera.” Their eyes meet, too, as Lucy’s and Flora’s had met a minute before. Whether the concussion of that meeting is too severe, we cannot say, but the result is, that the three pair of eyes drop to the ground, and their owners blush. George even goes the length of stammering something incoherent about “Highland scenery,” when a diversion is created in his favour by Jacky, who comes suddenly round the corner of the house with a North-American-Indian howl, and with the nine dogs tearing after him clamorously.

Jacky tumbles over a basket, of course, (a state of disaster is his normal condition), bruises his shins, and yells fearfully, to the dismay of his mother, who runs shrieking to the window in her dressing-gown, meets the gaze of Hector and Flora Macdonald, and retires precipitately in discomfiture.

No such sensibility affects the stern bosom of Mrs Brown, who darts out at the front door, catches the unhappy boy by one arm, and drags him into the house by it as if *it* were a rope, the child a homeward-bound vessel, and *she* a tug-steamer of nine hundred horse-power. The sounds that proceed from the nursery thereafter are strikingly suggestive: they might be taken for loud clapping of hands, but the shrieks which follow forbid the idea of plaudits.

Poor Tilly, who is confused by the uproar, follows the nurse timidly, bent upon intercession, for she loves Jacky dearly.



The nine dogs—easy-going, jovial creatures—at once jump to the conclusion that the ham and cold chicken have been prepared and laid out there on the green hill-side for their special entertainment. They make a prompt dash at the hampers. Gentlemen and ladies alike rush to the rescue, and the dogs are obliged to retire. They do so with a surprised and injured look in their innocent eyes.

“Have you one or two raw onions and a few cold boiled potatoes?” inquires Hector.

“I’ll run and see,” cries George, who soon returns with the desired edibles in a tin can.

“That will do. Now I shall let you taste a potato salad; meanwhile I will assist in carrying the baskets down to the boat.”

Hector’s and Lucy’s eyes meet as this is said. There must be some unaccountable influence in the atmosphere this morning, for the meeting of eyes, all round, seems to produce unusual results!

“Will Mr McAllister accompany us?” says Mr Sudberry.

Mr McAllister permits a quiet smile to disturb the gravity of his countenance, and agrees to do so, at the same time making vague reference to the groves of Arcadia, and the delight of dining *alfresco*, specially in wet weather,—observations which surprise Mr Sudberry, and cause Hector and the two brothers to laugh.

Mrs Sudberry is ready at last! The gentlemen and Hobbs load themselves, and, followed by Jacky and the ladies, proceed to the margin of the loch, which sheet of water Mr Sudberry styles a “lock,” while his better half deliberately and obstinately calls it a “lake.” The party is a large one for so small a boat, but it holds them all easily. Besides, the day is calm and the water lies like a sheet of pure glass; it seems almost a pity to break such a faithful mirror with the plashing oars as they row away.

Thus, pleasantly, the picnic began!

George and Fred rowed, Hector steered, and the ladies sang,—Mr Sudberry assisting with a bass. His voice, being a strong baritone, was overwhelmingly loud in the middle notes, and sank into a muffled ineffective rumble in the deep tones. Having a bad ear for tune, he disconcerted the ladies—also the rowers. But what did that matter? He was overflowing with delight, and apologised for his awkwardness by laughing loudly and begging the ladies to begin again. This they always did, with immense good humour. Mrs Sudberry had two engrossing subjects of contemplation. The one was the boat, which, she was firmly persuaded, was on the point of upsetting when any one moved ever so little; the other was Jacky, who, owing to some strange impulse natural to his impish character, strove to stretch as much of his person beyond the side of the boat as was possible without absolutely throwing himself overboard.

The loch was upwards of three miles in length; before the party had gone half the distance Mr Sudberry senior had sung himself quite hoarse, and Master Sudberry junior had leaped three-quarters of his length out of the boat six times, and in various other ways had terrified his poor mother almost into fits, and imperilled the lives of the party more than once.

“By the way,” said Fred, when his father concluded a fine old boat-song with a magnificent flourish worthy of an operatic *artiste*, “can any one tell me any thing about the strange old woman that lives down in the hut near the bridge?”

“Ha! ha!” laughed George, “I can tell you that she’s an old witch, and a very fierce one too.”

A slight frown gathered on Flora’s white forehead, and a flash shot from her dark eyes, as George said this, but George saw it not. Lucy did, however, and became observant, while George continued—

“But methinks, Fred, that the long visit you paid her lately must have been sadly misapplied if you have not pumped her history out of her.”

“I went to paint, not to pump. Perhaps Mr Macdonald can tell me about her.”

“Not I,” said Hector, lighting a cigar. “I only know that she lost her grandson about six years ago, and that she’s been mad ever since, poor thing.”

“For shame, Hector,” said Flora; “you know that poor old Moggy is no more mad than yourself.”

"Possibly not, sweet sister, but as you often tell me that I *am* mad, and as I never deny the charge, it seems to me that you have said nothing to vindicate the old woman's character for sanity."

"Poor thing," said Flora, turning from her brother, and speaking with warmth to Fred; "if you knew how much that unhappy old creature has suffered, you would not be surprised to find her somewhat cross at times. She is one of my people, and I'm very glad to find that you take an interest in her."

"My people!" Flora then takes an interest in the poor," thought the observant Lucy. Another link was added to the chain of friendship.

"Do tell us about her, please," cried George. "There is nothing that I love so much as a story—especially a horrible one, with two or three dreadful murders to chill one's blood, and a deal of retributive justice to warm it up again. I'm dying to know about old Moggy."

"Are you?" said Flora saucily. "I'm glad to hear that, because I mean to keep you in a dying state. I will tell the story as a dead secret to Lucy, when I take her to see my poor people, and you sha'n't hear it for weeks to come."

George cast up his eyes in affected despair, and said with a groan, that he "would endeavour to exist notwithstanding."

"Oh! I know all about old Moggy," cried Jacky with energy.

Everyone looked at the boy in surprise. In the midst of the foregoing dialogue he had suddenly ceased to tempt his fate, and sat down quietly with a hand on each knee and his eyes fixed intently on Flora Macdonald—to the surprise and secret joy of his mother, who, being thus relieved from anxiety on his account, had leisure to transfer the agony of her attention to the boat.

"What do *you* know about her, child?" asked Flora.

"She's jolly," replied the boy with prompt vivacity.

"Most genuine testimony in her favour," laughed Hector, "though the word is scarcely appropriate to one whose temper is sour."

"Why do you think her jolly, my boy?" said Flora.

"Cause I do. She's a old brick!"

"Jacky, darling," said Mrs Sudberry, "do try to give up those ugly slang words—they're *so* naughty—that is to say—at least—they are very ugly if they're not positively naughty."

"She's a jolly old brick," retorted Jacky, with a look at his mother that was the concentrated essence of defiance.

"Dear child!"

Lucy snickered and coughed somewhat violently into her handkerchief; while Flora, repressing a smile, said—

"But why does Jacky like old Moggy so much?"

"Hallo! don't run us ashore," shouted Mr Sudberry, starting up with a sudden impetuosity which shook the boat and sent a pang to the heart of his wife, the sharpness of which no words can convey. A piercing shriek, however, betrayed the state of her feelings as the boat was swept violently round by George to avoid a point of rock. As they were now drawing near to the spot where it was proposed that they should picnic, Jacky suddenly became alive to the fact that in his interest about old Moggy he had been betrayed into a forgetfulness of his opportunities. No time was to be lost. Turning round with a cheer, he made a desperate plunge at the water and went much farther over than he had intended, insomuch that he would certainly have taken a "header" into its depths, had not McAllister grasped him by the baggy region of his trousers and gravely lifted him into his mother's lap. Next moment the boat's keel grated sharply on the gravel, to the horror of Mrs Sudberry, who, having buried her face in the bosom of her saved son, saw not what had occurred, and regarded the shock as her death-warrant.

Thus agreeably the picnic continued!

## Story 1—Chapter 7. The Picnic Concluded

What a glorious day it was, and what spirits it put everybody in! The sun shone with an intensity almost torrid; the spot on which they had landed was green and bright, like a slice out of the realms of Fairy-land. No zephyr dared to disturb the leaves or the glassy water; great clouds hung in the bright blue sky—rotund, fat, and heavy, like mountains of wool or butter. Everything in nature seemed to have gone to sleep at noon, as if Spanish principles had suddenly imbued the universe.

And what a business they had, to be sure, with the spreading of the viands and the kindling of the fire! The latter was the first duty. Hector said he would undertake it, but after attempting to light it with damp sticks he gave it up and assisted the ladies to lay the cloth on the grass. Then George and Fred got the fire to kindle, and Mr Sudberry, in attempting to mend it, burnt his fingers and put it out; whereupon McAllister came to his rescue and got it to blaze in right earnest. Jacky thereafter tried to jump over it, fell into it, and was saved from premature destruction by being plucked out and quenched before having received any further damage than the singeing of his hair and eyelashes. He was thus rendered a little more hideous and impish-like than Nature had intended him to be.

Jacky happened to be particularly bad that day. Not only was he more bent on mischief than usual, but Fortune seemed to enhance the value, (so to speak), of his evil doings, by connecting them with disasters of an unexpected nature. He tried to leap over a small stream, (in Scotland styled a burn), and fell into it. This necessitated drying at the fire—a slow process and disagreeable in all circumstances, but especially so when connected with impatience and headstrong obstinacy. Then he put his foot on a plate of sandwiches, and was within an ace of sitting down on a jam tart, much to his own consternation, poor boy, for had he destroyed *that*, the chief source of his own prospective felicity would have been dried up.

It is not to be supposed that everyone regarded Jacky's eccentricities with the forgiving and loving spirit of his mother. Mr Sudberry, good man, did not mind much; he was out for a day's enjoyment, and having armed himself *cap-à-pie* with benevolence, was invulnerable. Not so the other members of the party, all of whom had to exercise a good deal of forbearance towards the boy. McAllister took him on his knee and gravely began to entertain him with a story, for which kindness Jacky kicked his shins and struggled to get away; so the worthy man smiled sadly, and let him go, remarking that Ovid himself would be puzzled to metamorphose him into a good boy—this in an undertone, of course.

Hector Macdonald was somewhat sanguine and irascible in temper. He felt a tingling in his fingers, and an irresistible desire to apply them to the ears of the little boy.

"Come here, Jacky!" said he.

Flora, who understood his feelings, smiled covertly while she busied herself with cups, plates, and pannikins. Lucy, who did not understand his feelings, thought, "he must be a good-natured fellow to speak so kindly to a child who had annoyed him very much." Lucy did not admit that she herself had been much annoyed by her little brother's pertinacity in interrupting conversation between her and Hector, although she might have done so with perfect truth.

Jacky advanced with hesitation. Hector bent down playfully and seized him by both arms, turning his back upon the party, and thus bringing his own bulky figure between them and young Hopeful.

"Jack, I want you to be good."

"I won't!" promptly said, and with much firmness.

"Oh, yes, you will!" A stern masculine countenance within an inch of his nose, and a vigorous little shake, somewhat disconcerted Jacky, who exhibited a tendency to roar; but Hector closed his strong hands on the little arms so suddenly and so powerfully, that, being unexpectedly agonised,

Jacky was for a moment paralysed. The awful glare of a pair of bright blue eyes, and the glistening of a double row of white teeth, did not tend to re-assure him.

“Oh, yes, you will, my little man!” repeated Hector, tumbling him over on his back with a smile of ineffable sweetness, but with a little touch of violence that seemed inconsistent therewith.

Jacky rose, gasped, and ran away, glancing over his shoulder with a look of alarm. This little piece of by-play was not observed by any one but Flora, who exchanged a bright glance and a smile with her brother.

The imp was quelled—he had met his match! During the remainder of the picnic he disturbed no one, but kept at the farthest possible distance from Hector that was consistent with being one of the party. But it is not to be supposed that his nature was changed. No—Jacky’s wickedness only sought a new channel in which to flow. He consoled himself with thoughts of the dire mischief he would perpetrate when the dinner was over. Meanwhile, he sat down and gloated over the jam tart, devouring it in imagination.

“Is that water boiling yet?” cried Mr Sudberry.

“Just about it. Hand me the eggs, Fred.”

“Here they are,” cried Flora, going towards the fire with a basket.

She looked very sweet at that moment, for the active operations in which she had been engaged had flushed her cheeks and brightened her eyes.

George and Fred gazed at her in undisguised admiration. Becoming suddenly aware of the impoliteness of the act, the former ran to relieve her of the basket of eggs; the latter blushed, and all but upset the kettle in an effort to improve the condition of the fire.

“Fred, you goose, leave alone, will you?” roared George, darting forward to prevent the catastrophe.

“This is really charming, is it not, Mr Macgregor?” said Mrs Sudberry, with a languid smile.

“Macdonald, madam, if I may be allowed to correct you,” said Hector, with a smile and a little bow.

“Ah, to be sure!” (with an attempt at a laugh.) “I have such a stupid habit of misnaming people.”

If Mrs Sudberry had told the exact truth she would have said, “I have such difficulty in remembering people’s names that I have made up my mind to call people by any name that comes first into my head rather than confess my forgetfulness.” But she did not say this; she only went on to observe that she had no idea it would have been so charming.

“To what do you refer?” said Hector,—“the scenery, the weather, or the prospect of dinner?”

“Oh! you shocking man, how *can* you talk of food in the same breath with—”

“The salt!” exclaimed Lucy with a little shriek. Was there ever a picnic at which the salt was not forgotten, or supposed to have been forgotten? Never!

Mr Sudberry’s cheerful countenance fell. He had never eaten an egg without salt in his life, and did not believe in the possibility of doing so. Everyone ransacked everything in anxious haste.

“Here it is!” (hope revived.)

“No, it’s only the pepper.” (Mitigated despair and ransacking continued.)

“Maybe it’ll be in this parcel,” suggested McAllister, holding up one which had not yet been untied.

“Oh! bring it to me, Mr Macannister!” cried Mrs Sudberry with unwonted energy, for her happiness was dependent on salt that day, coupled, of course, with weather and scenery. “Faugh! no, it’s your horrid onions, Mr MacAndrews.”

“Why, you have forgotten the potato salad, Mr Macdonald,” exclaimed Lucy.

“No, I have not: it can be made in five minutes, but not without salt. Where *can* the salt be? I am certain it could not have been forgotten.”

The only individual of the party who remained calmly indifferent was Master Jacky. That charming creature, having made up his mind to feed on jam tart, did not feel that there was any need

for salt. An attentive observer might have noticed, however, that Jacky's look of supreme indifference suddenly gave place to one of inexpressible glee. He became actually red in the face with hugging himself and endeavouring to suppress all visible signs of emotion. His eye had unexpectedly fallen on the paper of salt which lay on the centre of the table-cloth, so completely exposed to view that nobody saw it!

"Why, here it is, actually before our eyes!" shouted George, seizing the paper and holding it up.

A small cheer greeted its discovery. A groan instantly followed, as George spilt the whole of it. As it fell on the cloth, however, it was soon gathered up, and then Mr Sudberry ordered everyone to sit down on the grass in a circle round the cloth.

"What a good boy Jacky has suddenly become!" remarked Lucy in some surprise.

"Darling!" ejaculated his mother.

"A *very* good little fellow," said Flora, with a peculiar smile.

Jacky said nothing. Hector's eye was upon him, as was his upon Hector. Deep unutterable thoughts filled his swelling heart, but he spoke not. He merely gazed at the jam tart, a large portion of which was in a few minutes supplied to him. The immediate result was crimson hands, arms, and cheeks.

While Hector was engaged in concocting the potato salad the kettle upset, extinguished the fire, and sent up a loud triumphant hiss of steam mingled with ashes. Fortunately the potatoes were cooked, so the dinner was at last begun in comfort—that is to say, everyone was very hot, very much exhausted and excited, and very thirsty. Jacky gorged himself with tart in five minutes, and then took an opportunity of quietly retiring into the bushes, sheltered by which he made a *détour* unseen towards the place where the boat had been left.

Alas for the picnic party that day, that they allowed Hector to prevail on them to begin with his potato salad! It was partly composed of raw onions. After having eaten a few mouthfuls of it, their sense of taste was utterly destroyed! The chickens tasted of onions, so did the cheese and the bread. Even the whiskey was flavoured with onions. The beefsteak-pie might as well have been an onion-pie; indeed, no member of the party could, with shut eyes, have positively said that it was not. The potatoes harmonised with the prevailing flavour; not so the ginger-bread, however, nor the butter. Everything was oniony; they finished their repast with a sweet onion-tart! To make things worse, the sky soon became overcast, a stiff breeze began to blow, and Mr McAllister "opined" that there was going to be a squall.

A piercing shriek put an abrupt termination to the meal!

Intent on mischief; the imp had succeeded in pushing off the boat and clambering into it. For some time he rowed about in a circle with one oar, much delighted with his performances. But when the breeze began to increase and blow the boat away he became alarmed; and when the oar missed the water and sent him sprawling on his back, he gave utterance to the shriek above referred to. Luckily the wind carried him past the place where they were picnicking. There was but one mode of getting at the boat. It was at once adopted. Hector threw off his coat and vest, and swam out to it!

Ten minutes later, they were rowing at full speed for the foot of the loch. The sky was dark and a squall was tearing up the waters of the lake. Then the rain came down in torrents. Then it was discovered that the cloaks had been left at Hazlewood Creek, as the place where they had dined was named. To turn back was impossible. The gentlemen's coats were therefore put on the ladies' shoulders. All were soaked to the skin in a quarter of an hour. Jacky was quiet—being slightly overawed, but not humbled! His mother was too frightened to speak or scream. Mr Sudberry rubbed his hands and said, "Come, I like to have a touch of all sorts of weather, and *won't* we have a jolly tea and a rousing fire when we get home?" Mrs Sudberry sighed at the word "home." McAllister volunteered a song, and struck up the "Callum's Lament," a dismally cheerful Gaelic ditty. In the midst of this they reached the landing-place, from which they walked through drenched heather and blinding rain to the White House.

Thus, drearily, the picnic ended!

## **Story 1—Chapter 8.**

### **Concerning Fowls and Pools**

One morning the Sudberry Family sat on the green hill-side, in front of the White House, engaged in their usual morning amusement—feeding the cocks and hens.

It is astonishing what an amount of interest may be got up in this way! If one goes at it with a sort of philanthropico-philosophical spirit, a full hour of genuine satisfaction may be thus obtained—not to speak of the joy imparted to the poultry, and the profound glimpses obtained into fowl character.

There were about twenty hens, more or less, and two cocks. With wonderful sagacity did these creatures come to perceive that when the Sudberrys brought out chairs and stools after breakfast, and sat down thereon, they, the fowls, were in for a feed! And it was surprising the punctuality with which they assembled each fine morning for this purpose.

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