

Rudyard Kipling

**Kipling Stories and Poems
Every Child Should Know,
Book II**



Редъярд Киплинг

**Kipling Stories and Poems Every
Child Should Know, Book II**

«Public Domain»

Киплинг Р. Д.

Kipling Stories and Poems Every Child Should Know, Book II /

Р. Д. КИПЛИНГ — «Public Domain»,

© Киплинг Р. Д.

© Public Domain

Содержание

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH | 5 |
| IV | 9 |
| THE FIRST BAG | 10 |
| THE SECOND BAG | 14 |
| THE THIRD BAG | 19 |
| Конец ознакомительного фрагмента. | 24 |

Kipling Rudyard

Kipling Stories and Poems Every Child Should Know, Book II

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

BY CHARLES ELIOT NORTON

The deep and widespread interest which the writings of Mr. Rudyard Kipling have excited has naturally led to curiosity concerning their author and to a desire to know the conditions of his life. Much has been written about him which has had little or no foundation in truth. It seems, then, worth while, in order to prevent false or mistaken reports from being accepted as trustworthy, and in order to provide for the public such information concerning Mr. Kipling as it has a right to possess, that a correct and authoritative statement of the chief events in his life should be given to it. This is the object of the following brief narrative.

Rudyard Kipling was born at Bombay on the 30th of December, 1865. His mother, Alice, daughter of the Rev. G. B. Macdonald, a Wesleyan preacher, eminent in that denomination, and his father, John Lockwood Kipling, the son also of a Wesleyan preacher, were both of Yorkshire birth. They had been married in London early in the year, and they named their first-born child after the pretty lake in Staffordshire on the borders of which their acquaintance had begun. Mr. Lockwood Kipling, after leaving school, had served his apprenticeship in one of the famous Staffordshire potteries at Burslem, had afterward worked in the studio of the sculptor, Mr. Birnie Philip, and from 1861 to 1865 had been engaged on the decorations of the South Kensington Museum. During our American war and in the years immediately following, the trade of Bombay was exceedingly flourishing, the city was immensely prosperous, a spirit of inflation possessed the Government and the people alike, there were great designs for the improvement and rebuilding of large portions of the town, and a need was felt for artistic oversight and direction of the works in hand and contemplated. The distinction which Mr. Lockwood Kipling had already won by his native ability and thorough training led to his being appointed in 1865 to go to Bombay as the professor of Architectural Sculpture in the British School of Art which had been established there.

It was thus that Rudyard Kipling came to be born in the most cosmopolitan city of the Eastern world, and it was there and in its neighbourhood that the first three years of the boy's life were spent, years in which every child receives ineffaceable impressions, shaping his conceptions of the world, and in which a child of peculiarly sensitive nature and active disposition, such as this boy possessed, lies open to myriad influences that quicken and give colour to the imagination.

In the spring of 1868 he was taken by his mother for a visit to England, and there, in the same year, his sister was born. In the next year his mother returned to India with both her children, and the boy's next two years were spent at and near Bombay.

He was a friendly and receptive child, eager, interested in all the various entertaining aspects of life in a city which, "gleaning all races from all lands," presents more diversified and picturesque varieties of human condition than any other, East or West. A little incident which his mother remembers is not without a pretty allegoric significance. It was at Nasik, on the Dekhan plain, not far from Bombay: the little fellow trudging over the ploughed field, with his hand in that of the native husbandman, called back to her in the Hindustani, which was as familiar to him as English, "Good-bye, this is my brother."

In 1871 Mr. and Mrs. Kipling went with their children to England, and being compelled to return to India the next year, they took up the sorrow common to Anglo-Indian lives, in leaving their children "at home," in charge of friends at Southsea, near Portsmouth. It was a hard and sad experience for the boy. The originality of his nature and the independence of his spirit had already become clearly manifest, and were likely to render him unintelligible and perplexing to whosoever might have charge of him unless they were gifted with unusual perceptions and quick sympathies. Happily his mother's sister, Mrs. (now Lady) Burne-Jones, was near at hand, in case of need, to care for him.

In the spring of 1877 Mrs. Kipling came to England to see her children, and was followed the next year by her husband. The children were removed from Southsea, and Rudyard, grown into a companionable, active-minded, interesting boy, now in his thirteenth year, had the delight of spending some weeks in Paris, with his father, attracted thither by the exhibition of that year. His eyesight had been for some time a source of trouble to him, and the relief was great from glasses, which were specially fitted to his eyes, and with which he has never since been able to dispense.

On the return of his parents to India, early in 1878, Rudyard was placed at the school of Westward Ho, at Bideford, in Devon. This school was one chiefly intended for the sons of members of the Indian services, most of whom were looking forward to following their fathers' careers as servants of the Crown. It was in charge of an admirable head-master, Mr. Cornell Price, whose character was such that he won the affection of his boys no less than their respect. The young Kipling was not an easy boy to manage. He chose his own way. His talents were such that he might have held a place near the highest in his studies, but he was content to let others surpass him in lessons, while he yielded to his genius in devoting himself to original composition and to much reading in books of his own choice. He became the editor of the school paper, he contributed to the columns of the local Bideford *Journal*, he wrote a quantity of verse, and was venturesome enough to send a copy of verses to a London journal, which, to his infinite satisfaction, was accepted and published. Some of his verses were afterward collected in a little volume, privately printed by his parents at Lahore, with the title "Schoolboy Lyrics." All through his time at school his letters to his parents in India were such as to make it clear to them that his future lay in the field of literature.

His literary gifts came to him by inheritance from both the father and mother, and they were nurtured and cultivated in the circle of relatives and family friends with whom his holidays were spent. A sub-master at Westward Ho, though little satisfied with the boy's progress in the studies of the school, gave to him the liberty of his own excellent library. The holidays were spent at the Grange, in South Kensington, the home of his aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Burne-Jones, and here he came under the happiest possible domestic influences, and was brought into contact with men of highest quality, whose lives were given to letters and the arts, especially with William Morris, the closest intimate of the household of the Grange. Other homes were open to him where the pervading influence was that of intellectual pursuits, and where he had access to libraries through which he was allowed to wander and to browse at his will. The good which came to him, directly and indirectly, from these opportunities can hardly be overstated. To know, to love, and to be loved by such a man as Burne-Jones was a supreme blessing in his life.

In the autumn of 1882, having finished his course at school, a position was secured for him on the *Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore, and he returned to his parents in India, who had meanwhile removed from Bombay to Lahore, where his father was at the head of the most important school of the arts in India. The *Civil and Military Gazette* is the chief journal of northwestern India, owned and conducted by the managers and owners of the Allahabad *Pioneer*, the ablest and most influential of all Indian newspapers published in the interior of the country.

For five years he worked hard and steadily on the *Gazette*. Much of the work was simple drudgery. He shirked nothing. The editor-in-chief was a somewhat grim man, who believed in snubbing his subordinates, and who, though he recognized the talents of the "clever pup," as he called

him, and allowed him a pretty free hand in his contributions to the paper, yet was inclined to exact from him the full tale of the heavy routine work of a newspaper office.

But these were happy years. For the youth was feeling the spring of his own powers, was full of interest in life, was laying up stores of observation and experience, and found in his own home not only domestic happiness, but a sympathy in taste and a variety of talent and accomplishment which acted as a continual stimulus to his own genius. Father, mother, sister, and brother all played and worked together with rare combination of sympathetic gifts. In 1885 some of the verses with the writing of which he and his sister had amused themselves were published at Lahore, in a little volume entitled "Echoes," because most of them were lively parodies on some of the poems of the popular poets of the day. The little book had its moment of narrowly limited success and opened the way for the wider notoriety and success of a volume into which were gathered the "Departmental Ditties" that had appeared from time to time in the *Gazette*. Many of the stories also which were afterward collected under the now familiar title of "Plain Tales from the Hills" made their first appearance in the *Gazette*, and attracted wide attention in the Anglo-Indian community.

Kipling's work for five years at Lahore had indeed been of such quality that it was not surprising that he was called down to Allahabad, in 1887, to take a place upon the editorial staff of the *Pioneer*. The training of an Anglo-Indian journalist is peculiar. He has to master knowledge of many kinds, to become thoroughly acquainted with the affairs of the English administration and the conditions of Anglo-Indian life, and at the same time with the interests, the modes of life, and thought of the vast underlying native population. The higher positions in Indian journalism are places of genuine importance and of large emolument, worthy objects of ambition for a young man conscious of literary faculty and inspired with zeal for public ends.

The *Pioneer* issued a weekly as well as a daily edition, and in addition to his regular work upon the daily paper, Kipling continued to write for the weekly issue stories similar to those which had already won him reputation, and they now attracted wider attention than ever. His home at Allahabad was with Professor Hill, a man of science attached to the Allahabad College. But the continuity of his life was broken by various journeys undertaken in the interest of the paper – one through Rajputana, from which he wrote a series of descriptive letters, called "Letters of Marque"; another to Calcutta and through Bengal, which resulted in "The City of Dreadful Night" and other letters describing the little-known conditions of the vast presidency; and, finally, in 1889, he was sent off by the *Pioneer* on a tour round the world, on which he was accompanied by his friends, Professor and Mrs. Hill. Going first to Japan, he thence came to America, writing on the way and in America the letters which appeared in the *Pioneer* under the title of "From Sea to Sea"; and in September, 1889, he arrived in London.

His Indian repute had not preceded him to such degree as to make the way easy for him through the London crowd. But after a somewhat dreary winter, during which he had been making acquaintances and had found irregular employment upon newspapers and magazines, arrangements were made with Messrs. Macmillan & Co. for the publication of an edition of "Plain Tales from the Hills." The book appeared in June. Its success was immediate. It was republished at once in America, and was welcomed as warmly on this side of the Atlantic as on the other. The reprint of Kipling's other Indian stories and of his "Departmental Ditties" speedily followed, together with the new tales and poems which showed the wide range of his creative genius. Each volume was a fresh success; each extended the circle of Mr. Kipling's readers, till now he is the most widely known of English authors.

In 1891 Mr. Kipling left England for a long voyage to South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and Ceylon, and thence to visit his parents at Lahore. On his return to England, he was married in London to Miss Balestier, daughter of the late Mr. Wolcott Balestier of New York. Shortly after their marriage, Mr. and Mrs. Kipling visited Japan, and in August they came to America. They established their home at Brattleboro, Vermont, where Mrs. Kipling's family had a large estate: and here, in a

pleasant and beautifully situated house which they had built for themselves, their two eldest children were born, and here they continued to live till September, 1896.

During these four years Mr. Kipling made three brief visits to England to see his parents, who had left India and were now settled in the old country.

The winter of 1897-98 was spent by Mr. Kipling and his family, accompanied by his father, in South Africa. He was everywhere received with the utmost cordiality and friendliness.

Returning to England in the spring of 1898, he took a house at Rottingdean, near Brighton, with intention to make it his permanent home.

Of the later incidents of his life there is no need to speak.

IV

BAA, BAA, BLACK SHEEP

At the School Council Baa, Baa, Black Sheep was elected to a very high position among the Kipling Stories "because it shows how mean they were to a boy and he did n't need it."

Baa, Baa, Black Sheep,
Have you any wool?
Yes, Sir; yes, Sir; three bags full.
One for the Master, one for the Dame —
None for the Little Boy that cries down the lane.

— *Nursery Rhyme.*

THE FIRST BAG

"When I was in my father's house, I was in a better place."

They were putting Punch to bed – the ayah and the hamal, and Meeta, the big Surti boy with the red and gold turban. Judy, already tucked inside her mosquito-curtains, was nearly asleep. Punch had been allowed to stay up for dinner. Many privileges had been accorded to Punch within the last ten days, and a greater kindness from the people of his world had encompassed his ways and works, which were mostly obstreperous. He sat on the edge of his bed and swung his bare legs defiantly.

"Punch-baba going to bye-lo?" said the ayah suggestively.

"No," said Punch. "Punch-baba wants the story about the Ranee that was turned into a tiger. Meeta must tell it, and the hamal shall hide behind the door and make tiger-noises at the proper time."

"But Judy-Baba will wake up," said the ayah.

"Judy-baba is waking," piped a small voice from the mosquito-curtains. "There was a Ranee that lived at Delhi. Go on, Meeta," and she fell asleep again while Meeta began the story.

Never had Punch secured the telling of that tale with so little opposition. He reflected for a long time. The hamal made the tiger-noises in twenty different keys.

"Top!" said Punch authoritatively. "Why does n't Papa come in and say he is going to give me put-put?"

"Punch-baba is going away," said the ayah. "In another week there will be no Punch-baba to pull my hair any more." She sighed softly, for the boy of the household was very dear to her heart.

"Up the Ghauts in a train?" said Punch, standing on his bed. "All the way to Nassick, where the Ranee-Tiger lives?"

"Not to Nassick this year, little Sahib," said Meeta, lifting him on his shoulder. "Down to the sea where the cocoanuts are thrown, and across the sea in a big ship. Will you take Meeta with you to Belait?"

"You shall all come," said Punch, from the height of Meeta's strong arms. "Meeta and the ayah and the hamal and Bhini-in-the-Garden, and the salaam-Captain-Sahib-snake-man."

There was no mockery in Meeta's voice when he replied – "Great is the Sahib's favour," and laid the little man down in the bed, while the ayah, sitting in the moonlight at the doorway, lulled him to sleep with an interminable canticle such as they sing in the Roman Catholic Church at Parel. Punch curled himself into a ball and slept.

Next morning Judy shouted that there was a rat in the nursery, and thus he forgot to tell her the wonderful news. It did not much matter, for Judy was only three and she would not have understood. But Punch was five; and he knew that going to England would be much nicer than a trip to Nassick.

And Papa and Mamma sold the brougham and the piano, and stripped the house, and curtailed the allowance of crockery for the daily meals, and took long council together over a bundle of letters bearing the Rocklington postmark.

"The worst of it is that one can't be certain of anything," said Papa, pulling his moustache. "The letters in themselves are excellent, and the terms are moderate enough."

"The worst of it is that the children will grow up away from me," thought Mamma; but she did not say it aloud.

"We are only one case among hundreds," said Papa bitterly. "You shall go Home again in five years, dear."

"Punch will be ten then – and Judy eight. Oh, how long and long and long the time will be! And we have to leave them among strangers."

"Punch is a cheery little chap. He's sure to make friends wherever he goes."

"And who could help loving my Ju?"

They were standing over the cots in the nursery late at night, and I think that Mamma was crying softly. After Papa had gone away, she knelt down by the side of Judy's cot. The ayah saw her and put up a prayer that the memsahib might never find the love of her children taken away from her and given to a stranger.

Mamma's own prayer was a slightly illogical one. Summarized it ran: "Let strangers love my children and be as good to them as I should be, but let me preserve their love and their confidence for ever and ever. Amen." Punch scratched himself in his sleep, and Judy moaned a little. That seems to be the only answer to the prayer: and, next day, they all went down to the sea, and there was a scene at the Apollo Bunder when Punch discovered that Meeta could not come too, and Judy learned that the ayah must be left behind. But Punch found a thousand fascinating things in the rope, block, and steam-pipe line on the big P. and O. Steamer, long before Meeta and the ayah had dried their tears.

"Come back, Punch-baba," said the ayah.

"Come back," said Meeta, "and be a Burra Sahib."

"Yes," said Punch, lifted up in his father's arms to wave good-bye. "Yes, I will come back, and I will be a Burra Sahib Bahadur!"

At the end of the first day Punch demanded to be set down in England, which he was certain must be close at hand. Next day there was a merry breeze, and Punch was very sick. "When I come back to Bombay," said Punch on his recovery, "I will come by the road – in a broom-gharri. This is a very naughty ship."

The Swedish boatswain consoled him, and he modified his opinions as the voyage went on. There was so much to see and to handle and ask questions about that Punch nearly forgot the ayah and Meeta and the hamal, and with difficulty remembered a few words of the Hindustani once his second-speech.

But Judy was much worse. The day before the steamer reached Southampton, Mamma asked her if she would not like to see the ayah again. Judy's blue eyes turned to the stretch of sea that had swallowed all her tiny past, and she said: "Ayah! What ayah?"

Mamma cried over her, and Punch marveled. It was then that he heard for the first time Mamma's passionate appeal to him never to let Judy forget Mamma. Seeing that Judy was young, ridiculously young, and that Mamma, every evening for four weeks past, had come into the cabin to sing her and Punch to sleep with a mysterious tune that he called "Sonny, my soul," Punch could not understand what Mamma meant. But he strove to do his duty, for the moment Mamma left the cabin, he said to Judy: "Ju, you remember Mamma?"

"Torse I do," said Judy.

"Then always remember Mamma, 'r else I won't give you the paper ducks that the red-haired Captain Sahib cut out for me."

So Judy promised always to "remember Mamma."

Many and many a time was Mamma's command laid upon Punch, and Papa would say the same thing with an insistence that awed the child.

"You must make haste and learn to write, Punch," said Papa, "and then you'll be able to write letters to us in Bombay."

"I'll come into your room," said Punch, and Papa choked.

Papa and Mamma were always choking in those days. If Punch took Judy to task for not "remembering," they choked. If Punch sprawled on the sofa in the Southampton lodging-house and sketched his future in purple and gold, they choked; and so they did if Judy put up her mouth for a kiss.

Through many days all four were vagabonds on the face of the earth: Punch with no one to give orders to, Judy too young for anything, and Papa and Mamma grave, distracted, and choking.

"Where," demanded Punch, wearied of a loathsome contrivance on four wheels with a mound of luggage atop – "where is our broom-gharri? This thing talks so much that I can't talk. Where is our own broom-gharri? When I was at Bandstand before we comed away, I asked Inverarity Sahib why

he was sitting in it, and he said it was his own. And I said, 'I will give it you' – I like Inverarity Sahib – and I said, 'Can you put your legs through the pully-wag loops by the windows? And Inverarity Sahib said No, and laughed. I can put my legs through the pully-wag loops. I can put my legs through these pully-wag loops. Look! Oh, Mamma's crying again! I did n't know. I was n't not to do so."

Punch drew his legs out of the loops of the four-wheeler: the door opened and he slid to the earth, in a cascade of parcels, at the door of an austere little villa whose gates bore the legend "Downe Lodge." Punch gathered himself together and eyed the house with disfavour. It stood on a sandy road, and a cold wind tickled his knickerbockered legs.

"Let us go away," said Punch. "This is not a pretty place."

But Mamma and Papa and Judy had quitted the cab, and all the luggage was being taken into the house. At the door-step stood a woman in black, and she smiled largely, with dry chapped lips. Behind her was a man, big, bony, gray, and lame as to one leg – behind him a boy of twelve, black-haired and oily in appearance. Punch surveyed the trio, and advanced without fear, as he had been accustomed to do in Bombay when callers came and he happened to be playing in the veranda.

"How do you do?" said he. "I am Punch." But they were all looking at the luggage – all except the gray man, who shook hands with Punch and said he was a "smart little fellow." There was much running about and banging of boxes, and Punch curled himself up on the sofa in the dining-room and considered things.

"I don't like these people," said Punch. "But never mind. We'll go away soon. We have always went away soon from everywhere. I wish we was gone back to Bombay soon."

The wish bore no fruit. For six days Mamma wept at intervals, and showed the woman in black all Punch's clothes – a liberty which Punch resented. "But p'raps she's a new white ayah," he thought. "I'm to call her Antirosa, but she does n't call me Sahib. She says just Punch," he confided to Judy. "What is Antirosa?"

Judy did n't know. Neither she nor Punch had heard anything of an animal called an aunt. Their world had been Papa and Mamma, who knew everything, permitted everything, and loved everybody – even Punch when he used to go into the garden at Bombay and fill his nails with mold after the weekly nail-cutting, because, as he explained between two strokes of the slipper to his sorely tried Father, his fingers "felt so new at the ends."

In an undefined way Punch judged it advisable to keep both parents between himself and the woman in black and the boy in black hair. He did not approve of them. He liked the gray man, who had expressed a wish to be called "Uncleharri." They nodded at each other when they met, and the gray man showed him a little ship with rigging that took up and down.

"She is a model of the *Brisk*– the little *Brisk* that was sore exposed that day at Navarino." The gray man hummed the last words and fell into a reverie. "I'll tell you about Navarino, Punch, when we go for walks together; and you must n't touch the ship, because she's the *Brisk*."

Long before that walk, the first of many, was taken, they roused Punch and Judy in the chill dawn of a February morning to say Good-bye; and of all people in the wide earth to Papa and Mamma – both crying this time. Punch was very sleepy and Judy was cross.

"Don't forget us," pleaded Mamma. "Oh, my little son, don't forget us, and see that Judy remembers too."

"I've told Judy to bremember," said Punch, wiggling, for his father's beard tickled his neck. "I've told Judy – ten – forty – 'leven thousand times. But Ju 's so young – quite a baby – is n't she?"

"Yes," said Papa, "Quite a baby, and you must be good to Judy, and make haste to learn to write and – and – and –"

Punch was back in his bed again. Judy was fast asleep, and there was the rattle of a cab below. Papa and Mamma had gone away. Not to Nassick; that was across the sea. To some place much nearer, of course, and equally of course they would return. They came back after dinner-parties, and Papa had come back after he had been to a place called "The Snows," and Mamma with him, to

Punch and Judy at Mrs. Inverarity's house in Marine Lines. Assuredly they would come back again. So Punch fell asleep till the true morning, when the black-haired boy met him with the information that Papa and Mamma had gone to Bombay, and that he and Judy were to stay at Downe Lodge "forever." Antirosa, tearfully appealed to for a contradiction, said that Harry had spoken the truth, and that it behooved Punch to fold up his clothes neatly on going to bed. Punch went out and wept bitterly with Judy, into whose fair head he had driven some ideas of the meaning of separation.

When a matured man discovers that he has been deserted by Providence, deprived of his God, and cast without help, comfort, or sympathy, upon a world which is new and strange to him, his despair, which may find expression in evil-living, the writing of his experiences, or the more satisfactory diversion of suicide, is generally supposed to be impressive. A child, under exactly similar circumstances as far as its knowledge goes, cannot very well curse God and die. It howls till its nose is red, its eyes are sore, and its head aches. Punch and Judy, through no fault of their own, had lost all their world. They sat in the hall and cried; the black-haired boy looking on from afar.

The model of the ship availed nothing, though the gray man assured Punch that he might pull the rigging up and down as much as he pleased; and Judy was promised free entry into the kitchen. They wanted Papa and Mamma, gone to Bombay beyond the seas, and their grief while it lasted was without remedy.

When the tears ceased the house was very still. Antirosa had decided it was better to let the children "have their cry out," and the boy had gone to school. Punch raised his head from the floor and sniffed mournfully. Judy was nearly asleep. Three short years had not taught her how to bear sorrow with full knowledge. There was a distant, dull boom in the air – a repeated heavy thud. Punch knew that sound in Bombay in the Monsoon. It was the sea – the sea that must be traversed before anyone could get to Bombay.

"Quick, Ju!" he cried, "we're close to the sea. I can hear it! Listen! That's where they've went. P'raps we can catch them if we was in time. They did n't mean to go without us. They've only forgot."

"Iss," said Judy. "They've only forgotted. Less go to the sea."

The hall-door was open and so was the garden-gate.

"It's very, very big, this place," he said, looking cautiously down the road, "and we will get lost; but I will find a man and order him to take me back to my house – like I did in Bombay."

He took Judy by the hand, and the two fled hatless in the direction of the sound of the sea. Downe Villa was almost the last of a range of newly built houses running out, through a chaos of brick-mounds, to a heath where gypsies occasionally camped and where the Garrison Artillery of Rocklington practised. There were few people to be seen, and the children might have been taken for those of the soldiery, who ranged far. Half an hour the wearied little legs tramped across heath, potato-field, and sand-dune.

"I'se so tired," said Judy, "and Mamma will be angry."

"Mamma's never angry. I suppose she is waiting at the sea now while Papa gets tickets. We'll find them and go along with them. Ju, you must n't sit down. Only a little more and we'll come to the sea. Ju, if you sit down I'll thmack you!" said Punch.

They climbed another dune, and came upon the great gray sea at low tide. Hundreds of crabs were scuttling about the beach, but there was no trace of Papa and Mamma not even of a ship upon the waters – nothing but sand and mud for miles and miles.

And "Uncleharri" found them by chance – very muddy and very forlorn – Punch dissolved in tears, but trying to divert Judy with an "ickle trab," and Judy wailing to the pitiless horizon for "Mamma, Mamma!" – and again "Mamma!"

THE SECOND BAG

*Ah, well-a-day, for we are souls bereaved!
Of all the creatures under Heaven's wide scope
We are most hopeless, who had once most hope,
And most beliefless, who had most believed.*

– *The City of Dreadful Night.*

All this time not a word about Black Sheep. He came later, and Harry, the black-haired boy, was mainly responsible for his coming. Judy – who could help loving little Judy? – passed, by special permit, into the kitchen and thence straight to Aunt Rosa's heart. Harry was Aunt Rosa's one child, and Punch was the extra boy about the house. There was no special place for him or his little affairs, and he was forbidden to sprawl on sofas and explain his ideas about the manufacture of this world and his hopes for his future. Sprawling was lazy and wore out sofas, and little boys were not expected to talk. They were talked to, and the talking to was intended for the benefit of their morals. As the unquestioned despot of the house at Bombay, Punch could not quite understand how he came to be of no account in this new life.

Harry might reach across the table and take what he wanted; Judy might point and get what she wanted. Punch was forbidden to do either. The gray man was his great hope and stand-by for many months after Mamma and Papa left, and he had forgotten to tell Judy to "remember Mamma."

This lapse was excusable, because in the interval he had been introduced by Aunt Rosa to two very impressive things – an abstraction called God, the intimate friend and ally of Aunt Rosa, generally believed to live behind the kitchen-range because it was hot there – and a dirty brown book filled with unintelligible dots and marks. Punch was always anxious to oblige everybody. He, therefore, welded the story of the Creation on to what he could recollect of his Indian fairy tales, and scandalized Aunt Rosa by repeating the result to Judy. It was a sin, a grievous sin, and Punch was talked to for a quarter of an hour. He could not understand where the iniquity came in, but was careful not to repeat the offence, because Aunt Rosa told him that God had heard every word he had said and was very angry. If this were true why did n't God come and say so, thought Punch, and dismissed the matter from his mind. Afterward he learned to know the Lord as the only thing in the world more awful than Aunt Rosa – as a Creature that stood in the background and counted the strokes of the cane.

But the reading was, just then, a much more serious matter than any creed. Aunt Rosa sat him upon a table and told him that A B meant ab.

"Why?" said Punch. "A is a and B is bee. Why does A B mean ab?"

"Because I tell you it does," said Aunt Rosa "and you've got to say it."

Punch said it accordingly, and for a month, hugely against his will, stumbled through the brown book, not in the least comprehending what it meant. But Uncle Harry, who walked much and generally alone, was wont to come into the nursery and suggest to Aunt Rosa that Punch should walk with him. He seldom spoke, but he showed Punch all Rocklington, from the mud-banks and the sand of the back-bay to the great harbours where ships lay at anchor, and the dockyards where the hammers were never still, and the marine-store shops, and the shiny brass counters in the Offices where Uncle Harry went once every three months with a slip of blue paper and received sovereigns in exchange; for he held a wound-pension. Punch heard, too, from his lips the story of the battle of Navarino, where the sailors of the Fleet, for three days afterward, were deaf as posts and could only sign to each other. "That was because of the noise of the guns," said Uncle Harry, "and I have got the wadding of a bullet somewhere inside me now."

Punch regarded him with curiosity. He had not the least idea what wadding was, and his notion of a bullet was a dockyard cannon-ball bigger than his own head. How could Uncle Harry keep a cannon-ball inside him? He was ashamed to ask, for fear Uncle Harry might be angry.

Punch had never known what anger – real anger – meant until one terrible day when Harry had taken his paint-box to paint a boat with, and Punch had protested with a loud and lamentable voice. Then Uncle Harry had appeared on the scene and, muttering something about "strangers' children," had with a stick smitten the black-haired boy across the shoulders till he wept and yelled, and Aunty Rosa came in and abused Uncle Harry for cruelty to his own flesh and blood, and Punch shuddered to the tips of his shoes. "It was n't my fault," he explained to the boy, but both Harry and Aunty Rosa said that it was, and that Punch had told tales, and for a week there were no more walks with Uncle Harry.

But that week brought a great joy to Punch.

He had repeated till he was thrice weary the statement that "the Cat lay on the Mat and the Rat came in."

"Now I can truly read," said Punch, "and now I will never read anything in the world."

He put the brown book in the cupboard where his schoolbooks lived and accidentally tumbled out a venerable volume, without covers, labelled *Sharpe's Magazine*. There was the most portentous picture of a Griffin on the first page, with verses below. The Griffin carried off one sheep a day from a German village, till a man came with a "falchion" and split the Griffin open. Goodness only knew what a falchion was, but there was the Griffin, and his history was an improvement upon the eternal Cat.

"This," said Punch, "means things, and now I will know all about everything in all the world." He read till the light failed, not understanding a tithe of the meaning, but tantalized by glimpses of new worlds hereafter to be revealed.

"What is a 'falchion'? What is a 'e-wee lamb'? What is a 'base usurper'? What is a 'verdant me-ad'? he demanded, with flushed cheeks, at bedtime, of the astonished Aunt Rosa.

"Say your prayers and go to sleep," she replied, and that was all the help Punch then or afterward found at her hands in the new and delightful exercise of reading.

"Aunt Rosa only knows about God and things like that," argued Punch. "Uncle Harry will tell me."

The next walk proved that Uncle Harry could not help either; but he allowed Punch to talk, and even sat down on a bench to hear about the Griffin. Other walks brought other stories as Punch ranged farther afield, for the house held large store of old books that no one ever opened – from Frank Fairleigh in serial numbers, and the earlier poems of Tennyson, contributed anonymously to *Sharpe's Magazine*, to '62 Exhibition Catalogues, gay with colours and delightfully incomprehensible, and odd leaves of "Gulliver's Travels."

As soon as Punch could string a few pot-hooks together, he wrote to Bombay, demanding by return of post "all the books in all the world." Papa could not comply with this modest indent, but sent "Grimm's Fairy Tales" and a "Hans Andersen." That was enough. If he were only left alone Punch could pass, at any hour he chose, into a land of his own, beyond reach of Aunty Rosa and her God, Harry and his teasements, and Judy's claims to be played with.

"Don't disturb me, I'm reading. Go and play in the kitchen," grunted Punch. "Aunty Rosa lets you go there." Judy was cutting her second teeth and was fretful. She appealed to Aunty Rosa, who descended on Punch.

"I was reading," he explained, "reading a book. I want to read."

"You're only doing that to show off," said Aunty Rosa. "But we'll see. Play with Judy now, and don't open a book for a week."

Judy did not pass a very enjoyable playtime with Punch, who was consumed with indignation. There was a pettiness at the bottom of the prohibition which puzzled him.

"It's what I like to do," he said, "and she's found out that and stopped me. Don't cry, Ju – it was n't your fault – please don't cry, or she'll say I made you."

Ju loyally mopped up her tears, and the two played in their nursery, a room in the basement and half underground, to which they were regularly sent after the midday dinner while Aunty Rosa slept. She drank wine – that is to say, something from a bottle in the cellaret – for her stomach's sake, but if she did not fall asleep she would sometimes come into the nursery to see that the children were really playing. Now bricks, wooden hoops, ninepins, and chinaware cannot amuse forever, especially when all Fairyland is to be won by the mere opening of a book, and, as often as not, Punch would be discovered reading to Judy or tell her interminable tales. That was an offence in the eyes of the law, and Judy would be whisked off by Aunty Rosa, while Punch was left to play alone, "and be sure that I hear you doing it."

It was not a cheering employ, for he had to make a playful noise. At last, with infinite craft, he devised an arrangement whereby the table could be supported as to three legs on toy bricks, leaving the fourth clear to bring down on the floor. He could work the table with one hand and hold a book with the other. This he did till an evil day when Aunty Rosa pounced upon him unawares and told him that he was "acting a lie."

"If you're old enough to do that," she said – her temper was always worst after dinner – "you're old enough to be beaten."

"But – I'm – I'm not a animal!" said Punch, aghast. He remembered Uncle Harry and the stick, and turned white. Aunty Rosa had hidden a light cane behind her, and Punch was beaten then and there over the shoulders. It was a revelation to him. The room door was shut, and he was left to weep himself into repentance and work out his own Gospel of Life.

Aunty Rosa, he argued, had the power to beat him with many stripes. It was unjust and cruel and Mamma and Papa would never have allowed it. Unless perhaps, as Aunty Rosa seemed to imply, they had sent secret orders. In which case he was abandoned indeed. It would be discreet in the future to propitiate Aunty Rosa, but, then, again, even in matters in which he was innocent, he had been accused of wishing to "show off." He had "shown off" before visitors when he had attacked a strange gentleman – Harry's uncle, not his own – with requests for information about the Griffin and the falchion, and the precise nature of the Tilbury in which Frank Fairlegh rode – all points of paramount interest which he was bursting to understand. Clearly it would not do to pretend to care for Aunty Rosa.

At this point Harry entered and stood afar off, eying Punch, a disheveled heap in the corner of the room, with disgust.

"You're a liar – a young liar," said Harry, with great unction, "and you're to have tea down here because you're not fit to speak to us. And you're not to speak to Judy again till Mother gives you leave. You'll corrupt her. You're only fit to associate with the servant. Mother says so."

Having reduced Punch to a second agony of tears Harry departed upstairs with the news that Punch was still rebellious.

Uncle Harry sat uneasily in the dining-room. "D – it all, Rosa," said he at last, "can't you leave the child alone? He's a good enough little chap when I meet him."

"He puts on his best manners with you, Henry," said Aunty Rosa, "but I'm afraid, I'm very much afraid, that he is the Black Sheep of the family."

Harry heard and stored up the name for future use. Judy cried till she was bidden to stop, her brother not being worth tears; and the evening concluded with the return of Punch to the upper regions and a private sitting at which all the blinding horrors of Hell were revealed to Punch with such store of imagery as Aunty Rosa's narrow mind possessed.

Most grievous of all was Judy's round-eyed reproach, and Punch went to bed in the depths of the Valley of Humiliation. He shared his room with Harry and knew the torture in store. For an hour and a half he had to answer that young gentleman's question as to his motives for telling a lie, and a

grievous lie, the precise quantity of punishment inflicted by Aunty Rosa, and had also to profess his deep gratitude for such religious instruction as Harry thought fit to impart.

From that day began the downfall of Punch, now Black Sheep.

"Untrustworthy in one thing, untrustworthy in all," said Aunty Rosa, and Harry felt that Black Sheep was delivered into his hands. He would wake him up in the night to ask him why he was such a liar.

"I don't know," Punch would reply.

"Then don't you think you ought to get up and pray to God for a new heart?"

"Y-yess."

"Get out and pray, then!" And Punch would get out of bed with raging hate in his heart against all the world, seen and unseen. He was always tumbling into trouble. Harry had a knack of cross-examining him as to his day's doings, which seldom failed to lead him, sleepy and savage, into half a dozen contradictions – all duly reported to Aunty Rosa next morning.

"But it was n't a lie," Punch would begin, charging into a laboured explanation that landed him more hopelessly in the mire. "I said that I did n't say my prayers twice over in the day, and that was on Tuesday. Once I did, I know I did, but Harry said I did n't," and so forth, till the tension brought tears, and he was dismissed from the table in disgrace.

"You use n't to be as bad as this?" said Judy, awe-stricken at the catalogue of Black Sheep's crimes. "Why are you so bad now?"

"I don't know," Black Sheep would reply. "I'm not, if I only was n't bothered upside down. I knew what I did, and I want to say so; but Harry always makes it out different somehow, and Aunty Rosa does n't believe a word I say. Oh, Ju! don't you say I'm bad too."

"Aunty Rosa says you are," said Judy. "She told the Vicar so when he came yesterday."

"Why does she tell all the people outside the house about me? It is n't fair," said Black Sheep. "When I was in Bombay, and was bad – doing bad, not made-up bad like this – Mamma told Papa, and Papa told me he knew, and that was all. Outside people did n't know too – even Meeta did n't know."

"I don't remember," said Judy wistfully. "I was all little then. Mamma was just as fond of you as she was of me, was n't she?"

"Course she was. So was Papa. So was everybody."

"Aunty Rosa likes me more than she does you. She says that you are a Trial and a Black Sheep, and I'm not to speak to you more than I can help."

"Always? Not outside of the times when you must n't speak to me at all?"

Judy nodded her head mournfully. Black Sheep turned away in despair, but Judy's arms were round his neck.

"Never mind, Punch," she whispered. "I will speak to you just the same as ever and ever. You're my own, own brother though you are – though Aunty Rosa says you're Bad, and Harry says you're a little coward. He says that if I pulled your hair hard, you'd cry."

"Pull, then," said Punch.

Judy pulled gingerly.

"Pull harder – as hard as you can! There! I don't mind how much you pull it now. If you'll speak to me same as ever I'll let you pull it as much as you like – pull it out if you like. But I know if Harry came and stood by and made you do it I'd cry."

So the two children sealed the compact with a kiss, and Black Sheep's heart was cheered within him, and by extreme caution and careful avoidance of Harry he acquired virtue and was allowed to read undisturbed for a week. Uncle Harry took him for walks and consoled him with rough tenderness, never calling him Black Sheep. "It's good for you, I suppose, Punch," he used to say. "Let us sit down. I'm getting tired." His steps led him now not to the beach, but to the Cemetery of Rocklington, amid the potato-fields. For hours the gray man would sit on a tombstone, while Black Sheep read epitaphs, and then with a sigh would stump home again.

"I shall lie there soon," said he to Black Sheep; one winter evening, when his face showed white as a worn silver coin under the lights of the chapel-lodge. "You need n't tell Aunty Rosa."

A month later, he turned sharp round, ere half a morning walk was completed, and stumped back to the house. "Put me to bed, Rosa," he muttered. "I've walked my last. The wadding has found me out."

They put him to bed, and for a fortnight the shadow of his sickness lay upon the house, and Black Sheep went to and fro unobserved. Papa had sent him some new books, and he was told to keep quiet. He retired into his own world, and was perfectly happy. Even at night his felicity was unbroken. He could lie in bed and string himself tales of travel and adventure while Harry was downstairs.

"Uncle Harry's going to die," said Judy, who now lived almost entirely with Aunty Rosa.

"I'm very sorry," said Black Sheep soberly. "He told me that a long time ago."

Aunty Rosa heard the conversation. "Will nothing check your wicked tongue?" she said angrily. There were blue circles round her eyes.

Black Sheep retreated to the nursery and read "Cometh up as a Flower" with deep and uncomprehending interest. He had been forbidden to read it on account of its "sinfulness," but the bonds of the Universe were crumbling, and Aunty Rosa was in great grief.

"I'm glad," said Black Sheep. "She 's unhappy now. It was n't a lie, though. I knew. He told me not to tell."

That night Black Sheep woke with a start. Harry was not in the room, and there was a sound of sobbing on the next floor. Then the voice of Uncle Harry, singing the song of the Battle of Navarino, cut through the darkness:

"Our vanship was the Asia —
The Albion and Genoa!"

"He 's getting well," thought Black Sheep, who knew the song through all its seventeen verses. But the blood froze at his little heart as he thought. The voice leapt an octave and rang shrill as a boatswain's pipe:

"And next came on the lovely Rose,
The Philomel, her fire-ship, closed,
And the Little Brisk was sore exposed
That day at Navarino."

"That day at Navarino, Uncle Harry!" shouted Black Sheep, half wild with excitement and fear of he knew not what.

A door opened and Aunty Rosa screamed up the staircase: "Hush! For God's sake hush, you little devil. Uncle Harry is dead!"

THE THIRD BAG

*Journeys end in lovers' meeting,
Every wise man's son doth know.*

"I wonder what will happen to me now," thought Black Sheep, when the semi-pagan rites peculiar to the burial of the Dead in middle-class houses had been accomplished, and Aunt Rosa, awful in black crape, had returned to this life. "I don't think I've done anything bad that she knows of. I suppose I will soon. She will be very cross after Uncle Harry's dying, and Harry will be cross too. I'll keep in the nursery."

Unfortunately for Punch's plans, it was decided that he should be sent to a day-school which Harry attended. This meant a morning walk with Harry, and perhaps an evening one; but the prospect of freedom in the interval was refreshing. "Harry'll tell everything I do, but I won't do anything," said Black Sheep. Fortified with this virtuous resolution, he went to school only to find that Harry's version of his character had preceded him, and that life was a burden in consequence. He took stock of his associates. Some of them were unclean, some of them talked in dialect, many dropped their h's, and there were two Jews and a Negro, or someone quite as dark, in the assembly. "That's a hubshi," said Black Sheep to himself. "Even Meeta used to laugh at a hubshi. I don't think this is a proper place." He was indignant for at least an hour, till he reflected that any expostulation on his part would be by Aunt Rosa construed into "showing off," and that Harry would tell the boys.

"How do you like school?" said Aunt Rosa at the end of the day.

"I think it is a very nice place," said Punch quietly.

"I suppose you warned the boys of Black Sheep's character?" said Aunt Rosa to Harry.

"Oh, yes!" said the censor of Black Sheep's morals. "They know all about him."

"If I was with my father," said Black Sheep, stung to the quick, "I should n't speak to those boys. He would n't let me. They live in shops. I saw them go into shops – where their fathers live and sell things."

"You're too good for that school, are you?" said Aunt Rosa, with a bitter smile. "You ought to be grateful, Black Sheep, that those boys speak to you at all. It is n't every school that takes little liars."

Harry did not fail to make much capital out of Black Sheep's ill-considered remark; with the result that several boys, including the hubshi, demonstrated to Black Sheep the eternal equality of the human race by smacking his head, and his consolation from Aunt Rosa was that it "served him right for being vain." He learned, however, to keep his opinions to himself, and by propitiating Harry in carrying books and the like to secure a little peace. His existence was not too joyful. From nine till twelve he was at school, and from two to four, except on Saturdays. In the evenings he was sent down into the nursery to prepare his lessons for the next day, and every night came the dreaded cross-questionings at Harry's hand. Of Judy he saw but little. She was deeply religious – at six years of age Religion is easy to come by – and sorely divided between her natural love for Black Sheep and her love for Aunt Rosa, who could do no wrong.

The lean woman returned that love with interest, and Judy, when she dared, took advantage of this for the remission of Black Sheep's penalties. Failures in lessons at school were furnished at home by a week without reading other than schoolbooks, and Harry brought the news of such a failure with glee. Further, Black Sheep was then bound to repeat his lessons at bedtime to Harry, who generally succeeded in making him break down, and consoled him by gloomiest forebodings for the morrow. Harry was at once spy, practical joker, inquisitor, and Aunt Rosa's deputy executioner. He filled his many posts to admiration. From his actions, now that Uncle Harry was dead, there was no appeal.

Black Sheep had not been permitted to keep any self-respect at school; at home he was of course utterly discredited, and grateful for any pity that the servant-girls – they changed frequently at Downe Lodge because they, too, were liars – might show. "You 're just fit to row in the same boat with Black Sheep," was a sentiment that each new Jane or Eliza might expect to hear, before a month was over, from Aunty Rosa's lips; and Black Sheep was used to ask new girls whether they had yet been compared to him. Harry was "Master Harry" in their mouths; Judy was officially "Miss Judy"; but Black Sheep was never anything more than Black Sheep *tout court*.

As time went on and the memory of Papa and Mamma became wholly overlaid by the unpleasant task of writing them letters under Aunty Rosa's eye, each Sunday, Black Sheep forgot what manner of life he had led in the beginning of things. Even Judy's appeals to "try and remember about Bombay" failed to quicken him.

"I can't remember," he said. "I know I used to give orders and Mamma kissed me."

"Aunty Rosa will kiss you if you are good," pleaded Judy.

"Ugh! I don't want to be kissed by Aunty Rosa. She'd say I was doing it to get something more to eat."

The weeks lengthened into months, and the holidays came; but just before the holidays Black Sheep fell into deadly sin.

Among the many boys whom Harry had incited to "punch Black Sheep's head because he dare n't hit back," was one more aggravating than the rest, who, in an unlucky moment, fell upon Black Sheep when Harry was not near. The blows stung, and Black Sheep struck back at random with all the power at his command. The boy dropped and whimpered. Black Sheep was astounded at his own act, but, feeling the unresisting body under him, shook it with both his hands in blind fury and then began to throttle his enemy; meaning honestly to slay him. There was a scuffle, and Black Sheep was torn off the body by Harry and some colleagues, and cuffed home tingling but exultant. Aunty Rosa was out; pending her arrival Harry set himself to lecture Black Sheep on the sin of murder – which he described as the offence of Cain.

"Why did n't you fight him fair? What did you hit him when he was down for, you little cur?"

Black Sheep looked up at Harry's throat and then at a knife on the dinner-table.

"I don't understand," he said wearily. "You always set him on me and told me I was a coward when I blubbed. Will you leave me alone until Aunty Rosa comes in? She'll beat me if you tell her I ought to be beaten; so it's all right."

"It's all wrong," said Harry magisterially. "You nearly killed him, and I should n't wonder if he dies."

"Will he die?" said Black Sheep.

"I daresay," said Harry, "and then you'll be hanged."

"All right," said Black Sheep, possessing himself of the table-knife. "Then I'll kill you now. You say things and do things and – and I don't know how things happen, and you never leave me alone – and I don't care what happens!"

He ran at the boy with the knife, and Harry fled upstairs to his room, promising Black Sheep the finest thrashing in the world when Aunty Rosa returned. Black Sheep sat at the bottom of the stairs, the table-knife in his hand, and wept for that he had not killed Harry. The servant-girl came up from the kitchen, took the knife away, and consoled him. But Black Sheep was beyond consolation. He would be badly beaten by Aunty Rosa; then there would be another beating at Harry's hands; then Judy would not be allowed to speak to him; then the tale would be told at school and then —

There was no one to help and no one to care, and the best way out of the business was by death. A knife would hurt, but Aunty Rosa had told him, a year ago, that if he sucked paint he would die. He went into the nursery, unearthed the now-disused Noah's Ark, and sucked the paint off as many animals as remained. It tasted abominable, but he had licked Noah's Dove clean by the time Aunty Rosa and Judy returned. He went upstairs and greeted them with: "Please, Aunty Rosa, I believe I've

nearly killed a boy at school, and I've tried to kill Harry, and when you've done all about God and Hell, will you beat me and get it over?"

The tale of the assault as told by Harry could only be explained on the ground of possession by the Devil. Wherefore Black Sheep was not only most excellently beaten, once by Aunty Rosa and once, when thoroughly cowed down, by Harry, but he was further prayed for at family prayers, together with Jane, who had stolen a cold rissole from the pantry and snuffled audibly as her enormity was brought before the Throne of Grace. Black Sheep was sore and stiff, but triumphant. He would die that very night and be rid of them all. No, he would ask for no forgiveness from Harry, and at bedtime would stand no questioning at Harry's hands, even though addressed as "Young Cain."

"I've been beaten," said he, "and I've done other things. I don't care what I do. If you speak to me to-night, Harry, I'll get out and try to kill you. Now you can kill me if you like."

Harry took his bed into the spare-room, and Black Sheep lay down to die.

It may be that the makers of Noah's Arks know that their animals are likely to find their way into young mouths, and paint them accordingly. Certain it is that the common, weary next morning broke through the windows and found Black Sheep quite well and a good deal ashamed of himself, but richer by the knowledge that he could, in extremity, secure himself against Harry for the future.

When he descended to breakfast on the first day of the holidays, he was greeted with the news that Harry, Aunty Rosa, and Judy were going away to Brighton, while Black Sheep was to stay in the house with the servant. His latest outbreak suited Aunty Rosa's plans admirably. It gave her good excuse for leaving the extra boy behind. Papa in Bombay, who really seemed to know a young sinner's wants to the hour, sent, that week, a package of new books. And with these, and the society of Jane on board-wages, Black Sheep was left alone for a month.

The books lasted for ten days. They were eaten too quickly, in long gulps of four-and-twenty hours at a time. Then came days of doing absolutely nothing, of dreaming dreams and marching imaginary armies up and down stairs, of counting the number of banisters, and of measuring the length and breadth of every room in handspans – fifty down the side, thirty across, and fifty back again. Jane made many friends, and, after receiving Black Sheep's assurance that he would not tell of her absences, went out daily for long hours. Black Sheep would follow the rays of the sinking sun from the kitchen to the dining-room and thence upward to his own bedroom until all was gray dark, and he ran down to the kitchen fire and read by its light. He was happy in that he was left alone and could read as much as he pleased. But, later, he grew afraid of the shadows of window-curtains and the flapping of doors and the creaking of shutters. He went out into the garden, and the rustling of the laurel-bushes frightened him.

He was glad when they all returned – Aunty Rosa, Harry, and Judy – full of news, and Judy laden with gifts. Who could help loving loyal little Judy? In return for all her merry babblement, Black Sheep confided to her that the distance from the hall-door to the top of the first landing was exactly one hundred and eighty-four handspans. He had found it out himself.

Then the old life recommenced; but with a difference, and a new sin. To his other iniquities Black Sheep had now added a phenomenal clumsiness – was as unfit to trust in action as he was in word. He himself could not account for spilling everything he touched, upsetting glasses as he put his hand out, and bumping his head against doors that were manifestly shut. There was a gray haze upon all his world, and it narrowed month by month, until at last it left Black Sheep almost alone with the flapping curtains that were so like ghosts, and the nameless terrors of broad daylight that were only coats on pegs after all.

Holidays came and holidays went, and Black Sheep was taken to see many people whose faces were all exactly alike; was beaten when occasion demanded, and tortured by Harry on all possible occasions; but defended by Judy through good and evil report, though she hereby drew upon herself the wrath of Aunty Rosa.

The weeks were interminable and Papa and Mamma were clean forgotten. Harry had left school and was a clerk in a Banking-Office. Freed from his presence, Black Sheep resolved that he should no longer be deprived of his allowance of pleasure-reading. Consequently, when he failed at school he reported that all was well, and conceived a large contempt for Aunty Rosa as he saw how easy it was to deceive her. "She says I'm a little liar when I don't tell lies, and now I do, she does n't know," thought Black Sheep. Aunty Rosa had credited him in the past with petty cunning and stratagem that had never entered into his head. By the light of the sordid knowledge that she had revealed to him he paid her back full tale. In a household where the most innocent of his motives, his natural yearning for a little affection, had been interpreted into a desire for more bread and jam or to ingratiate himself with strangers and so put Harry into the background, his work was easy. Aunty Rosa could penetrate certain kinds of hypocrisy, but not all. He set his child's wits against hers and was no more beaten. It grew monthly more and more of a trouble to read the schoolbooks, and even the pages of the open-print story-books danced and were dim. So Black Sheep brooded in the shadows that fell about him and cut him off from the world, inventing horrible punishments for "dear Harry," or plotting another line of the tangled web of deception that he wrapped round Aunty Rosa.

Then the crash came and the cobwebs were broken. It was impossible to foresee everything. Aunty Rosa made personal inquiries as to Black Sheep's progress and received information that startled her. Step by step, with a delight as keen as when she convicted an underfed housemaid of the theft of cold meats, she followed the trail of Black Sheep's delinquencies. For weeks and weeks, in order to escape banishment from the book-shelves, he had made a fool of Aunty Rosa, of Harry, of God, of all the world. Horrible, most horrible, and evidence of an utterly depraved mind.

Black Sheep counted the cost. "It will only be one big beating, and then she'll put a card with 'Liar' on my back, same as she did before. Harry will whack me and pray for me, and she will pray for me at prayers and tell me I'm a Child of the Devil and give me hymns to learn. But I've done all my reading and she never knew. She'll say she knew all along. She's an old liar, too," said he.

For three days Black Sheep was shut in his own bedroom – to prepare his heart. "That means two beatings. One at school and one here. That one will hurt most." And it fell even as he thought. He was thrashed at school before the Jews and the hubshi, for the heinous crime of bringing home false reports of progress. He was thrashed at home by Aunty Rosa on the same count, and then the placard was produced. Aunty Rosa stitched it between his shoulders and bade him go for a walk with it upon him.

"If you make me do that," said Black Sheep very quietly, "I shall burn this house down, and perhaps I'll kill you. I don't know whether I can kill you – you 're so bony – but I'll try."

No punishment followed this blasphemy, though Black Sheep held himself ready to work his way to Aunty Rosa's withered throat, and grip there till he was beaten off. Perhaps Aunty Rosa was afraid, for Black Sheep, having reached the Nadir of Sin, bore himself with a new recklessness.

In the midst of all the trouble there came a visitor from over the seas to Downe Lodge, who knew Papa and Mamma, and was commissioned to see Punch and Judy. Black Sheep was sent to the drawing-room and charged into a solid tea-table laden with china.

"Gently, gently, little man," said the visitor turning Black Sheep's face to the light slowly. "What's that big bird on the palings?"

"What bird?" asked Black Sheep.

The visitor looked deep down into Black Sheep's eyes for a half a minute, and then said suddenly: "Good God, the little chap's nearly blind."

It was a most business-like visitor. He gave orders, on his own responsibility, that Black Sheep was not to go to school or open a book until Mamma came home. "She'll be here in three weeks, as you know of course," said he, "and I'm Inverarity Sahib. I ushered you into this wicked world, young man, and a nice use you seem to have made of your time. You must do nothing whatever. Can you do that?"

"Yes," said Punch in a dazed way. He had known that Mamma was coming. There was a chance, then, of another beating. Thank Heaven, Papa was n't coming too. Aunty Rosa had said of late that he ought to be beaten by a man.

For the next three weeks Black Sheep was strictly allowed to do nothing. He spent his time in the old nursery looking at the broken toys, for all of which account must be rendered to Mamma. Aunty Rosa hit him over the hands if even a wooden boat were broken. But that sin was of small importance compared to the other revelations, so darkly hinted at by Aunty Rosa. "When your mother comes, and hears what I have to tell her, she may appreciate you properly," she said grimly, and mounted guard over Judy lest that small maiden should attempt to comfort her brother, to the peril of her own soul.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.