

Stables Gordon

Courage, True Hearts: Sailing in Search of Fortune



Gordon Stables

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Courage, True Hearts: Sailing in Search of Fortune

BOOK I

IN SCOTTISH WILDS AND LONDON STREETS

CHAPTER I. – HOPE TOLD A FLATTERING TALE

Had you been in the beautiful and wild forest of Glenvoie on that bright and blue-skied September morning-on one of its hills, let us say-and heard the music of those two boys' voices swelling up towards you, nothing that I know of could have prevented you from joining in. So joyous, so full of hope were they withal, that the very tune itself, to say nothing of the words, would have sent sorrow right straight away from your heart, if there had been any to send.

"Cheer, boys, cheer, no more of idle sorrow,
Courage, true hearts, shall bear us on our way;
Hope flies before, and points the bright to-morrow,
Let us forget the dangers of to-day."

There was a pause just here, and from your elevated situation on that rocky pap, looking down, you would have rested your eyes on one of the prettiest rolling woodland scenes in all broad Scotland.

It was a great waving ocean of foliage, and the sunset of autumn was over it all, lying here and there in patches of crimson, brown, and yellow, which the solemn black of pine-trees, and the funereal green of dark spruces only served to intensify.

Flap-flap-flap! huge wood-pigeons arise in the air and go sailing over the woods. They are frightened, as well they may be, for a moment afterwards two guns ring out almost simultaneously, and so still is the air that you can hear the dull thud of fallen game.

"Hurrah, Conal! Why, that was a splendid shot! I saw you take aim."

"No, Duncan, no; the bird is yours. You fired first."

"Only at random, brother. But come, let us look at him. What a splendid creature! Do you know, Conal, I could almost cry for having killed him."

"Oh! so could I, Duncan, for that matter, but the capercailzie¹ is game, mind, and won't father be pleased. Why do they call it a wild turkey?"

"Because it isn't a turkey. That is quite sufficient reason for a gamekeeper. The capercailzie is the biggest grouse there is, you know, and sometimes weighs very many pounds."

"And didn't we find the nest of one in a spruce tree last spring."

"Ay, and six eggs that we didn't touch; and I've never put any faith again in that ignoramus of a book, that would have us believe the birds always build on the bare ground."

"Written by an Englishman, no doubt, Duncan, who had never placed a foot on our native heath. But now let us get back to breakfast. I wonder where our little sister Flora is."

¹ The letter "z" not pronounced in Scotch.

"I heard her gun about ten minutes ago; she can't be far off. Besides Viking is with her, so she is safe enough. Give the curlew's scream and she'll soon appear."

"Like the wild scream of the curlew,
From crag to crag the signal flew."

Duncan threw down his gun beside the dead game, and, placing his fingers in his mouth, gave a perfect imitation of this strange bird's cry:

"Who-o-o-eet, who-o-o-eet (these in long-drawn notes, then quicker and quicker), who-eet, who-eet, wheet, wheet, wheet, wheet, who-ee!"

The boys did not have long to wait for an answer. For Duncan, the elder, who was about sixteen, with a stalwart well-knit frame, and even a budding moustachelet, had hardly finished, when far down in a dark spruce thicket sounded the barking of a dog, which could only belong to one of a very large breed.

He entered the glade in which the brothers stood not many seconds after. He entered with a joyous bound and bark, his great shaggy coat, black as the raven's wing, afloat on his shoulders and back; his white teeth flashing; and a yard or two, more or less, of a red ribbon of a tongue hanging out of his mouth.

Need I say he was a noble Newfoundland.

He stopped short and looked at the 'cailzie, then snuffed at it, and immediately after licked his master's cheek. To do so he had to put a paw on each of Duncan's shoulders, and his weight nearly bore him to the ground.

But see, here comes little Flora herself-she is only twelve; her brothers are both dressed in the kilt of hill tartan, and Flora's frock is but a short one, showing to advantage a pair of batten legs encased in galligaskins; fair hair, streaming like a shower of gold over her shoulders; blue eyes, and a lively very pretty face. But across that independent wee nose of hers is quite a bridge of freckles, which extends half-way across her cheeks.

Now a child of her tender years would, in many parts of England, be treated quite as a child. It was quite the reverse at Glenvoie. Flora was in reality a little model of wisdom, and many a bit of good advice she gave her brothers-not that they bothered taking it, though both loved her dearly.

Flora carried a little gun-a present from her father, who was very proud of her exploits and worldly wisdom, and across her shoulders was slung a bag, which appeared to be well filled.

"Hillo, Siss!" cried Duncan. "Any cheer?"

"Oh, yes, three wild pigeons! But what a lovely great wild turkey! I'm sure, Duncan, it was a pity to kill him!"

"Sport, Sissie, sport!" said Duncan.

Yet as he looked at the splendidly plumaged bird which his gun had laid low in death, he smothered a sigh. He half repented now having killed the 'cailzie.

Homeward next, for all were hungry, and in the old-fashioned hall of the house of Glenvoie breakfast would be waiting for them. Through the forest dark and deep, across a wide and clear brown stream by stepping-stones, a stream that in England would be called a river, then on to a broad heathy moorland, with here and there a cottage and little croft.

Poor enough these were in all conscience, but they afforded meal and milk to the owners and their children. Chubby-cheeked hardy little chaps these were. They ran to gate or doorway to greet our young heroes with cheers shrill and many, and Flora smiled her sweetest on them. Neither stockings nor shoes nor caps had they, winter or summer, and when they grew up many of them would join the army, and be first in every bayonet charge where tartans would wave and bonnets nod.

Laird M'Vayne himself came to the porch to meet his children. These were all he had, and their mother was an invalid.

An excellent specimen of the Highland laird was this Chief M'Vayne. As sturdy and strong in limb as a Hercules, broad in shoulder, and though sixty years and over, as straight as an arrow. His was a fearless face, but handsome withal, and he never looked better than when he smiled. Smiling was natural to him, and came straight from the heart, lighting up his whole face as morning sunshine lights the sea.

"Better late than never, boys. What ho! a capercailzie!"

Then he placed his hand so kindly on Duncan's shoulder.

"It was a good shot, I can see," he said, "and now we won't kill any more of these splendid birds. I want the woods to swarm with them."

"No, father," said Duncan, "this is the last, and I shall send to Glasgow for eyes, and stuff and set him up myself."

Then the Laird hoisted Flora, gun, game-bag and all, right on top of his broad left shoulder and carried her inside, while Viking, enjoying the fun, made house and "hallan" ring with his gladsome barking.

Ever see or partake of a real Highland breakfast, reader? A pleasure you have before you, I trust. And had you been at Glenvoie House on this particular morning, the very sight of that meal would have given you an appetite, while partaking of it would have made you feel a man.

That was real porridge to begin with, a little lake of butter in the centre of each plate and creamy milk to flank it. Different indeed from the clammy, saltless saucers of poultice Englishmen shiver over of a morning at hotels, making themselves believe they are partaking of Scotia's own *own* dish.

All did justice to the porridge, and Viking had a double allowance. There was beautiful mountain trout to follow, cold game, and fresh herrings with potatoes. Marmalade and honey with real oat-cakes finished the banquet.

About this time, gazing across the lawn from the great window, Duncan could see the runner bringing the post-bag. Runner he might well be called. He had come twenty miles that morning with the mails, trotting all the way.

Duncan threw open the window, and with a smile and order for postie to go round to the kitchen for a "piece" and a "drink", he received the bag.

The arrival of the runner was always one of the chief events of the day, for the Laird "let" his shootings every season, and had friends in every part of the kingdom.

So had the boys.

"Ah!" said their father, opening a letter which he had reserved to the last. "Here is one from our distant relative, Colonel Trelawney."

"Oh! do read it out," cried Flora impulsively.

Her father obeyed, as all dutiful fathers do when they receive a command from juvenile daughters.

"Maida Vale, London.

"My dear 42nd cousin, – I think that is about our relationship. Well, I was never good at counting kin, so we must let it stand at that. Heigho! That is my 42nd sigh since breakfast time, and it isn't the luncheon hour yet. But I couldn't quite tell you what I am sighing for; I think it must be for the Highland moors around you, on which I enjoyed so glorious a time in August. Heigho! (43rd). Your hills must still be clad in the crimson and purple glory of heath and heather whence scattered coveys or whirring wings spring skywards (Poetry!).

"Well now, I've got something to propose. Since his poor mother died, my boy Frank-fifteen next birthday, you know-has not seemed to thrive well. He is a capital scholar, and is of a very inventive turn of mind. He delights in the country, and when he and I bike away down into the greenery of fields and woods he always looks better and happier. But at home he has nothing to look at that is natural-a few misshapen trees only, a shaven lawn, evergreens, and twittering sparrows.

"He is lively enough, and plays the fiddle charmingly. He is only a London lad after all, and his pale face bears witness to the fact.

"Well, cousin, fair exchange is no robbery. Send me your two boys up here to spend the winter, and then I'll send the whole three down to you to put in the spring and summer. Expected results? Is that what you ask, cousin mine? Well, they are these. A little insight into London life will assist in toning down the fiery Highland exuberance of your brave lads, and will help to make them young men of the world. While a spell among your Highland hills shall put more life-blood into my boy, and make him stronger, braver, and heartier."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Duncan. "He is going to civilize us, is he, daddy dear? We'll have to wear frock-coats, long hats and long faces, and carry umbrellas. What do you think of that, Conal?"

"Why," said Conal disdainfully, "umbrellas are only for old wives and Sassenachs. The plaid for me."

"And me!"

"Well, but listen," said the Laird laughing.

"Your boys," says the colonel, "must come to us dressed in their hill-tartan kilts, and have dress tartans to wear at evening parties. The English are fond of chaffing the Scot, but, mind you, they love him all the same, and can quite appreciate all the deeds of derring-do he accomplishes on the field of battle, as well as his long-business-headedness on the Stock Exchange. Heigho! (sigh the 44th), had I been a Scot I'd have been a richer man to-day instead of having to maintain a constant fight to keep the wolf from the door. But you, dear cousin, must be fairly wealthy."

It was Laird M'Wayne's turn to sigh now, for alas! he was far indeed from rich, and, young as they were, both his boys knew it. And between you and me and the binnacle, reader, the lads used to pray every night, that Heaven might enable them when they came to man's estate, or even before, to do something for the parents who had been so good to them.

"Well," the letter ran on, "I sha'n't say any more, only you will let the laddies (that is Scotch, isn't it?) come, won't you, cousin? and if we can only find out the time of the boat's arrival, Frank and I shall be at the dock waiting for them."

"Hurrah!" cried Duncan,

"Hurrah!" cried Conal.

"And you won't be sorry to leave me and the old home, will you?" said M'Wayne.

"Oh, indeed, indeed we will, daddy," cried Duncan, "and we'll think about you all and pray for you too, every day and night. Won't we, Conal?"

"Of course we will."

Then the younger lad went and threw his arms round his father's neck, leaned his cheek against his breast, in truly Celtic fashion, and there were tears in his eyes.

"Besides," said Duncan, "the change will do us such a heap of good, and by all we read London must be the grandest place in the whole wide world."

"Streets paved with gold, eh? Houses tiled with sheets of solid silver that glitter daily in the noonday sun. No poverty, no vice, no crime in London. Is that your notion of London, my son?"

"Well," replied Duncan laughing, "it may not be quite so bright as all that, daddy, but I am sure of one thing."

"Yes?"

"If the streets are not paved with gold, nor the houses tiled with silver, there is money to be made in the city by any honest business Scot who cares to work and wants to win."

"Bravo, Duncan!"

"In the lexicon of youth which fate reserves
For a bright manhood, there is no such word as Fail."

—

For the next two or three weeks, although the boys with their plucky little sister went every day either to the hill or woods to shoot, or to the burn to fish, there was very little talked about except the coming excursion to the great city of London.

Mrs. M'Wayne was at present confined to her room, and, being nervous, the thought of losing her boys even for a short four or five months made her heart feel sad indeed, and it took them all their time to reassure her.

"No, no, lads," she would cry almost petulantly; "I cannot be happy until I see you in the glen once more, safe and sound!"

Two weeks passed—oh, ever so quickly—away, and the last week was to be devoted wholly and solely to the packing of trunks, a very pleasurable and hopeful employment indeed.

Duncan was *facile princeps* at this work, and he kept a note-book always near, so that whenever he thought about anything he might need, he wrote it down—just as if it had not been possible to get every article he might require in great London, from a needle to an anchor.

Only, as he told his brother Conal, "It is far better to be sure than sorry."

Well, the last day—the last sad day—came round at last and farewells had to be said on both sides.

Mrs. M'Wayne kept up as well as she could, and so did the boys. *Noblesse oblige*, you know, for although their father was but a Highland laird, and poor at that, he was connected by blood with the chiefs of the best clans in Scotland.

Poor honest Viking had watched the packing with the very greatest of interest, and so sad did he appear that Duncan and Conal made up their minds to take him with them. And when they told him so, there really was not a much happier dog in all the British islands. For Viking was wise beyond compare, and there was very little, indeed, that he did not understand.

But Florie's grief at the loss of her brothers was beyond control, and she made no attempt to hide her tears.

Yes, the laird himself journeyed with his boys as far as Leith, and saw them safe on board.

When the good ship steamed away at last, he waved them a silent adieu, then turned and walked quickly away.

CHAPTER II. – HURRAH FOR "MERRIE ENGLAND"!

Neither Duncan nor Conal was a bad sailor, for, their father's estate being near the western sea, many a long summer's day they spent in open boats, and they sometimes went out with the herring-fishers and were heard of no more for clays.

But this was to be a voyage of more than ordinary rigours, for, as bad luck would have it, a gale of wind arose, with tremendous seas, soon after they passed Berwick.

The waves made a clean breach over the unfortunate ship, and at midnight, when the storm was at its worst, the boys were suddenly awakened by the strange rolling motion of the steamer, and they knew at once that some terrible accident had happened.

The engines had stopped, for the shaft was broken; and high over the roaring of the terrible wind they could hear the captain shouting:

"All hands on deck!"

"Hands make sail!"

It was but little sail she could carry, indeed, and that only fore-and-afters, jib and stay-sails.

The boys had a cabin all to themselves, and the companionship of honest Viking, the Newfoundland. The poor dog did not know what to make of his situation. If he thought at all, and no doubt dogs do think, he must have wondered why his masters should have forsaken their beautiful home, their wanderings over the hills still clad in crimson heather, or through the forests deep and dark, for a life like this; but to the lower animals the ways of mankind are inscrutable, just as those of a higher power are to us. We are gods to the pets we cherish, and they are content to believe in and trust us, never doubting that all is for the best. Alas! we ourselves hardly put the same trust in the good God who made us, and cares for us, as our innocent dogs do in those who own them.

"Well, Conal," said Duncan, "this is, indeed, a wild night. I wonder if we are going to Davie Jones's locker, as sailors call it?"

"I don't think so. The captain is a long-headed fellow. I guess he knows what he is up to."

"I shall light the candles anyhow. I don't like to lie awake in the dark. Do you?"

"Not much. If I was to be drowned I think I would like it to come off in good daylight."

After a scramble, during which he was pitched three times on the deck, once right on top of the dog, Duncan succeeded in lighting the candles.

These were hung in gimbals, so that the motion of the ship did not affect them.

It was more cheerful now; so, having little desire to go to sleep, knowing that the ship must really be in danger, they lay and talked to each other. Talked of home, of course, but more about the great and wondrous city of London, which, if God spared the ship, they soon should see.

Presently a bigger wave than any that had come before it struck the ship, and seemed to heel her over right on her beam-ends, so that Duncan almost tumbled out of his berth.

A deep silence followed, broken only by the rush of water into the boys' cabin.

Viking sprang right into Conal's berth, and crouched, shaking and quivering in terror, at his feet.

There was half a foot of water on the cabin deck.

The worst seemed to be over, however, for presently sail was got on her, and though the wind continued to rave and howl through the rigging, she was on a more even keel and much steadier.

Presently the captain himself had a peep into the lads' state-room.

He had a bronzed but cheerful face, and was clad in oil-skins from his sou'-wester hat to his boots.

"Not afraid, are you, boys? No? Well, that's right. We have broken down, and it will be many days before we get into London; but we'll manage all right, and I think the wind is just a little easier already."

"So we won't go to Davie Jones's to-night, will we, captain?"

"Not if I know it, lad. Now, my advice is this: go to sleep, and-er-well, there can be no harm if you say your prayers before you do drop off."

The boys took his advice, and were soon fast in the arms of Morpheus. So, too, was honest Viking. He was one of those dogs who know when they are well off, so he preferred remaining in Conal's bunk to descending to the wet deck again. To show his sympathy, he gave the boy one of his huge paws to hold, and so hand-in-hand they fell asleep.

The wind was still blowing when they sat down to breakfast with the captain and first mate, for there was not another passenger on board save themselves. The old saying, "The more the merrier", does not apply to coasting steamers in early winter. The fewer the easier-that is more truthful.

The gale was a gale no longer, but a steady breeze. The ship was given a good offing, for the wind blew from the north-east, and to be too close to a lee shore is at all times dangerous.

But how very snug and cosy the saloon looked, when they were all gathered around the brightly-burning stove that night.

The skipper could tell many a good story, and the first mate also could spin a yarn or two, for they had both been far away at sea in distant climes, and both hoped to get ocean-going ships again.

So there they sat and chatted-ship-master and man, with their tumblers of hot grog on the top of the stove-till six bells in the middle watch.

Then the boys and Viking retired.

"I say, Conal," said Duncan that evening, just before turning in, "I think I should like to be a sailor."

"Well," replied Conal, "I should like to visit far-away countries, where hardly anybody had ever been before, and try to make some money just to be able to help father in his difficulties."

"Poor father, yes. Well, young fellows have made money before now."

"Ay," said Conal, who was wise beyond his years; "but, brother, they had a nest-egg to begin with. Now, we have nothing."

"Nonsense, Conal; we have clear heads, we have a good education, and we have a pair of willing hands each. That makes a good outfit, Conal, and many a one has conquered fate with far less."

The voyage to London was a long and tedious one, for they had to struggle for days against head-winds, and tack and half tack isn't the quickest way to a port.

But long before they reached the mouth of the Thames, and were taken in tow by a tug-boat, the boys had cemented quite a friendship with Captain Talbot and his mate Morgan. They promised to correspond, and the honest skipper told them that he had a great project on, and that if it came to a head, he would be willing to take them both to sea with him as apprentices, if their father would let them go. This was real good news for our young heroes, and they parted from Talbot happy and hopeful.

Morgan, the mate, put them up to the ropes as to getting to Colonel Trelawney's residence, and a good thing it was that he did so, else assuredly they would have lost themselves. A bargain was made with a cabman, and he agreed for a certain sum to drive them all the way.

It was a damp and miserable day, the streets were inches deep in slimy mud, the houses all gray and dismal.

No wonder that the hearts of these two boys, accustomed to the green grandeur of forests and crimson-clad Highland hills, sank within them, as they gazed from the windows of their cab.

Was this the beautiful London they had heard tell of and expected to see? Nothing but discomfort and misery met their eyes at first, and when the conveyance stopped now and then, blocked by carts and wagons, they found they could scarcely understand a word of the jargon that fell on their ears from every side.

"Moaning piper!" cried a ragged urchin, shoving a newspaper right under Duncan's nose.

Duncan bought this morning paper.

"Did you notice what he said, Conal?"

"Yes; he said 'Moaning piper'. There must be something about a battle in it, and a Scotch piper must have been wounded. No wonder he moaned if he was shot through the chest or legs-eh, Duncan?"

"No indeed, that would make anybody moan."

But much to the boys' disgust there was nothing about a battle in the paper, nor about pipers, nor even about soldiers at all. So the newspaper was thrown down, and they contented themselves by looking from the windows at the crowds of people that were hurrying along the pavement, everyone intent only on his own business, and taking not the slightest notice of his neighbour. They had now got into a better part of the town. There were fewer guttersnipes and badly-dressed men and women here, less apparent poverty, in fact, with the exception of the poor, white-faced, hungry-looking girls and women who were selling flowers. During a block one of these came to the window near which Duncan sat, and he made the lassie happy by buying two button-holes, and giving her sixpence for them.

The 'buses were objects of curiosity for our heroes.

The drivers were ideal in their own way, and of a class not to be met with anywhere out of London.

The boys criticised them unmercifully.

"Oh, Duncan, did ever you see such faces, or such slow-looking men!"

"Faces just like hams, Conal-and, why, they seem to be wearing about twenty coats! So solemn too-I wonder if ever those fellows smiled except over a pint of beer!"

"And look at those huge wooden umbrellas!"

"Yes, that is for fear a drop of rain should fall upon John Guttle, and he should catch cold."

"Shouldn't I like to see one of these John Guttles trudging over a moor!"

"He wouldn't trudge far, Conal; he would tumble down and gasp like an over-fed ox."

"I say, Duncan, I haven't seen anybody with a plaid yet."

"No, and you won't. Top-coats-nothing else-and tobacco-pipes. No wonder most of those male creatures on the tops of the 'buses are watery-nebbit or red-nosed."

Now, however, private carriages began to mingle with the traffic, and the boys had more to wonder at. But inside these they caught glimpses of fashionable ladies, some young, charmingly dressed, and of a cast of beauty truly English and refined. What astonished Duncan and his brother most was the coachman and flunkeys on the dickey, so severely and stupidly aristocratic did they look.

"Oh, Duncan," cried Conal laughing, "did ever you see such frights! and they've got on ladies' fur tippets!"

"Yes, that is to keep their poor shivery bodies warm, Conal."

"And they look just as if they owned all London, don't they?"

"Yes, that is one of the peculiarities of the flunkey tribe. What's the odds, Conal, so long as they are happy?"

The cab seemed to have reached the suburbs at last. Here were many a pleasant villa, and many a lordly mansion too, with splendid balconies, which were in reality gardens in the sky. There were trees, too, though now almost bare, and green lawns and bushes and flowers.

But none of these latter appealed to our young heroes because they were all so artificial.

Hillo! the cab stops; and the driver, radiant in the expectation of a tip, throws open the door.

"'Ere we are at last, young gents. 'Appy to drink yer 'ealth. Thousand thanks! Hain't seen a 'alf-crown before for a month. Nobuddy needn't say to me as the Scots ain't liberal."

One of the handsomest villas the boys had yet seen, and in the porch thereof stood Colonel Trelawney himself to welcome his guests.

"Right welcome to the Limes," he cried heartily. "Frank is out, but he'll be home to luncheon. Why, what tall hardy chaps you are, to be sure, and I'm right glad you came in your native dress. I wonder how my boy would look in the kilt. It's a matter of legs, I believe."

"Oh, sir," said Duncan, "he'll soon get legs when he comes to the Highlands, and climbs the hills and walks the moors for a few months."

"Well, come in, boys. James, here, will show you your room. We've put you both in the same, as I know young fellows like to talk before turning in."

The room was plainly, yet comfortably, furnished, and the window gave a pleasant view of gardens, shrubberies, and a cloudland of trees to which the autumn foliage still was clinging.

"Ot watah, young gents."

"Thank you, James."

Duncan and Conal made haste to wash and dress.

James had opened their boxes, and was acting as valet to them in every way. But they were not used to this, and so they told James. God had given them hands and arms, and so they liked to make use of them.

Hark! footsteps on the stairs. Hurried ones, too; two steps, one stride!

Next moment the door was thrown open, and Frank himself stood before them, with both hands extended to bid them welcome.

CHAPTER III. – THE BOYS' LIFE IN LONDON

"Cousin Frank!"

"That's me. And how are you, cousins Conal and Duncan? We're only far-off cousins, but that doesn't matter, does it? I'm jolly glad to see you, anyhow. You'll bring some life into this dull old hole; and I'll find some fun for you, you bet."

"Did you ask if we betted?" said Duncan, smiling, but serious. "We wouldn't be allowed to."

"No, no. 'You bet' is just an expression; for, mind you, everybody speaks slang nowadays in town. Oh, I don't bet-as a rule, though I did have a pony on the Oxford and Cambridge last race."

"And did the pony win?" asked Conal, naïvely.

"Eh? What? Ha, ha, ha! Why, it's a boat race, and a pony is a fiver. I'd saved the cash for a year, and like a fool I blewed it at last."

Well, if Frank Trelawney was not very much to look at as regards body, he was frank and open, with a handsome English face, all too pale, however, and he seemed to have more worldly wisdom in his noddle than Duncan, Conal, and Viking all put together.

After talking a little longer to our Highland heroes Frank knelt down and threw his arms around the great dog's neck, and Viking condescended to lick his cheek.

"I'm so glad that old Vike takes to you, Frank," said Duncan. "It isn't everybody he likes."

"Of course," said Frank, "'old' is merely a term of endearment, as father would say."

"That's it. He is only a year and six months old, but already there is nothing scarcely that he does not know, in country life, I mean, though I suppose he will be rather strange in town for a time."

"Sure to be. But here comes James. Luncheon served, James, eh?"

"Luncheon all ready, Master Frank."

They found the Colonel walking up and down the well-lighted hall smoking a cigarette. He was really a most inveterate smoker. He smoked before breakfast, after breakfast, all the forenoon, and all day long. Rolled his own cigarettes, too, so that his fore and middle fingers were indelibly stained yellow with the tobacco.

"Horrid habit!" he always told boys, "but I've become a slave to it. Don't you ever smoke."

Though some years over sixty, Trelawney was as straight as a telephone pole, handsome, and soldierly in face and bearing. The only thing that detracted from his facial appearance was a slight degree of bagginess betwixt the lower eyelids and the cheek bones. This was brought on, his doctor had told him often and often, by weakness of the heart caused by tobacco and wine. But Trelawney would not punish himself by leaving either off.

The boys took to Mrs. Trelawney from the very first. She must have been fully twenty years younger than the Colonel, and had a sweet, even beautiful, face, and was altogether winning.

Well, that was a luncheon of what might be called elegant kickshaws, artistically cooked and served, but eminently unsatisfactory from a Scotch point of view.

The dinner in the evening was much the same, and really when these Highland lads got up from the table they almost longed for the honest, "sonsy" fleshpots of Glenvoie.

Walnuts and wine for dessert! But they did not drink wine, and would have preferred a cocoa-nut or two to the walnuts. There would have been some satisfaction in that.

A private box for the theatre!

"Oh," cried Duncan, "that will be nice!"

"You have often been at the theatre, dear, haven't you?"

This from Mrs. Trelawney, as she placed her very much be-ringed fingers on Conal's shoulder.

"No, auntie," replied Conal; "only just once, with Duncan there. It was in Glasgow. They were playing 'Rob Roy', and I shall never forget it. Never, never, never!"

But to-night it was a play of quite a different class, a kind of musical comedy. Plenty of action and go in it, plenty of the most ordinary and musicless singing, which pleased the gallery immensely, and frequent spells of idiotic dancing. There were no serious situations at all, however, and no thread of narrative woven into the play.

Moreover, both Scotch boys were placed at a disadvantage owing to their inability to follow the English patois, which on the whole was thoroughly Cockney, the letter "R" being dead and buried, and the "H" being silent after a "W", so that the lads did not enjoy themselves quite as much as they had expected to.

Every now and then the colonel excused himself. He told our heroes he was going to see a man. That really meant lounging into the buffet to smoke a cigarette, and moisten a constitutionally dry throat.

A few days after this, however, the colonel, who, by some means or other known only to himself, was behind the scenes (virtually speaking) of all the best theatres, managed to get a box for the Lyceum.

That truly great tragedian, Irving, was playing in "The Bells", and the young M'Vaynes were struck dumb with astonishment; they were thrilled and awed with the terrible realism of the grand actor, and when the curtain fell at last both boys thanked the colonel most heartily.

"That is real acting, a real play!" cried Duncan enthusiastically. "I'm sure neither Conal nor I want to sit and listen to Cockney buffoonery after that."

Dear Mrs. Trelawney, as both boys called her, had evidently made up her mind to give the lads as pleasant a time as possible. Every fine day, and there were now many, she took them all for a drive.

"We sha'n't be back for luncheon, Tree," she always told her husband. "You must eat in solitary state and grandeur for one day."

"Indeed," she smilingly informed Duncan, "I don't care much to lunch at home. I like to be free, and not have extreme gentility and servants pottering about behind your chair, and listening to every word you say. I hate the proprieties."

Duncan and Conal both smiled. They felt just that way themselves.

After a drive in the park, Mrs. Trelawney would go shopping, and those two brown-faced, brown-kneed Highland boys created a good deal of sensation, though they seemed quite unaware of the fact.

Ah! but after the shopping came luncheon. And the colonel's wife knew where to go to. A charming hotel, not a million of miles from the Thames embankment. And that was a luncheon, too, or, as Frank called it, a spread!

It was a square meal at all events, and Mrs. Trelawney seemed delighted at seeing the boys thoroughly enjoying it.

"Now you lads must eat, you know, because you've got to grow many, many inches yet. And this is liberty hall anyhow. Isn't it delightfully free and easy?"

It was. This the boys admitted.

The more they were with Mrs. Trelawney the more they liked her. And the young M'Vaynes might have said the same of Frank. He was a charming companion. Moreover, he had many accomplishments that his 42nd cousins could not boast of. He could sing with a sweet girl-voice, and he played the violin charmingly, his mother accompanying him on the piano.

She, too, could sing, and in the evenings she often electrified her guests by her renderings of dramatic pieces. Everybody who visited at the Trelawneys' house knew that the colonel had married a young and beautiful actress, and that here she was-far more a woman of the world, and a more perfect lady than anyone at her table.

And the boys were a great attraction. They were so outspoken, yet so innocent, that conversation with them was full of amusement. They always donned their belts and dress tartans for dinner, and

were a good deal admired. Moreover, they soon got to be asked frequently out to dinners, or to dances. These they very much enjoyed.

Well, a whole month passed away, and Duncan and his brother were now able to endure London and London life, though they never could love it.

Many a long walk did Frank take them. The carriage would drive them as far as the Strand, then the journey was continued on foot citywards.

Everything here was new-I can't say fresh, for there is precious little freshness about London streets-to the Scotch lads. They could have wished, however, that the pavements had been less crowded, that the people had been less lazy-looking, and that the vendors of penny wares had not thrust their unsavoury hands so often right under their noses.

Frank seemed determined to show his 42nd cousins every phase of London life. He even took them into a corner drink-palace, and there ordered lemonade, just that they might see a little of the dark side of city life.

They were horrified to behold those gin-sodden men and women, many leaning almost helplessly against the counter; the patched and semi-dropsical faces of the females, the maudlin idiotic looks of the males, Duncan thought he never could forget.

He shuddered, and felt relieved when out once more in the crowded streets.

One day Frank thought he would give his cousins a special treat, so he took them to the Zoo.

Both were much interested in beholding the larger wild beasts, the lions of Africa, the splendid tigers of India, the sulky hippopotami, and ill-natured-looking rhinoceroses. But it was a sad sight after all, for these half-starved-looking beasts were deprived of the freedom of forest and plains, and confined here in filthy dens, all for the pleasure of a gaping crowd of ignorant Cockneys.

But when they came upon the birds of prey, and their eyes caught sight of a poor puny specimen of the Scottish eagle, chained to a post, and almost destitute of feathers, Duncan's heart melted with shame and sorrow, and he turned hurriedly away.

As far as the Zoo was concerned, Frank's best intentions had failed to give his guests pleasure. But they were too polite to say so.

—

Duncan and Conal had now been two months in London, and could understand even what the street boys said. On the whole they had enjoyed the wonderful sights of this wonderful city, for these really seemed unending.

Then came Christmas.

Christmas and the pantomime.

They enjoyed Drury Lane far more even than the parties or even the dances they were invited to. The scenery and scenes were exquisitely lovely. No dream of fairyland ever equalled these.

The boys gave themselves wholly up to amusement throughout all the festive season. But to their credit be it said, they did not gorge on goose, turkey, or pudding as everybody else did.

"No wonder," thought Duncan, "that the Englishman is called John Guttle in many parts of Scotland." For he had never seen such eating or drinking in his life before.

Then after the festivities of the festive week came dulness and dreariness extreme. The people had spent all their money, and wretchedness abounded on every pavement of the sleet-swept streets of the city. Yes, and the misery even overflowed into the west-end suburbs.

It was about this time that Duncan made a discovery.

Frank had told him, frankly enough, that his father was not over-well off, but it was evident to him now that Colonel Trelawney was simply struggling to keep up appearances, and that, in all probability, he was deeply in debt.

Mrs. Trelawney, or "dear Auntie", as the Scotch lads called her, was ever the same. Nothing seemed to trouble or worry her.

But the colonel at breakfast used to take up his letters, one by one, and eye them with some degree of suspicion before opening them.

The waste-paper basket was close to him, and was wonderfully handy.

"The first application," he would say with a smile as he tore up a bill and summarily disposed of the fragments.

"Second application" – that too was torn up.

Letter from a friend-put aside to be read at leisure.

A long blue letter-suspicious-disposed of without reading.

"Ha! Amy, love, here is Sweater & Co.'s fourth letter. Threatens us with-ah, you know."

"Well, dear," says Mrs. Trelawney with her sweetest smile, "just let them sweat!"

"Give 'em a bill, I suppose," the colonel says, as if speaking to himself.

And the letter is put aside.

So one way or another Trelawney got through his pile at last, and settled down to serious eating, that is, he made a hearty meal from a Londoner's point of view. Then he lit a cigarette.

Well the month of January was raw and disagreeable, and seldom was there a day without a fog either white or yellow.

Is it any wonder that, brought up in a clear transparent atmosphere among breezes that blew over heathy hills, and were laden with the balsamic odour of the pine-trees, Duncan and Conal began to languish and long for home.

With great candour they told "Auntie" they wanted to get home to enjoy skating, tobogganing, and white-hare shooting; and she promised to speak to the colonel.

"We will be so sorry to leave you, auntie, for you've been so good to us."

"And I shall miss you, boys, sadly."

"Yes, I hope so. It will give Conal and me pleasure to think that you like us. And of course Frank comes with us."

"I fear it is too cold for Frank."

"Oh no, auntie dear. One never feels cold in Scotland, the air is so bracing, you know."

So that very day it was all arranged, and Laird M'Vayne had a letter to that effect.

The parting was somewhat sorrowful, but the boys did not say "Farewell!" only "*Au revoir*", because both hoped to return, and by that time they declared that Frank would be as hardy as-as-well, as hardy as Highlanders usually are.

The last things that the boys bought in London were skates. Of course they could have got those in Edinburgh, but not so cheaply, and for this reason: there did not seem to be the ghost of a chance of any skating for the Londoners this season, and so they got the skates for an old song.

They went by sea to Edinburgh. The *Queen* was at present all but a cargo-boat, and besides the three lads and Vike, there was only one other passenger, an old minister of the Church of Scotland.

The same skipper and the same mate, and delighted they were to see the boys again, and they gave Frank a right hearty welcome on their account.

But Frank had that with him which secured him a welcome wherever he went-his fiddle, and when after dinner he played them some sad and plaintive old Scottish airs, all were delighted, and the minister got up from his chair, and, grasping the boy's hand, thanked him most effusively.

"Dear lad," he said, "you have brought the moisture to my eyes, although I had thought my fountain of tears had dried up many and many a long year ago."

Now here is something strange; although, when once fairly out of the Thames' mouth and at sea, it was blowing a head wind, with waves houses high, Frank was not even squeamish. I have seen many cases like this, though I must confess they are somewhat rare.

Nor was the minister ill; but then, like the Scotch boys, he was sea-fast, having done quite a deal of coasting.

"How goes the project you have in view?" asked Duncan that evening of the skipper.

"Well," was the reply, "it is not what the French call a *fait accompli* just yet, but it is bound to be so before very long."

"Well, my 42nd cousin Frank here would like to go to sea also. Could you do with the three of us?"

"Yes. You must be prepared to rough it a bit, and we'll be rather cramped for room, but we shall manage. Eh, mate?"

"I'm sure we shall, and this young gentleman must take his fiddle."

"And I'll take the bagpipes," said Duncan, laughing.

"Hurrah!" cried the mate. "Won't we astonish the king of the Cannibal Islands? Eh?"

It was Frank's turn to cry "Hurrah!"

"But," he added, "will there be real live cannibals, sir?"

"Certainly. What good would dead ones be?"

"And is there a chance of being caught and killed and eaten, and all the like of that?"

"Ay, though it isn't pleasant to look forward to. Only mind this: I may tell you for your comfort that although, after being knocked on the head with a nullah, your Highland cousin would be trussed at once and hung up in front of a clear fire until done to a turn, you yourself would be kept alive for weeks. Penned up, you know, like a chicken."

"But why?"

"Oh, they always do that with London boys, because they are generally too lean for decent cooking, and need too much basting. You would be penned up and fattened with rice and bananas."

"Humph!" said Frank, and after a pause of thoughtfulness, "Well, I suppose there is some consolation in being kept alive a bit; but bother it all, I don't half like the idea of being a side dish."

The weather was more favourable during this voyage, and though bitterly cold, all the boys took plenty of exercise on the quarter-deck, and so kept warm. So, too, did the old minister, who was really a jolly fellow, and did not preach at them nor dilate on the follies of youth. Moreover, this son of the Auld Kirk enjoyed a hearty glass of toddy before turning in.

Leith at last!

And yonder, waiting anxiously on the quay, was Laird M'Vayne himself.

His broad smile grew broader when his boys waved their hands to him, and soon they were united once again.

CHAPTER IV. – WILD SPORTS ON MOORLAND AND ICE

Pretty little Flora M'Wayne was half afraid of the London boy at first. The violin won her heart, however, and before retiring for the night, when shaking hands with Frank, she nodded seriously as she told him:

"I'm not sure I sha'n't love you soon; Viking likes you, so you must be good."

Well, Frank was an impressionable boy, and he was very much struck by the child's innocent ways and beauty.

"I'm not sure," he said in reply, "that we won't be sweethearts before I leave. How would you like that?"

She shook her head. "No, no," she said, "you are very nice, but you are only an English boy. Good-night!"

"Good-night!"

I do not think that any two boys were ever more glad to find themselves back once more, safely under the parental roof-tree, than Duncan and Conal. They had made many friends in London, it is true, and spent many a happy evening therein, and these they could look back to with pleasure and with a sigh; but the city and town itself, with all its strange ways, the ignorance of its lower classes, its murdered twangy English, its filth and its festering iniquities—they positively shuddered when they thought of.

God seemed nowhere in London. Here in this wild and beautiful land He appeared to be everywhere.

The pure and virgin snow that clad the moors and mountains was a carpet on which angels might tread; the tiny budlets already appearing on the trees were scattered there by His own hand; yea, and the very wind that sighed and moaned through the forest was the breath of heaven.

And when the sun had gone down behind the waves of the western ocean did not

"The moon take up the wondrous tale
And nightly to the listening earth
Repeat the story of her birth,
While all the stars that round her burn,
And all the planets in their turn
Confirm the story as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole".

Yes, in wild and silent lands, God seems very near. It was in a country like this that the immortal poet Lord Byron wrote much of his best poetry. And no bolder song did he ever pen than Loch-na-garr. Near here many of his ancestors—the Gordons—were laid to rest after the fatal field of Culloden. In one verse he says—

"Ill-starred, though brave, did no vision foreboding
Tell you that fate had forsaken your cause?
Ah! were ye then destined to die at Culloden,
Though victory crown'd not your fall with applause.
Still were ye happy in death's earthly slumbers,
You rest with your clan in the caves of Braemar,
The pibroch resounds to the piper's loud numbers
Your deeds to the echoes of wild Loch-na-garr."

No wonder that, wandering amidst such soul-enthraling scenery, arrayed in the tartan of his clan, or thinking of the happy days of his boyhood, years and years afterwards he said as he sighed-

"England, thy beauties are tame and domestic
To one who has roam'd on the mountains afar!
Oh! for the crags that are wild and majestic,
The steep frowning glories of dark Loch-na-garr."

But Frank Trelawney was a guest at Glenvoie, and, imbued with that spirit of hospitality for which Highlanders are so famous, the boys M'Vayne would have bitten their tongue through and through rather than say one disparaging word about England.

Nor was there any need, for tame and domestic though its scenery is, the whole history of the country, even before the Union, teems with deeds of derring-do, done by her brave sons, on many and many a blood-drenched field of battle.

As for Frank himself, he seemed not only to settle down to his life in the wilds in less than a week, but to become quite enthusiastic over "Scotland's hills and Scotland's dells"; and he was not slow in reminding his 42nd cousins that he too had a drop of real Highland blood in his veins.

"We'll soon make a man of you, dear boy," said the Laird one evening. "Now, myself, and my lads, with Vike and a setter, are going after the white hares to-morrow, and if you think yourself strong enough, we shall take you."

"Oh, I feel strong enough now for anything," replied Frank laughing.

"Mind it is terribly hard work; but there is a little snow on the ground, and we'll be able to track the hares easily."

"I don't think that Frank should go, Ronald," put in Mrs. M'Vayne; "the boy is far indeed from hardy, and it may exhaust him quite. You'll stay at home with me, won't you, Frank?"

"Yes, aunt, if you bid me, but-" He hesitated.

"Oh!" cried Duncan, "that 'but' turns the scale, mother. Don't you ask him to stay, mother. All Englishmen have pluck if they haven't all strength. So Frank is coming."

The morning was very bright and beautiful, with just a slight "sciffen" of snow on the ground, and the sun rose over the eastern hills in a blue-gray haze, like a ball of crimson fire, and intimated his intention of shining all day long.

Duncan and Conal were up betimes, and had got everything in readiness long before Frank came down.

A sturdy keeper would carry the bags and the luncheon they should partake of on the hill.

But the young Englishman was full of life and go. After a hearty breakfast they started; Flora standing in the porch waving her hand to them, but with tears of sorrow in her eyes because she too was not allowed to go.

Viking was daft with joy, feathering round and round in wide circles, and now and then turning Dash, the Gordon setter, over on his back in the snow.

They passed the forest, now leafless and bare, and taking to the right, the ground soon began to rise.

The sheep under the charge of a plaided shepherd and his dog, were busy scratching away the snow to feed on grass and succulent mosses-a cold kind of breakfast, to say the least of it.

The ground rose and rose.

The dogs were kept well to heel, for indeed their services were but little needed.

Ha! here are hare-tracks!

"Take the front, Frank," said the laird; "you are the guest, and must have the first blood."

Frank's heart beat high with excitement, and he carried the gun low with a finger on the trigger.

"Hurrah! there she tips!"

Bang! and a white hare that had essayed crossing from one broom-bush to another, was tumbled; then off darted Viking and brought her in.

"Capital shot!" said Duncan. "Now we'll spread, and it will be every one for himself, and Viking and Dash for us all."

They lay out in skirmishing order, and marched on and up.

But soon they had to force their way through heather that came up even to the laird's and the tall keeper's waists, and all but buried little Frank.

He held his gun aloft, however, and struggled bravely on.

In about a quarter of an hour they had emerged, and the boys were shaking the snow from their kilts.

On and up. Why, it was always on and up.

They marched all that forenoon, sometimes around rocky spurs and paps of the mountains, sometimes along bare and barren glens, sometimes along the edges of fearful precipices, where a single slip or false step would have meant a terrible accident.

By the time they had reached the cliffy shelter of a very high hill, they had bagged eight white hares in all.

And now it was noon, and though the frost was fairly hard, the exercise had warmed their life-blood, and they felt no cold.

Hunger, though? Ah! yes, but that could speedily be appeased.

Plaids were spread on the ground, and down they all sat, the dogs not far off, and I'm sure that the keeper, sturdy chiel though he was, felt glad to be lightened of his load.

What a jolly meal that was to be sure! With her own lady fingers the laird's wife had made that splendid pie. Pie for five and almost enough for fifty. But then, of course, there were the honest dogs to be considered, and they easily disposed of all that was left.

Bread-that is, real oatcakes-cheese, and butter followed.

The boys washed all down with a flagon of milk, but in the interests of truth, I must add that the laird and his keeper had a modest glass or two of Highland whisky.

And now, after yarning for about half an hour, sport was resumed.

Farther up the hillsides they still went, and so on and on for two whole hours.

It had been a grand day, but as the sun was now declining towards the blue blue ocean, the laird called a halt.

"I think, boys," he said, "we've done enough, and as we are nearly ten miles from home we had better be retracing our steps. Donald has as many hares as he can carry. Haven't you, Donald?"

"Och! well, it's nothing," was the reply. "And it's all down-hill now you'll mind, sir."

"Yes. Well, lead the way, Donald."

Donald did.

For one of the party, and that was Frank, the journey was a terrible one. On the upward march there was all the excitement of the sport to keep him up. But now he had no such stimulant to stir his English blood.

When still three miles from Glenvoie mansion-house, Duncan observed that he was very pale and limped most painfully. In fact the poor boy's ankles were swollen, and his toes felt like whitlows; but although so tired that he could hardly carry his gun, that indomitable English courage of his kept him from complaining.

He confessed, however, feeling just a little tired, so the laird poured a small quantity of whisky into a measure, mixed it with snow, and made him swallow it.

After this he felt better.

When they arrived at the top of the very lower-most and lost hill, the house being but half a mile distant, they sat down for a short time to rest and gaze across the sea.

The sun's lower limb had just touched the wester-most wave, and red and fiery gleamed his beams 'twixt horizon and shore. It was a beautiful sight.

Many flocks of rooks were winging their way northwards to the shelter of the great forest, and now and then a string of wild ducks were seen in full flight towards the tall reeds that bordered an ice-bound lake.

Slowly sank the sun, the waves seemed to wash up across its blood-red surface, and gradually, so gradually, engulfed the whole.

"And the sun's last rosy rays did fade
Into twilight soft and dim."

—

Frank Trelawney was indeed glad when he found himself once more in his own room. The man brought water, and with Highland courtesy insisted on bathing his feet.

He next hurried away for a cup of delicious coffee, after swallowing which Frank felt like a giant refreshed, and soon went down into the drawing-room.

He was still pale, however, for the terrible fatigue had temporarily affected the heart.

Little Flora was not slow to note this.

"Oh, cousin," she said, "how white and tired-looking you are! You shouldn't have gone. You're only a poor little English boy, you know."

Frank liked the child's sympathy, but he certainly did not feel flattered by the last sentence.

"That's all," he mustered courage to say. "I'm only a poor Cockney lad, and I think, Flora, I've had enough white-hare shooting to last me for a very long time. When next your father and brothers go after game of this sort, I'll stay at home and make love to you."

Frank, however, was as well as could be next day, and after a cold bath went hungrily down to breakfast.

The day was as still and bright as ever, and it was to be spent upon the loch.

Curling-which might be called a kind of gigantic game of billiards on the ice-was to be engaged in. A party was coming from a neighbouring parish, and a strong club was to meet them.

At this most splendid "roaring" game there is no class distinction; lord and laird, parson and peasant, all play side by side, all are equal, and all feed together, ay, and partake of Highland usquebaugh together also.

Well, the laird's party were victorious, and all were invited up to Glenvoie house, to partake of an excellent dinner, laid out in the barn.

But the barn was beautifully clean, and along its wall, among evergreens, was placed many a bright cluster of candles.

The silver and crystal sparkled on the snow-white table-cloth, and that huge joint of hot corn-beef and carrots-the curlers' dinner *par excellence*-was partaken of with great gusto.

Bread and cheese and whisky followed this, then the minister returned thanks, and this was followed by more whisky, with song after song.

"Roof and rafters a' did dir!"

It was not till near to the "wee short 'oor ayont the twal" that the party broke up, and all departed for their distant homes, on horseback or in traps.

Did I say "all departed"? What an awkward thing it is to be possessed of a conscience! I have one which, whenever I deviate in the slightest degree from the straight lines of truth, brings me up with a round turn.

Well, *all* did not depart, for the corn-beef-let us say-had flown to the legs and to the heads of half a dozen jolly fellows at least, and they determined that they wouldn't go home till morning.

So they had some more toddy, sang "Auld Lang Syne", and then retreating to the rear of the barn, curled up amongst the straw and were soon fast asleep.

So ended the great curling match of Glenvoie.

CHAPTER V. – A HIGHLAND BLIZZARD – THE LOST SHEEP AND SHEPHERD

It must not be supposed for a single moment that although the boys M'Vayne liked fun and adventure in their own wild land, just as you or I or any other boys do, reader, their education was neglected. Quite the reverse, in fact. For at the time our tale commences, both had just returned from the High School of Edinburgh, where they had studied with honour, and carried off many prizes.

One of Duncan's pet studies had been and still was-navigation. Not only of a theoretical kind, but thoroughly practical.

He had long since made up his mind to become a sailor, and he had left no stone unturned to learn the noble art of seamanship.

For this purpose he had prevailed upon his father to let him take several cruises in a barque plying between Leith and Hull. So earnest was Duncan, and so willing was both skipper and mate of this craft to teach him, that in a very short time he was not only up to every rope and stay, but could take both the latitude and longitude as well as could be desired.

He did all he could to put his brother up to the ropes also.

They were very fond of each other, these two lads, and it was the earnest desire of both that they should not be parted.

Well, all the stories they read were of the "ocean wild and wide", and all the poetry they loved had the sound of the sea in it.

Such poetry and such tales Duncan would often read to his brother and winsome wee Florie sitting high on a hilltop, perhaps, on some fine summer's day with the great Atlantic spreading away and away from the shore beneath them to the distant horizon.

Dibdin's splendid and racy songs, redolent as they are of the brine and the breeze, were great favourites.

But I do think there is a thread of romance in the life of every sailor. Nay, more, I believe that it is this very romance that first induces young fellows to tempt the billows, although they are but little likely to find a life on the ocean wave quite all that their fancy painted. Talking personally, I am of opinion that it was *Tom Cringle's Log* that first gave me an idea of going to sea. Well, I do not regret it.

Byron's *Corsair* was a great favourite with the boys. Indeed, I rather think that they both would have liked to become corsairs or dashing pirates. And little Flora would gladly have gone with them.

"Heigho!" she sighed one day when Duncan had closed the book. "Heigho! I wish I had been a boy. I think it was very foolish of the Good Man to make me a girl, when he knew well enough I wanted to be a boy."

The poor child did not know how irreverent was such talk.

Honest Vike used to lie by Duncan's side while he was reading, with one huge heavy paw placed over the boy's knee.

But it must have been monotonous for him; and often his head fell on the extended foot, and he went off to sleep outright.

No sooner was the reading ended, however, than Vike awoke, as full of life as a spring-born kitten. Then his game began. He used to loosen a huge boulder and send it rolling down the hill. As it gained force, it split up into twenty pieces or more, and bombarded everything it came across. Vike just stood and barked. But once, when a flying piece of the boulder killed a hare, the noble Newfoundland dashed down the hill at tremendous speed, and seized his quarry.

He came slowly up with it, and laid it solemnly down at Duncan's feet.

This was all very well; but one day, when the boys and Flora sat down about half-way up a hill, Viking, tired of the reading, found his way to the hilltop, and, as usual, loosened a boulder, and started it.

Thump, thump, rattle, rattle, rush! Fully a dozen great stones came down on our heroes in a cloud of dust, and with the force of an avalanche. The danger was certainly great, but it was all over before they could fully realize it.

Duncan hastily drew his whistle, and at its call the innocent dog instantly ceased working at another boulder he was busily engaged loosening, and came galloping down the hill.

Poor fellow! I dare say he deserved a scolding, but so full of life and happiness was he, that Duncan had not the heart to speak harshly to him. Only care was taken after this that Vike never got higher up the hill than the reading party.

Frank had been nearly three weeks at Glenvoie, before he became initiated into the mysteries of a real Highland snow-storm. Many of my readers have doubtless been out in such a blizzard, but the majority have not, and can have but little idea of the fierceness and danger of it.

The morning of the 10th of February, 18-, was mild and beautiful. Both Duncan and his brother had been early astir, and had taken their bath long before sunrise.

They went downstairs on tiptoe, as they had no desire to awake their guest.

"English boys need a lot of sleep," said Conal. "They're not like you or me, Duncan."

"N-no," said his brother; "but I could have done with another hour myself to-day. But we are Scotsmen, and must show an example. Noblesse oblige. Well," he added, "we'll have time to run up the hill anyhow, and see the sun rise."

So off they went, Vike making all the rocks and braes resound with his barking.

It was, indeed, a glorious and beautiful morning, and from their elevated situation they could see all the wild and romantic country on every side of them, for daylight was already broadening in the east. To the west the gray Atlantic ocean, the horizon buried in mist, away to the south woods and forests. Forests to the north also, while behind them hills on hills successive rose.

But the eastern sky was already aglow with clouds of crimson fire and gold. What artist could paint, what poet describe, such glory?

Then low towards a wood shines forth a brighter, more fiery gleam than all, and even at this distance the boys can see the branches, aye, and even the twigs, of the trees silhouetted against it.

And that is the sun itself struggling up behind the radiant clouds.

They stayed but little longer, for by this time breakfast would be ready, and Frank himself getting up.

After this meal was discussed, as a light breeze, sufficient to ripple the stream, had sprung up, the young folks determined to go fishing.

They took luncheon with them, and spent the whole forenoon on the banks of the bonnie wimpling burn.

But so well engaged were they that they did not at first observe that the sky was becoming rapidly overcast, and that the wind had begun to wail and moan in the trees of the adjoining forest. It had turned terribly cold too.

Duncan became fully alive to his danger now, however, especially when the tiny millet-seed snow began to fall.

"Our nearest way is through the wood," said the boy. Duncan was always pioneer in every danger and in every pleasure.

"And there is no time to lose," he added. "Florie, I wish you hadn't come. I suppose Conal and I will have to carry you."

"I won't be carried," replied the stout-hearted little Scots maiden. "I daresay you think I'm a child."

Fishing-tackle was by this time made up, and off they started.

It was terribly dark and gloomy under the great black-foliaged pine-trees, but Duncan knew every foot of the way.

They got through the forest, and out on to the wide moorland, just as the snow began to fall in earnest.

This moor was for the most part covered with heather, with broom and with whins, but dotted over with Scottish pine-trees. These last had been planted, or rather sown, by the rooks, for the black corbies turn many a heathery upland in Scotland into waving woods or forests. They bear the cones away to pick the seeds therefrom on the quiet moors. Some of these seeds are dropped, and in a short time trees spring up.

Duncan now took from his pocket a small compass, and studied it for a moment.

"We sha'n't be able to see the length of a fishing-rod before us soon," he said. "Now, I propose steering due south till we strike the old turf dike² that leads across the mountains. By following this downwards we will be guided straight to the pine-wood rookery behind our house."

They commenced to struggle on now in earnest-I might almost say for dear life's sake-for wilder and wilder blew the blizzard, increasing in force every minute, and thicker fell the snow. But I was wrong in saying it fell, for it was carried horizontally along on the wings of the wind. Not a flake would lie on the hills or bare slopes, but every dingle and dell and gully, and every rock-side facing westward, was filled and blocked.

Duncan held Flora firmly by the hand, for if she got out of sight in this choking drift, even for a few seconds, her fate would, in all probability, be that of sweet Lucy Gray-she might ne'er be seen alive again.

Frank and Conal were arm-in-arm, their heads well down as they struggled on and on.

"Let us keep well together, boys," cried Duncan, as he looked at his little compass once again. "Cheerily does it, as sailors say."

Now and then they stopped for breath when they came to a clump of pines.

Here the noise of the wind overhead was terrific. At its lightest it was precisely like the roar of a great waterfall. But ever and anon it would come on in furious squalls, that had in them all the force of a hurricane, which swept the tree-tops straight out to one side and bent their giant stems as if they had been but fishing-rods. At every gust such as this the flakes were broken into ice-dust, with a suffocating snow fog that, had they not buried their faces in their plaids, would have choked the party one and all.

Many of these pines were carried away by the board, snapped near to the ground, and hurled earthwards with the force of the blast.

Long before they reached the fence of turf, called in Scotland, as I have said, a dike, Flora was completely exhausted, and had to submit to be carried on Duncan's sturdy back.

Frank was but little better off, but he would not give in.

At last they reached the dike.

"Heaven be praised!" cried Duncan. "And now we shall rest just a short time and then start on and down. Cheer up, lads, we will manage now."

Flora descended from her brother's back, and he sat down on the turf, and took her on his knee.

But where was Vike?

Surely he had not deserted them!

No, for a dog of this breed is faithful unto death.

But now a strange kind of somnolence began to take possession of the boys.

Duncan himself could not resist its power, far less his companions.

"Let us be going, lads," he cried more than once, but he did not move.

He seemed to be unable to lift a limb, and at last he heard the howling of the wind only like sunlit waves breaking on a far-off sandy beach.

He nodded-his chin fell on his breast-he was dreaming.

² Dike (*Scottice*), a low fence of stone or turf.

Ah! but it is from a sleep like this that men, overtaken in a snow-storm, never, never arise. They simply

"Sleep the sleep that knows not breaking,
Morn of toil, nor night of waking".

In a few minutes, however, Duncan starts. The sound of a dog's voice falls on his ear. Ah! there is no bark in all broad Scotland so sonorous and so sincere as that of honest Vike.

Wowff! Wowff! Wowff!!

There is joy in it, too, for he has found the boys-ah! more than that, he has brought relief, and here are the sturdy kilted keeper and two farm hands, ready to help them safely home. The keeper has a flask, and all must taste-even Florie, who is hardly yet awake.

How pleasant looked the fire in the fine old dining-hall when, after dressing, the boys came below.

And Glenvoie himself was laughing now, and as he shook Frank's hand, he could not help saying:

"Well, my lad, and how do you like a Highland snow-storm?"

"Ah!" said Frank, laughing in turn, "a little of it goes a long way. I don't want any more Highland snow-storm, thank you-not for Frank!"

The gale seemed to be increasing rather than abating, and it kept on all that night, and for two nights and two days more.

Then it fell calm.

"I trust in Heaven," said M'Vayne, "that Sandie, our shepherd, has reached the shelter of some hut, but I fear the worst. The sheep may be buried, but they will survive; but without food poor Sandie cannot have withstood the brunt of that awful blizzard.

"Boys," he continued, "I shall start at once on a search, and the keeper will come with me."

"And we too."

"Wowff! wowff!" barked Vike, as much as to say, "You'd be poorly off without my assistance."

It was a lovely forenoon now, with a clear sky, but not as much wind as would suffice to lift one feathery flake.

They meant to find the shepherd, but it was his hard-frozen corpse they expected to dig out of a snow-drift.

CHAPTER VI. – "THE BREATH OF GOD WAS OVER ALL THE LAND."

There were two huts on the moorland, one in the open, another close against a ridge of rocks, and in one or other poor Sandie would surely have found shelter.

So to the first they bent their footsteps. It stood with its back to the east, and on the west it was entirely covered with great banks of snow, some of them shaped like waves on the sea-shore, that are just on the eve of breaking.

It took the keeper and two men nearly an hour to break through the barrier and find the doorway.

They could see nothing when they opened it, for all were partially snow-blind.

But they groped around, and called the shepherd by name; then convinced that he was not there, dead or alive, they came sadly away, and joined the group outside.

There was still the other hut to be examined, and this was a good mile higher up the hill.

Thither, therefore, the party now wended their way, but so completely covered up did they find it, that another long hour of hard work was spent in reaching the doorway.

Like the last which they had explored, it was cold, dark, and deserted.

No one had any hope now of finding Sandie alive, but after a hurried luncheon they spread themselves out across the hill and moor somewhat after the fashion of skirmishers, and the ground was thoroughly searched.

But all in vain.

No frozen corpse was found.

They were about to return now sorrowfully homewards, when high up the hill and at the foot of a semi-lunar patch of rocks-an upheaval that had taken place probably millions of years ago-Vike was noticed, and his movements attracted the attention of all.

He was yap-yapping as if in great grief, tearing up the snow at the foot of a mighty drift and casting it behind him and over him.

A pure white dog was the Newfoundland at present, so laden was his coat with the powdery drift.

"Come on, men, come on," cried Glenvoie, "there yet is hope! The good dog scents something in spite of the snow. It may only be sheep, and yet poor dead frozen Sandie may be amongst them."

It took them but a few minutes to reach the cliff and the huge snowdrift that covered its western side. It was then that Duncan remembered something about these rocks.

"Why, father," he said, "now that I think of it, this is Prince Charlie's cave."

"You are right, lad, and my hopes are certainly in the ascendant."

"Conal and I have often been inside, and there is room enough inside to shelter a flock of sheep, or a regiment of soldiers."

"Now then, lads," cried the laird, "work away with a will. I'll take care you don't lose by it."

He handed them his flask as he spoke, and thus refreshed by the wine of their native land, they did work, and with a will too.

But hard work it was, from the fact that the snow was loose and powdery.

But at long, long last they reached the mouth of the cave.

And now a curious spectacle was witnessed, for to the number of at least a hundred, and headed by a huge curly-horned ram, with a chorus of baa-a-ing, out rushed the imprisoned sheep, kicking and leaping with joy to see once more the light of day.

Behind them came the shepherd's bawsont-faced collie Korran. But after licking Vike's ear he rushed back once more into the cave, and the rescuers quickly lighting a fire with some withered grass, found the body of the shepherd with Korran standing over it. Was he dead?

That had yet to be seen. They carried him out, and placing him on plaids, began to rub his face with snow and chafe his cold, hard hands.

In less than ten minutes Sandie opened his wondering eyes.

He could swallow now, and a restorative was administered.

I need scarcely say that this restorative was Highland whisky.

After about half an hour Sandie was able not only to eat and talk but to walk.

His story was a very brief one. He had, with the assistance of Korran, driven the sheep into the cave, and never dreaming that he would be snowed up, and remained with them for a time. Alas! it was a long time for the poor fellow and his faithful dog!

Two days and two nights without food and only snow to keep body and soul together. And the cold-oh, so intense!

"How did you feel?" asked Frank.

The shepherd hadn't "a much English", as he phrased it, but he answered as best he could.

"Och, and och! then, my laddie, she was glad the koorich (sheep) was safe, and she didna thinkit a much aboot hersel. But she prayed and she prayed, and then she joost fell asleep, and the Lord of Hosts tookit a care of her."

Well, this honest shepherd was certainly imbued with the sincere and beautiful faith of the early Covenanters, but, after all, who shall dare to say that there is no efficacy in real prayer. Not in the prayers that are said, but in the prayers that are prayed.

—

Well, spring returned at last. Soft blew the winds from off the western sea; all the hills were clad in green; the woods burst into bud and leaf; in their darkest thickets the wild doves' croodle was heard, droning a kind of bass to the mad, merry lilt of the chaffie, the daft song of the mavis, or low sweet fluting of the mellow-voiced blackbird.

But abroad on the moors the orange-scented thorny whins, resplendent, hugged the ground, and here the rose-linnets built and sang, while high above, fluttering against some fleecy cloudlet, laverocks (larks) innumerable could be heard and dimly seen.

Oh it was a beautiful time, and the breath of God seemed over all the land.

Frank Trelawney had adopted, not only all the methods of life of his Scots 42nd cousins, but even their diet.

Almost from the date of his arrival he had taken a shower-bath or sponge-bath before breakfast, and this breakfast was for the most part good oatmeal porridge, with the sweetest of butter and freshest of milk.

Now that spring had really come, he went every morning with Duncan and Conal to a big brown pool in the woodland stream. So deep was it that they could take headers without the slightest danger of knocking a hole in the gravel bottom of the "pot". Having towelled down and dressed rapidly, they ran all the way home.

This new and healthful plan of living soon told for good on the constitution of the London lad. His muscles grew harder and stronger, roses came on his cheeks, and he was as happy and gay as Viking himself, and that is saying a deal.

Many a long ramble did he and little Flora now take together through the woods and wilds, for he did not care to go boating or sea-fishing with the others every day.

Vike always accompanied the two. This certainly was not because he disliked the sea. On the contrary, he loved it. Whenever the boat came within a quarter of a mile of the beach he always sprang overboard and swam the rest of the way.

Arrived on shore he shook gallons of water out of his coat. If you had been standing between the dog and the sun, you would have seen him enveloped in bright little rainbows, which were very pretty;

but if anywhere alongside of him, then you would have required to go straight home and change your clothing, for Viking would have drenched you to the skin if not quite through it.

But I suppose that this grand and wise Newfoundland thought the London boy and little Flo had more need of his protection.

Ah! many and many a day and night after this, when far away at sea or wandering in wild lands, did Frank think of these delightful rambles with his little companion. Think of them, ay, and dream of them too.

Often they were protracted till-

... "The moonbeams were bright
O'er river and forest, o'er mountain and lea".

Some poet of olden times-I forget his name-tells us that "pity is akin to love". Well, Flora began by pitying this "poor little London boy", as she always called him, even to his face, but quite sympathizingly, and she ended, ere yet the summer was in its prime, by liking him very much indeed. To say that she loved him would, of course, be a phrase misapplied, for Flora was only a child.

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With June, and all its floral and sylvan joys, came shoals of herring from the far north, and busy indeed were the boatmen catching them.

Glenvoie lay some distance back from a great sweep of a bay, at each end of which was a bold and rocky headland.

Few of the herring boats really belonged to this bay, but they all used often to run in here, and after arranging their nets, they set sail for their mighty draughts of fishes.

Duncan and Conal were always welcome, because they assisted right willingly and merrily at the work.

The boats were very large, and all open in the centre-the well, this space was called-and with a cuddy, or small living and cooking room, both fore and aft.

It used to be rough work, this herring fishing, and not over cleanly, but the boys always put on the oldest clothes they had, with waterproof leggings, oil-skin hats, and sou'westers.

They would be out sometimes for two days and nights.

The beauty of the scenery, looking towards the land at the sunset hour, it would be impossible for pen or pencil to do justice to. The smooth sea, with its patches of crimson, opal, or orange, the white sands of the bay, the dark, frowning headlands, the dark greenery of the shaggy woods and forests, and the rugged hills towering high against the eastern horizon; the whole made a picture that a Turner only could have conveyed to canvas.

The dolphin is-from a poet's point of view-a very interesting animal, with an air of romance about him. Dolphins are said to be of a very joyous temperament. Well, perhaps; but they are, nevertheless, about the worst enemies those hardy, northern, herring-fishery men have to encounter.

They come in shoals after the herrings, and go "slick" through the nets, carrying great pieces away on their ungainly bodies. And the boatmen can do nothing to protect their silvery harvest.

Once, while our young heroes were on board one of the largest and best of the boats, it came on to blow off the land-not simply a gale of wind, but something near akin to a hurricane. They were driven out to sea about sundown, and Duncan and Conal could never forget the sufferings of that fearful night.

After trying in vain to beat to windward, they put up the helm-narrowly escaping broaching-to-and ran before it.

But all through the darkness, and until the gray and uncertain light of day broke slowly over the storm-tossed ocean, the seas were continually breaking over the sturdy boat, and everyone was drenched to the skin. It might have been said, with truth, that she was swamped, so full of water was the well.

The great waves were now visible enough, each with its yellow sides and its foaming mane. It seemed, indeed, that the ocean was stirred up to its very bottom, and when down in the trough of the seas, with those "combers" threatening far above, with truth might it have been said that the waves were mountains high.

All the nets were lost, but no lives.

About noon the wind veered round to the west, and all sail was set, and the boat steered for land; but so far into the Atlantic had they been driven that it was sunrise next morning before they succeeded in reaching the bay.

And there sad news awaited them.

There would be mourning widows and weeping children, for two bonnie boats had perished with all their brave crews.

Well, there is danger in every calling, but far more, I think, in that of the northern fisherman than in any other.

But how doubly dear to him is life on shore, when he reaches his little white-washed cottage, after a successful run, and meets his smiling wife and happy children, who run to greet their daddy home from sea.

—

Summer was already on the wane, and July nights were getting longer. Frank must soon seek once more his London home.

But he was healthier, stronger, happier now, by far and away, than when he first arrived at Glenvoie.

Ah! but the parting with everyone, but especially with bonnie young Flora, would be sad and sad indeed.

One morning, about a week before Frank was to leave for the south, Duncan came into his room.

"You and I and Conal are going up the hill to-day," he said, "all by ourselves, and I have something to propose which I feel sure you will be glad to approve of."

"All right!" said Frank.

So after breakfast the three boys slipped away to the hills, without telling anyone what they were after.

A council was to be held.

CHAPTER VII. – THE PARTING COMES AT LAST

If Duncan M'Vayne were a mere imaginary hero, I should not take credit for any virtue that in him lay, but I don't mind telling you, reader, that very few of the heroes of my stories are altogether creations of my fairly fertile brain. Like most sailor-men who have seen a vast deal of the world, I have so much truth to tell that it would be downright foolish to fall back upon fiction for some time yet.

And so I am not ashamed to say that Duncan was one of those *rara aves*-boys who think. I do not care to study the characters of boys who are not just a little bit out of the common run. Ordinary boys are as common as sand-martins in an old gravel-pit, and they are not worth writing about.

Well brought up as he had been, so far away in the lonesome wilds of the Scottish Highlands, and having few companions save his brother and parents, it is but little wonder that he dearly loved his father and mother. To tell the whole truth, the affection felt by Scottish boys towards their parents is very real and sincere indeed. It is a love that most assuredly passes the knowledge of southerners, and in saying so I am most sincere.

Well, neither he, Duncan, nor Conal either could help knowing that of late years circumstances connected with the estate of Glenvoie had become rather straitened, and although obliged to keep up a good show, as I may term it, his father was far indeed from being wealthy at the present time. The estate was not a large one certainly, but it would have been big enough to live well upon, had the shootings let as well as they did long ago.

Is it any wonder that talking together about their future, as they frequently did before going to sleep, Duncan and Conal used often to ask each other the question, "How best can we be of some use to Daddy?" And it was indeed a difficult one to answer.

Both lads had already all the "schooling" they needed to enable them to make a sturdy fight with or against the world, but the idea of going as clerks or shopmen to a city like Glasgow or even Edinburgh was utterly repulsive to their feelings.

They were sons of a proud Highland chief, although a poor one. Alas! how often poverty and pride are to be seen, arm in arm, in bonnie Scotland. But anyhow, they were M'Vaynes. Besides, the wild country in which they had spent most of their lives until now, had imbued them with romance.

Is that to be wondered at? Did not romance dwell everywhere around them? Did they not breathe it in the very air that blew from off the mountains, and over the heathery moorlands? Did it not live in the dark waving pine forests, and in the very cliffs that overhung the leaden lakes, cliffs whereon the eagle had his eyry? Was it not heard in the roar of the cataract, and seen in the foaming rapids of streams that chafed its every boulder obstructing their passage to yonder ocean wild and wide? Yes, and Duncan was proud of that romance, and proud too, with a pride that is unknown in England of the grand story of his never-conquered country.

And so we cannot be astonished to find the three lads sitting together, in solemn conclave, on a bright summer's forenoon, far away on a green brae that overlooked Glenvoie.

Indeed, they had come here seriously to discuss their future.

Viking was lying close to Duncan with his great loving lump of a head on the boy's lap.

"You see," Duncan was saying, "it is precious hard for lads like us, who haven't any money to get a kind of a start in the world. If we could only get a beginning, I feel certain we should need no more. But our father is poor, Frank!"

"Heigho!" sighed Frank, "and so, alas! is mine."

"I know," continued Duncan, "that he would scrape the needful together somehow if we asked him. He could not sell any portion of the estate, because it is entailed, but I know that father would try hard to raise enough money to send Conal and me to sea as apprentices."

"And you really think you'll go to sea?" said Frank.

"As certain as sunrise, Frank. Mind I don't expect to find things quite so rosy as books paint them, but to sea I go for all that, and so will Conal."

"And so will I," cried Frank determinedly. "For my father is poorer far than yours. But I won't go before the mast, as I think you mean to."

"No?"

"No! because I have an uncle who has already promised to give me a little lift in life, and I haven't got so much Highland pride as you, so I'll ask him to apprentice me.

"I wonder," he added, "if dear old Captain Talbot would have me?"

"Oh," cried Duncan, "I had entirely forgotten. I have a letter from Talbot. He has given up the coasting trade, and is now in the Mediterranean, sailing betwixt London and Italy, a merchant ship, and I'm sure he will be glad to take you. He'll be back at the port of London in September. Why, Frank, old man, you're in luck.

"And as for Conal and I, we shall go before the mast."

"I'm sorry for you, boys."

"But you needn't be. Not the slightest wee bit. Many an officer in the merchant service, ay, and in the Royal Navy as well, has entered through the hawsehole."

"That means risen from the ranks, doesn't it?"

"Something very like it."

"Well," said Conal, "is it all arranged?"

"I think so," replied Duncan. "And the sooner we set about putting our resolves into force the better, I think."

Then he sighed as he bent down and gave poor Vike's honest head a good hug, and I'm not sure there wasn't a tear in his eye as he said:

"Poor Vike! your master is going away where he can't take you. But you'll be good, won't you, till we come back again, and look well after your little mistress, Flora. I know you will, doggie."

If ever grief was depicted in a dog's looks, and we know it often is, you might have seen it in Viking's now. I do not mean to say that he knew all his master said. He was too young for that, but he could tell from the mere intonation of Duncan's voice that grief was in store for all.

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Chief M'Vayne was much averse at first to his sons becoming mere boys before the mast, but Duncan and Conal were determined, and so he came round at last and gave his consent.

I am going to say just as little as I can about the parting. Partings are painful to write about.

Not only the boys but M'Vayne himself were heroic. It does not do for clansmen to show weakness, but the mother's tears fell thick and fast, and poor Flora was to be pitied.

It was the first cloud of sorrow that had fallen upon her young life, and she felt desolate in the extreme. She believed she would never survive it. She would have no pleasure or joy now in wandering over the hills and through the forests dark and wild.

"I will pray for you both." These were about the last words she said.

"And for me too, Florie," said Frank sadly.

"Oh, yes, and for you."

Then he kissed her.

For the first time-wondering to himself, if it would be the last.

He had gotten a pretty little ring for her, with blue stones and an anchor on it. And of this she was very proud.

"Mind," he said, "you're a sailor's sweetheart now."

Then they mounted the trap that was to drive them to the nearest station, and away they went, waving hands and handkerchiefs, of course, until a bend in the road and a few pine-trees shut the dear old home from their view.

BOOK II. THE CRUISE OF THE *FLORA M'VAYNE*

CHAPTER I. – THE TERRORS OF THE OCEAN

Long months have passed away since that sad parting at Glenvoie; a parting that seemed to raise our young heroes at once from the careless happiness of boyhood to the serious earnestness of man's estate.

They had stayed in town until Captain Talbot arrived. He was just the same brave and jolly sailor that Duncan had first known.

Would he take Frank as his apprentice?

Why, he would be glad to have the whole three. They were so bold and bright, there was not the least fear of their not getting on.

Wouldn't they come? His present ship was not so large as he would like it to be, but he would make shift somehow.

But Duncan, while he thanked him, was firm.

"Well," said Talbot, "I'll tell you what I'll do for you, for somehow I have acquired a liking for you all Frank here, then, shall come with me, not as an apprentice belonging to the owners, but as a friend who wishes to get well up in seamanship and eventually pass even for master-mariner. You see, Frank, you will be rated as apprentice to me, and not to the company, else they would hold you to the same ship for years. And my reason is this: in about a year or a little over, I shall, please God, have a ship of my own. It is to be a great project, but I am promised assistance, and many of the savants in London say the project is well worthy of the greatest success. I shall voyage first to the Antarctic regions, and come home with a paying voyage of oil and skins of the sea-elephants, and this shall smooth my way to exploring further south than any ship has yet reached.

"So you see, Duncan, as you and your brother will not be bound to any tie as regards apprenticeship, you can both sail with me to the South Pole, and who knows but you may yet become the Nansens of the Antarctic."

"Too good to be true," said Duncan laughing; "but I'm just determined to do my best, and no one can do more."

"Bravo, lad!" cried the colonel, laying his hand on Duncan's shoulder. "And you remember what the poet says:

""T is not in mortals to command success,
But we'll do more...; we'll deserve it!"

"Brave words, Colonel Trelawney," cried Talbot. "Why, sir, scraps of heroic verse have helped me along all through life. I'm a ship-master now, with a bit in bank. But my first voyage was to the Arctic and I had hardly clothes enough to keep out the terrible weather. My mother was a poor widow in Dundee, and I-being determined to go to sea-became a stowaway. I hid in a coal-bunker, and it came on to blow, so that I was very nearly killed with the shifting coals that cannonaded against my ribs.

"Luckily the storm did not last long, but when they hauled me out at last I was as black as a chimney-sweep and covered with blood.

"I was too ill to be lifted and landed at Lerwick. The doctor said I was dying. The first mate, who was never sober, said, 'Serve the young beggar right!' But, boys, I knew better. Dundee boys don't die worth shucks, and so I was on deck in ten days' time. There were two dogs on board, and my duty was to feed and look after them, and also to assist the cook.

"I roughed it, I can tell you, lads; but, Lord bless you, it did me a power of good. We were out for six months, and by that time I was as strong as a young mule. How old was I? Oh, not more than sixteen. But I felt a man. And I could reef and steer now, and splice a rope, and do all sorts of things. For the bo's'n had taken me in hand, and right kind he was.

"Ah! but that rascally mate! A long black, red-cheeked chap he was, and not a bit like a sailor, but he kept up his spite against me, and, when half-seas over-which he always was when not completely drunk-he would let fly at me with a belaying-pin, a marling-spike, or anything else he could lay his hands on.

"'Why don't you land him one,' said the bo's'n one day, 'right from the shoulder?'

"'That would be mutiny, wouldn't it?' said I.

"'Nonsense, lad, the skipper likes you, and he wouldn't log you for it.'

"'I determined to take the bo's'n's advice next time the drunken mate hit me.

"'Well, I hadn't long to wait. You see I had come to really love the dogs under my charge. So one day the mate kicked one of them rather roughly out of his way.

"'Don't you dare kick that dog,' I cried; 'they are both in my charge.'

"'How well do I remember that forenoon. We were on the return voyage, running before a light breeze, with every scrap of canvas set, low and aloft, and the sun shining bonnie and warm.

"'But the mate grew purple with rage when I checked him. He could hardly speak. He could only stutter.

"'You, you beggar's brat,' he shouted, 'I'll give you a lesson.'

"'He rushed to pull out a belaying-pin.

"'I tossed off my jacket and threw it on the top of the capstan.

"'I twisted the belaying-pin out of his hands before you could have said 'knife'.

"'Fight fair, you drunken scamp!' I cried.

"'Pistols and rifles lay ready loaded in boxes at the top of the cabin companion, and he made a stride or two as if to take one out.

"'Mutiny!' he muttered, 'rank mutiny!'

"'I sprang between him and the box, and dealt him a square left-hander that made him reel. I followed this up with a rib-starter, then with one on the nose.

"'Down he went, and he actually prayed for mercy.

"'That bulbous nose of his was well tapped, and there was no fear of him taking apoplexy for a while anyhow.

"'But when I let him up he seemed to lose control of his senses, for the demon drink was now in the ascendant. He faced me no longer, however, but rushed for poor, faithful Collie, and before I could prevent it, had seized and pitched him overboard.

"'The men, untold, rushed to haul the foreyard aback and to lower a boat.

"'But he checked them.

"'What! lower a boat for a dog?' he cried.

"'Lower a boat for a man then,' I shouted, 'and just as I was I leapt upon the bulwark and dived off it. Next minute I was alongside Collie. Ay, lads, and alongside something else. A huge shark sailed past us, and passed us so near I could almost have touched him. He must have been fully fifteen feet long.³ I knew that nothing but splashing and shouting could keep him at bay, and I did both as well as I knew how to.'

"'But the boat came quickly to our rescue, and we were soon safe on board. The skipper liked me, and did not log my mutinous conduct. In fact he became my friend, and I was apprenticed to his very ship. So I had many and many a voyage to the Sea of Ice after this.

³ The *Scymnus borealis*, or Greenland shark, is often eighteen to twenty feet in length.

"There is a glamour about this weird and wonderful frozen ocean, boys, that none can resist who have ever been under its bewitching spell. It is on me now, and this it is which has determined me to seek soon for adventures in the Antarctic, which very few have ever sought to explore.

"Now, Duncan and Conal, I'll tell you what I shall do with you. There is a big Australian ship to sail from Southampton in about a month. The captain is a personal friend of mine, and will do anything for you. I shall give you a letter.

"Mind this, he is strict service, and if you do your duty, as I'm sure you will, you'll soon have a friend on the quarter-deck."

Captain Talbot-or Master-mariner Talbot as he liked best to be called-had been as good as his word, and now our young heroes were far away at sea.

The *Ocean's Pride* was a full-rigged Aberdeen clipper-built vessel, and could show a pair of clean heels to almost any other ship in the trade. The skipper and his two mates were all thorough sailors, and gentlemen at heart. The skipper, whose name was Wilson, soon began to take an interest in Duncan and Conal, and knowing that they were studying in their idle moments, invited them to come daily to his own cabin, and there for a whole hour he used to teach them all he could.

Duncan could soon be trusted to take sights, and even "lunars", and gave every evidence of possessing the steadiness and grit that goes so far to make a thorough British sailor.

They touched at the Cape in due time, and Conal acted as clerk or "tally-boy" while cargo was being landed and fresh stock taken on board.

The boys found time to have a look at the town. They went with one of the mates who had been often here before.

Well, the hills all around, clad in their summer coats of dazzling heaths and geraniums, were quite a sight to see. But the town itself they voted dismally slow, and so I myself have found it, there being so many heavy-headed Dutchmen therein.

They were not a bit sorry, therefore, when they found themselves once more on the heaving billows.

And the billows around the Cape of Good Hope do heave too with a vengeance.

Such mountain waves Duncan could not have believed existed anywhere. Tall and raking though she was, the *Ocean's Pride* was all but buried when down in the trough of the waves.

There was but a six-knot breeze when they started to stretch away and away across that seemingly illimitable ocean betwixt the Cape and Australia. Oh such a lonesome sea it is, reader! Six thousand miles of water, water, water, and often never a sign of life in the sky above or in the sea below.

There was, as I have said, but a light wind to begin with, and it was dead astern, so that stunsails were set, and the great ship looked like some wonderful bird of the main, as she sailed, with her wings out-spread, eastward and eastward ho!

But before noon the sky in the west began to darken, and great rock-shaped or castellated clouds rolled up from the horizon. Snow-white were they on top, where the sun's rays struck them, but dark and black below.

"Snug ship!" was the order now.

In came the stunsails, the men working right merrily, and singing as they worked. In came royals and top-gallant sails, and close-reefed were the topsails. The captain was no coward, but right well he knew that the storm coming quickly up astern would be no child's play.

Nor was it.

A vivid flash of lightning and great-gun thunder first indicated the approach of the gale.

Then away in the west a long line of foam was seen approaching. In an inconceivably short space of time it struck the ship with fearful violence, and though she sprung forward like a frightened deer and dipped her prow into a huge wave, she seemed engulfed in raging seas. The skipper had

battered down, but so much water had been taken on board that the good clipper could not for a time shake herself clear. Perhaps the shivered bulwarks helped to save the ship.

In a few minutes she was rushing before the wind at a good twelve knots an hour.

"What a blessing it is," said Captain Wilson, "that we got snug in time!"

"Yes, sir," said the mate, "and it's an ill wind that blows nobody good. Why, this gale is all in our favour, and will help us along."

Our heroes had far from a pleasant time, however, for the next few days. Then wind and sea went down, and peace reigned once more on the decks, and in the rigging of the good ship *Ocean's Pride*.

The splendid cities they visited when the vessel at last arrived in Australia quite dazzled our boys. And as the English language was spoken everywhere they felt quite at home.

Captain Wilson seemed to take a pride in having Duncan and Conal with him, and he introduced them as friends wherever he went.

Both lads were handsome, and in the city of Melbourne a rumour got abroad that they were of noble birth, and were serving before the mast for the mere romance of the thing. Well, even the Earl of Aberdeen was once found in the guise of an ordinary seaman; but there was something more than romance in our heroes' situation. However, the report, which they always contradicted, did them no harm, and they were invited to more houses than one, being asked, moreover, to come in their sailor's clothes.

The boys obeyed. In fact they had none other, but they had a kind of best suit, and very well the broad blue collar and black sailor's-knotted handkerchief became their handsome young faces.

I don't think I am far wrong in saying that some of the Australian ladies fell in love with them.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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