

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

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

These are the fine perceptions which preserve a man of my position from the effects of calumny. And, next to myself, the principal guardian of my honour was this noble Colonel Lougher. Moreover, a fine little chap there was, Lady Bluett's younger son, Honourable Rodney Bluett by name; for his father had served under Admiral Rodney, and been very friendly with him, and brought him to church as a godfather. This young Rodney Bluett was about ten years old at that time, and the main delight of his life was this, to come fishing with old Davy. The wondrous yarns I used to spin had such an effect on his little brain, that his prospects on dry land, and love of his mother, and certain inheritance from the Colonel, were helpless to keep him from longing always to see the things which I had seen. With his large blue eyes upon me, and his flaxen hair tied back, and his sleeves tucked up for paddling, hour by hour he would listen, when the weather was too

rough to do much more than look at it. Or if we went out in a boat (as we did when we could pay for hiring, and when his mother was out of the way), many and many a time I found him, when he should have been quick with his bait, dwelling upon the fine ideas which my tales had bred in him. I took no trouble in telling them, neither did I spare the truth when it would come in clumsily (like a lubber who cannot touch his hat), but they all smelled good and true, because they had that character.

However, he must bide his time, as every one of us has to do, before I make too much of him. And just at the period now in hand he was down in my black books for never coming near me. It may have been that he had orders not to be so much with me, and very likely that was wise; for neither his mother nor his uncle could bear the idea of his going to sea, but meant to make a red herring of him, as we call those poor land-soldiers. Being so used to his pretty company, and his admiration, also helping him as I did to spend his pocket-money, I missed him more than I could have believed; neither could I help sorrowing at this great loss of opportunity; for many an honest shilling might have been turned ere winter by the hire of my boat to him when he came out with me fishing. I had prepared a scale of charges, very little over Captain Bob's, to whom he used to pay 4d. an hour, when I let him come after the whiting with me. And now, for no more than 6d. an hour, he should have my very superior boat, and keep her head by my directions, for he understood a rudder, and bait my hooks, and stow my fish, and enjoy (as all boys should) the idea of being useful.

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