

Story of the Week:

The Pit of Allachy.

Adam Ogilvie lay basking in the mid-summer sun on the lee side of the Witch's Hillock. It is a mound of blown sand, rising a little above the level of a beach of naked shingle and wet, rolled stones, held together by the tough roots and the sage-green blades of the bent. The sea is close by, but the din of its perpetual warfare with the shore is far off, heard in the hollow behind the mound, scarcely reaching the ears of Adam Ogilvie as he leaned his back against the warm sand, and, half sunk in a day dream, looked into the book whose pages he had almost ceased to turn.

The wind must have shifted or risen, for the spars of the windstreaked shroud and rusted overhead. The leaves of the book fluttered, and a bunch of seaweed was cast on the page Adam was reading, as if by some impish hand. Rising, he climbed the dune, and glanced seaward. The waves sounded and broke on the beach in regular files, shooting out long tongues of foam which slid smoothly over the sand and gravel; and, at the moment of being withdrawn returned into clashing clutches and tore at the ground. Outside the calm surface of the Northern Sea had crisped into infinite wrinkles, with here and there a broadening point of white. Never in after years did Adam know salt water so clear, so deep blue, as this, within a stone's throw of his father's door. Today to look forth upon it was like gazing into the pure depths of space, fretted with white, and the western horizon were faintly pencilled the shapes of far-away hills. The sail of a fishing boat, heading for home, was disappearing round the Scar Head. On the verge of the sea line was a blur of smoke—some steamer making for Thule of old. There was nothing else in that direction between the Witch's Hillock and the lee of the North Pole.

As Adam looked, the voice of the sea seemed to gather volume and meaning. The freshening breeze picked the froth from the lips of the waves and chased it along the beach, and shook the dry wisps of seaweed and the long swaths of wreckage that marked the high level of tide and storm. Ogilvie turned his face to the land. It rose and fell in a succession of even swells like the sea itself. The sea, indeed, had made it, and half shaped it after its own fashion. The swift river near by was restless at work, dragging down the sand and the pebbles, and the waves piled them upon the shore and then tore and raged at their own handiwork. Worse than that of Sisyphus, this endless rolling of stones that slowly but surely encumbered the province of the sea and enlarged that of the land. The stain of the earth was almost as those of the landward side of the sea beaches before they were half raised. In the trough between bunches of hardy sea pinks stood brilliant, amid greenish patches of wet grass. The yellow stalks of the blueberry struggled up between the loose stones; the crowberry and the creeping juniper clasped them and enfolded them as in a green web. Further back heather and loose-cropped whins covered them completely, and here and there were a few wild-planted firs and birches, which the sheep and the salt breezes kept from reaching the estate of shrubs. Behind these were the green patches of croft land rescued from the links by the salmon fishers in those intervals of leisure from the water when they were to tilling the soil. Then large and well-groomed farms, and further back, two or three miles away, the wooded moors of the Great Heide, and now in full leaf. As a background to the scene, the darker from contrast with the light tints of the trees and meadows below, rose the sombre crests of the fells, and the sky line by bare and brown moors.

In that northern clime Spring lingers on to the longest day, the colors of the sea seemed as green as the grass of the sea, with infinitely more warmth and variety. Ogilvie turned once more to face the salt breath of the Firth. A quarter of a mile to the seaward a crew of fishermen were beating the cable and preparing to draw in their salmon net. Between him and them his eye caught a dark object, bobbing now on the crest and now in the hollow of the waves. His gaze was fixed on it, it was a seal; he regretted that he had not his father's gun beside him, and then remembered that to shoot a seal in the water was bad sport. But this particular specimen of the phoca was making fast for the shore; there was a twinkle of bare feet on the sand, the gleam of a white shoulder, and before the onlooker could draw his breath, the sea-maid had emerged from the foam and had disappeared in the deserted bathing house on the beach.

The young man stepped down from the Witch's Hillock, but it was some minutes before he could resume his book; the sea-nymph had turned aside the current of his dream. By and by a sweet voice at his elbow, with a little of the reasonableness in it, roused him from his reverie. "What are you reading?"

Adam Ogilvie sprang to his feet. A maid who had just entered upon womanhood stood at a yard or two of him. She was simply dressed, but there was about her the air of gentle birth, and the aspect of one by nature a little shy and proud. Her hair was drawn from the sea bath, hung in fleeces of tarnished brown upon her shoulders. Of her features Ogilvie was at first only aware of a pair of startled eyes, of a blue like that of the sea. She glanced that the form, clad in rough and well-worn tweed, curled up in the hollow of the sandhill, was that of some studious herd-boy or fisher-lad, and was surprised when a tall young man suddenly stood erect and looked at her with dark eyes shining under bent brows.

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stranger youth; and in the scriptural phrase, he found favor in her sight. She made as if to read the written comfort, but, with the shrinking nature of the young even of taste, that of an involuntary movement to restrain her, and then hated himself for the act. Thinking better of her intention, she returned the book with a word of apology, and asked, instead, to be directed to the postoffice of the hamlet. The pair moved side by side along the hollow way towards the group of thatched houses and kailyards fenced with elderly bushes. Their thoughts were closer together than either knew, but their speech was only of the trivial things—of the weather and the path. Adam pointed out the slat in the little half-boarded window to which the fisher folk commit their correspondence. They paused a minute before parting, and the girl said:

"And do you live here?" Adam answered "Yes." He also was proud and shy; he did not care to let her know that his home was free from squalor and had its share of the comfort and even of taste, that those of his father's house were gently nurtured and had the respect of the country side. She looked at the lowly house nearest to her; then passed to the gate that floated above the trees from the castle where she was a guest; and then at Adam Ogilvie. In the pause of the cry of the sea grew plainer; it appeared to be imploring, admonishing, even threatening the listeners. It was wafted from the rocky nook of coast inside the sickeries, where, in certain states of the tide, and the wind, the innumerable waves seem to wash and dash together like straws in an eddy.

"What a strange, weird sound," she said. "Do you know what it means?" "Is the pit of Allachy—the Hell of the Warming," was the reply. "The folks hereabouts believe that it signifies a change of weather—a change for the worse." She turned away to post her letter, and he went back to the hollow of the Witch's Hill.

In eighteen years the sea has time to set about throwing up a fresh line of interment on its frontier with the land, although it will make and unmake its work many times before the task is complete. The ribs of a wreck struck the shore, and the sea was restless at work, dragging down the sand and the pebbles, and the waves piled them upon the shore and then tore and raged at their own handiwork. Worse than that of Sisyphus, this endless rolling of stones that slowly but surely encumbered the province of the sea and enlarged that of the land. The stain of the earth was almost as those of the landward side of the sea beaches before they were half raised. In the trough between bunches of hardy sea pinks stood brilliant, amid greenish patches of wet grass. The yellow stalks of the blueberry struggled up between the loose stones; the crowberry and the creeping juniper clasped them and enfolded them as in a green web. Further back heather and loose-cropped whins covered them completely, and here and there were a few wild-planted firs and birches, which the sheep and the salt breezes kept from reaching the estate of shrubs. Behind these were the green patches of croft land rescued from the links by the salmon fishers in those intervals of leisure from the water when they were to tilling the soil. Then large and well-groomed farms, and further back, two or three miles away, the wooded moors of the Great Heide, and now in full leaf. As a background to the scene, the darker from contrast with the light tints of the trees and meadows below, rose the sombre crests of the fells, and the sky line by bare and brown moors.

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TWO VERSIONS.

A young farmer who had great conceit, little discretion and scarcely any education, presented himself at a Presbyterian conference, and said he wished to be ordained as a preacher. "I ain't had any great learnin'," he said, frankly, "but I reckon I'm called to preach. I've had a vision. Three nights runnin' that's what I'm here."

"What was your vision?" inquired one of the elders. "Well," said the young man, "I dreamt I see a big, round ring in the sky, and the middle of it was two great letters—P. C. I knew that meant Presbyterian Conference, and here I am."

There was an uncomfortable pause, which was broken by a speaker who knew the young man, and was well acquainted with the poverty of his family and the neglected condition of the farm in which his father had taken such pride.

"I haven't any gift at reading visions," said the old man, gravely, as he rose from his seat, "but I'd like to put it to my young friend whether he can read the book with a word of apology, and asked, instead, to be directed to the postoffice of the hamlet. The pair moved side by side along the hollow way towards the group of thatched houses and kailyards fenced with elderly bushes. Their thoughts were closer together than either knew, but their speech was only of the trivial things—of the weather and the path. Adam pointed out the slat in the little half-boarded window to which the fisher folk commit their correspondence. They paused a minute before parting, and the girl said:

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QUEER MONEY.

Here is an amusing account of a traveler who went many years ago to a distant land and found the natives using a strange kind of currency. Says he: "In one of the small towns I bought some limes, and gave the girl one dollar in payment. By the way of change, she returned me 40 pieces of soap, the size of a small biscuit. I looked at her in astonishment, and she returned my look with equal surprise, when a police officer, who had witnessed the incident, hastened to inform me that for small sums soap was legal tender in many portions of the country."

I examined my change and found that each cake was stamped with the name of a town, and of a manufacture authorized by the government. The cakes of soap were worth three farthings each. Afterwards, in my travels, I recently resolved to make a change. Many of the cakes showed signs of being in the wash tub, but that I discovered was not uncommon. Provided the stamp was not obliterated, the soap was still an article of value. Occasionally a man would borrow a cake of a friend, wash his hands and return it with thanks. I made use of my pieces more than once, and my bath and subsequent spent them. —Harper's Round Table.

Conventional rules are most useful in intercourse with strangers, and this feeling, the result of deliberate reflection among men, seems quite as well understood by animals. The number of steps which a prince or ambassador might advance to meet the other without derogating from his dignity, and the frequent halts and bows, find a parallel in the amusing form of canine etiquette when one dog "spies" a stranger at a distance. The first dog stops short, then trots on a little, then sniffs, and finally lies flat down, with its nose on its paws, like a skinner ordered to open fire on the enemy. The other dog, which has been quick-sighted, sometimes lies down too, but more usually rises slowly up, with occasional halts. The action of the first seems clearly to be a survival of a time when a dog naturally crouched in order to con-

temptation can make them break. When approaching a lady swan, or pursuing a rival which has intruded into its particular reach of the river, the cock swan has certain set movements which it goes through. It is said that the word of command for action in the Chinese drill is first, "Prepare to look fierce!" next, "Look fierce!" and thirdly, "Approach the enemy!" The swan does all this, and something more. He sets up his wings like plumes and draws his head very far back, which corresponds with the first and second words of command. But for his mode of approach he always uses a special stroke in swimming, which he keeps for grand occasions. He strikes the water with both feet together, which sends him forward with a rush, the water rippling from his chest as from the prow of a ship. Then he strikes again, as his "way" gets less, and in this manner will swim very long distances, either in pursuit of his enemy or of some covet female swan. If he chose to swim in the ordinary manner, or to fly, or even to get out onto the bank and rest, he would have no difficulty in overtaking the other. But etiquette prescribes that this slow and stately stroke shall be used on such occasions, and swans are too conservative to break the rule.

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