

'Ay, ay, missie; there's no offence taken where none is meant.'

'It's ten years ago come next Saturday since I pulled her,' he began, looking up at the oar. 'It was at home in old Scotland. The morning was dark and squally and the sea choppy, but for all that we made up our minds to run out the 'Bright-Light,' our fishing boat, for a catch. Other boats had bided, and we weren't laggards. 'T'wur the right sort of a day for a haul. She was a tight craft, and my sons were as easy in her as bit wee lambies in their cradles. She'd been their bed and play-yard many a time.

'There were five on us. My four lads were as bold and brave a set as you'd wish to see. There was Pete, the eldest, standing nigh on six feet, and big and broad, not knowing fear. Alec, my second boy, a full head shorter, less of a man in the build, but as bold as a lion. Tom was my third, he never took kindly to the sea, and missed its beauty—and it has a beauty of its own, sir; and come last was Will, who took to his tools, and could turn his hand to most anything. He wur ship's carpenter, and a bit of a boat builder, too.

'The mother and I took them out when they were little uns, and it was a proud day for each one in turn as he could come home and say, "I've sailed the 'Bright-Light' alone to-day." I've heard 'em all say't, and seen each of 'em bring in his load. But that morning we were all aboard—three of 'em at the nets, and one of 'em lending a hand a-sailin' her. It wur Alec with me. 'T'others were with the nets. A silent chap was Alec. He'd keep at his work for hours and say never a word; but he'd a wonderful head for thinkin', and could see a deal more than most of us. This is his book. (Here old Wilson took from the table a worn, shabby, brown-bound Bible, and passed it to Jack.) If you look at the New Testament, sir, you'll notice pencil marks here and there, for my boy followed the Master's sea-journeys and oft sat in the boat with him and helped him haul in the fish. He was ne'er a one for showin' his feelin's, but he'd not much opinion of himself. I recall his shamefacedness when he owned to me one day, "I misdoubt, father, I be jist a coward." Well, sir, that dawn we set out wur not promisin', but we thought o' the fish we were likely to take, and would get on to Edinburgh, if we could, for we fisher-folks must e'en use our opportunities. The mother she thought different, but women is fearsome critters when them as they love is concerned, so we paid her no heed. The lads kissed her—she would always have it so before every journey—but her last kiss was for Alec; she know'd his mind and never misread him.

"Take care o' tha old father!" she said to him.

"Ay, ay, mother," was all he answered her, and blithe and brave, we all five on us took to the boat.

'On we scudded before the wind, and presently we hove to and my lads threw out the nets.

"We'll ha' a fine haul, father, for mark't to-day," sings out Pete. He know'd by the look o' the sea.

'But Alec was a-reading the sky. "We'll ha' all we can do to make for Stonehaven to escape the storm," he said.

"Is 't feared?" asked Tom.

"Nay, nay, we'll bide and fill the nets," he said.

'Will had hauled down the sails as the wind rose and the sea grew rougher. Have you seen the sea in a storm, sir, off the coast of Scotland, mebbe?'

'No,' answered Jack. 'I'm a land-lubber, you know, and couldn't appreciate it if I did.'

'Life'll mean more to ye, sir, when ye ha.'

'There's more swirl about life, as it is, than some of us care for.'

'You may well say that, sir; like enough it'll quieten down when ye are drappit some-thin' into it. I mind that mornin', ten years ago, how I sat in the 'Bright-Light' a watchin' o' my sons, and thinkin' of their future well-bein'. I never pictur'd them other than fisherfolk; I'd always lived by my boat, and my father and grandfather before me, and many o' my race had gone down in the water, but more had died on their beds.

"Haul in, haul in," shouted Pete, "it's good few days sin' we've had such a catch." The nets were full of glistening fish, and spite o' the rain and the wind and the trying day our hearts were glad, for we were in sore need of money.'

Here the old man paused and sat silent; nor did his visitors break the silence. At length he resumed his story, sitting erect and his eyes kindling, as he continued, "Those nets were never landed, sir, as missie here has often heard me tell. The wind mocked our sport. In a moment, I can never rightly tell how it happened, the 'Bright-Light' turned on her side, filled with water and sank. It all happened in a trice. Ah, sir, I saw my three sons, Pete and Tom and Will, go down in the swirl of waters, and Alec, too, disappeared. I was sinking myself, when an oar floated past me, and I grabbed at it, and caught at it and held my head above water. I thought I was alone in a terrible loneliness; when by my side I saw Alec swimming, and gasping for dear life. He looked at the oar, sir, that oar, and in that look he faced death. He saw that it could not support us both, and he, who misdoubted whether he were other than "jist a coward," said as calmly as if he saying "gude nicht," "Weel, father, I maun just awa'," and sank beneath the waves.

"Tis writ there, master, on the blade of the oar, and you can read it yoursel', and underneath is his name and age, the name of him who died for his old father. Oh, my son! my son!

'After that I mind no more. They tell me I was picked up by a passing boat clinging to the oar, and was taken on to Stonehaven, where I lay at first unconscious and then delirious, raving of my lost laddies.

'My wife survived her boys two years, but she buried her heart in the swirl of waters, and died holding on to that oar, sir. Do you believe me now when I say that its weight in banknotes wouldn't buy it from me?'

'Forgive me that I doubted,' said Jack.

'Good-bye, dear Wilson,' said Mary, softly, 'my friend will be sending you a small present of five pounds to-morrow; it'll help you on through the winter.'

'I'll not forget it, Wilson,' said Jack; 'accept it for his sake.'

Peculiar People.

(By Jane Ellis Joyn, in 'Forward'.)

Any one who knew Letty well heard her say very frequently of certain persons in the neighborhood, 'She is very peculiar,' or 'He is so peculiar.' Usually the tones of her voice indicated, even when the words were uttered thoughtlessly, that the people so designated did not stand high in her favor, as indeed they did not.

Further than this, however, Letty would not make an unamiable remark about any

one; for she rather prided herself on her good breeding and 'ladylike' behavior.

One summer Aunt Alida visited the Ostends. Aunt Alida was something of a cosmopolitan. For years she had resided in a large city, and she had spent much time abroad. Her visit to Dewbrook was made the occasion of much social intercourse, and in talking over the different entertainments afterwards in the family, this lady naturally heard from her niece about the 'peculiarities' of this one and that one.

'Didn't you find Miss Cotts very peculiar, Aunty?' Letty asked, one morning, following a tea at the Van Noster's. Miss Cotts was a woman of about fifty.

'No; I've met people more or less like her,' answered Aunt Alida, soberly. 'I thought her talk decidedly interesting. In what way do you consider her peculiar, my dear?'

'Why—you know—' stammered Letty, lamely, 'she's so different from others.'

'And who, pray, are the "others"?'

Although Aunt Alida's tone was pleasant, there was a certain incisiveness about the manner that was disconcerting to Letty. To find herself the object of criticism was something new to the self-complacent girl. She wished exceedingly to merit the favor of Aunt Alida, for whom she had great admiration. Her face flushed, and she looked beseechingly from her drooping eyelashes, as if to say, 'Please don't press the question; I dare say I have said something foolish.'

But Aunt Alida did not heed the look.

'Do you mean your young friends?' she asked.

Although Aunt Alida was smiling now, Letty knew she had a purpose in pursuing the subject. 'Yes, and some older people, too,' she answered. 'Miss Cotts isn't the least like mother, or like you.'

'Another question,' smiled Aunt Alida. 'How old are you?'

'I'm nearly eighteen. Oh, Aunt Alida, what are you aiming at? Have I said something very improper in calling Miss Cotts queer? But you see she—she doesn't dress like other folks, and she has some views, or something, that I don't understand. I didn't mean that she wasn't nice—oh, no, only—a little peculiar.'

'If you will pardon me, dear,' said Aunt Alida, 'it seems to me far more "peculiar" that a young girl not yet eighteen who has had but very limited opportunities for observation should constitute herself an authority and a judge in matters so far beyond her. People as well as things lose their peculiar aspects when you understand them. The more one knows the fewer "peculiar" traits he sees in his acquaintances. It is an attribute of a very commonplace mind to be offended at even real peculiarities when they are innocent ones.'

Letty's self-esteem was hurt; but she was too honest-minded to resent a criticism that she felt was merited and intended kindly.

'Aunt Alida,' she said, several days afterwards, 'I thank you for frankly calling my attention to that silly habit I have of calling people peculiar. I have never travelled as you have,' she continued, with a smile, 'and I don't know many people outside of Dewbrook; but I'm trying to get breadth of view from another source: "Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth in the truth."'

It has been proved beyond question that some brands of cigarettes contain a great deal of opium, while the wrapper warranted to be rice paper, is only common paper whitened with arsenic.—'Pacific Ensign.'