

and I came in sight of Sker-house, and hoped to find some water there. Beer, of course, I would rather have; but never was there a chance of that within reach of Evan Thomas. And I tried to think this all the better; for half a gallon would not have gone any distance with me, after ploughing so long through sand, with the heavy weight of Bunny, upon a day like that. Only I hoped that my dear little grandchild might find something fit for her, and such as to set her up again; for never before had I seen her, high and strong as her spirit was, so overcome by

the power and pressure of the air above us. She lay in my arms almost as helpless as little Bardie, three years younger, had lain the night before; and knowing how children will go off without a man's expecting it, I was very uneasy, though aware of her constitution. So in the heat I chirped and whistled, though ready to drop myself almost; and coming in sight of the house, I tried my best to set her up again, finding half of her clothes gone down her back, and a great part of her fat legs somehow sinking into her Sunday shoes.

CHAPTER VIII.—CHILDREN WILL BE CHILDREN.

The "boys of Sker," as we always called those rough fellows over at Newton, were rabbiting in the warren; according to their usual practice, on a Sunday afternoon. A loose unseemly lot of lads, from fifteen up to two-and-twenty years of age, perhaps, and very little to choose between them as to work and character. All, however, were known to be first-rate hands at any kind of sporting, or of poaching, or of any roving pleasure.

Watkin, the sixth and youngest boy, was of a different nature. His brothers always cast him off, and treated him with a high contempt, yet never could despise him. In their rough way, they could hardly help a sulky sort of love for him.

The seventh and last child had been a girl—a sweet little creature as could be seen, and taking after Watkin. But she had something on her throat from six months up to six years old; and when she died some three months back, people who had been in the house said that her mother would have sooner lost all the boys put together, if you left Watkin out of them. How that was I cannot say, and prefer to avoid those subjects. But I knew that poor black Evan swore no oath worth speaking of for one great market and two small ones, but seemed brought down to sit by himself, drinking quietly all day long.

When we came to the ancient hall (or kitchen, as now they called it), for a moment I was vexed—expecting more of a rush, perhaps, than I was entitled to. Knowing how much that young child

owed me for her preservation, and feeling how fond I was of her, what did I look for but wild delight at seeing "old Davy" back again? However, it seems, she had taken up with another and forgotten me.

Watkin, the youngest boy of Sker, was an innocent and good little fellow, about twelve years old at that time. Bardie had found this out already; as quickly as she found out my goodness, even by the moonlight. She had taken the lead upon Watkin, and was laying down the law to him, upon a question of deep importance, about the manner of dancing. I could dance a hornpipe with anybody, and forward I came to listen.

"No, no, no! I tell 'a. 'E mustn't do like that, Yatkin. 'E must go yound and yound like this; and 'e must hold 'a cothes out, same as I does. Gardy là! 'E must hold 'a cothes out all the time, 'e must."

The little atom, all the time she delivered these injunctions, was holding out her tiny frock in the daintiest manner, and tripping sideways here and there, and turning round quite upon tiptoe, with her childish figure poised, and her chin thrown forward; and then she would give a good hard jump, but all to the tune of the brass jew's-harp which the boy was playing for his very life. And all the while she was doing this, the amount of energy and expression in her face was wonderful. You would have thought there was nothing else in all the world that required doing with such zeal