

"What a fool I am!" cried I. "Of course you do, you darling. What an atomy you are to talk! Stop here a moment."

Setting her on the seat by herself (like a stupid, as I was, for she might have tumbled overboard), I jumped out of the boat to fetch her water from the spring-head, as well as the relics of my food from the corner of the fish-basket. And truly vexed was I with myself for devouring of my dinner so. But no sooner was I gone, than feeling so left alone again after so much desertion, what did the little thing do but spring like a perfect grasshopper, and, slipping under the after-thwart, set off in the bravest toddle, for the very bow of the boat, in fear of losing sight of me? Unluckily, the boat just happened to lift upon a bit of a wave, and, not having won her sea-legs yet in spite of that long cruise, down came poor Bardie with a thump, which hurt me more than her, I think.

Knowing what Bunny would have done, I expected a fearful roar, and back I ran to lift her up. But even before I could interfere, she was up again and all alive, with both her arms stretched out to show, and her face set hard to defy herself.

"I 'ont ky, I 'ont, I tell 'a. 'Ee see if I does now, and ma say hot a good gal I is."

"Where did you knock yourself, little wonder? Let old Davy make it well. Show old Davy the poor sore place."

"Nare it is. Gardy lâ! nare poor Bardie knock herself."

And she held up her short white frock, and showed me the bend of her delicate round knee as simply and kindly as could be.

"I 'ont ky; no, I 'ont," she went on, with her pretty lips screwed up. "Little brother ky, 'e know; but Bardie a gate big gal, savvy voo? Bardie too big enough to ky."

However, all this greatness vanished when a drop of blood came oozing from the long black bruise, and still more when I tried to express my deep compassion. The sense of bad-luck was too strong for the courage of even two years' growth, and little Bardie proved herself of just the right age for crying. I had observed how clear and bright and musical her voice

was for such a tiny creature; and now the sound of her great woe, and scene of her poor helpless plight, was enough to move the rocks into a sense of pity for her.

However, while she had her cry out (as the tide would never wait), I took the liberty of stowing all my fish and fishing-tackle on board of that handy little boat, which I began to admire and long for more and more every time I stepped from the rock into her foresheets. And finding how tight and crank she was, and full of spring at every step, and with a pair of good ash skulls, and, most of all, discovering the snuggest of snug lockers, my conscience (always a foremost feature) showed me in the strongest light that it would be a deeply ungracious, ungrateful, and even sinful thing, if I failed to thank an ever-wise Providence for sending me this useful gift in so express a manner.

And taking this pious and humble view of the night's occurrence, I soon perceived a special fitness in the time of its ordering. For it happened to be the very night when Evan Thomas was out of the way, as I had been told at Nottage, and the steward of the manor safe to be as drunk as a fiddler at Bridgend; and it was not more than a few months since that invincible Scotchman, Sandy Macraw (a scurvy limb of the coast-guards, who lived by poaching on my born rights), had set himself up with a boat, forsooth, on purpose to rogue me and rob me the better. No doubt he had stolen it somewhere, for he first appeared at night with it; and now here was a boat, in all honesty mine, which would travel two feet for each one of his tub!

By the time I had finished these grateful reflections, and resolved to contribute any unsold crabs to the Dissenting minister's salary (in recognition of the hand of Providence, and what he had taught me concerning it no longer ago than last Sabbath-day, when he said that the Lord would make up to me for the loss of my poor wife, though never dreaming, I must confess, of anything half so good as a boat), and by the time that I had moored this special mercy snugly, and hidden the oars, so that no vile wrecker could make off with her feloniously, that dear little