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The Vicar's Nephew; or The Orphan's Vindication

CHAPTER III.—(Cont'd).

Jack had one secret; only one, and that so simple and so plainly written in his face that anybody could have read it who had looked at him with unprejudiced eyes. But there were no such eyes at the vicarage; and his secret remained unread. It was that he was unhappy. He had never acknowledged it to himself, and would have been amazed and indignant had any one suggested it; but it was true, nevertheless. Though in some ways, especially in his home, he got a fair amount of enjoyment out of life, there was always behind his pleasure a dull ache, as of emptiness that nothing could fill. To be glad when night came because another day was over; to hide every little hurt and grief away for fear some one should find it out; to have his hand against every man and every man's hand—often so heavy—against him, seemed to him a matter of course; if he thought about it all, he thought only that the world was stupidly managed somehow, and that it was no use to worry, because one couldn't make things any better.

It was this secret hunger of the soul that had driven him to seek his life outside of human companionship. The bleak grey Cornish moorland was a tender mother to him than Aunt Sarah, with all her kindly heart, had ever been. On his worst days, when mischief failed to help and even fighting could not cure the aching restlessness within him, he would slip away and wander on the cliffs alone for hours. Then he would lie down in some still, shadowy gorge, and bury himself in the wet fern, and find comfort somehow.

So, blind as he was and groping in the dark, he had learned to know and love the healing touch of nature. Then, when the mavis flew away, his eyes were opened, and whereas he was blind, now he saw.

For a long time he sat by the window, looking out; at last he undressed himself in the dark and crept into bed, very grave and subdued. Fortunately there was no one in the world who cared enough about him to look in upon his sleep, as happens sometimes with boys who have mothers; so his pride was safe from any one discovering that he slept with wet eyelashes. He found it out himself, though, in the morning, and was ashamed for a moment. Then he looked out of the window, and forgot to be self-conscious, seeing a new heaven and a new earth.

Then followed glorious days; long days of wonder and rejoicing, radiant with light and song and color, or veiled in solemn clouds and mystery. Of course there were the usual annoyances; church on Sunday, school on week-days, family prayers and Bible-readings, Aunt Sarah and Uncle Josiah. But these disturbances, after

all, were temporary and unimportant; he had never realized before how few of the twenty-four hours they filled, how wide and wonderful were those remaining. Sunday passed, and Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and the first rapture of his awakening still encircled him about; since Saturday he had not fought or quarrelled, had played no tricks and given no trouble either at home or in school. Four consecutive days without so much as a reprimand were a new record in his life; according to his social traditions and standard of conduct a disgraceful one; but it did not occur to him to think about the matter at all; he was behaving like the "good boys" that he held in contempt, and had not even found it out, so absorbed he was in the joy of life, in splendors of sunlight and starlight, in shining sands and glittering foam.

On Monday night there had been a thunderstorm; and he had slipped out, unobserved, into the roaring blackness of the moor, to lie bareheaded on the heather, in a torrent of rain. Then had come Tuesday, soft and cool and silver-grey, with tender shadows over land and sea, after the turbulent glories of the lightning god. Surely there was never any world so beautiful, or any boy so happy, so splendidly alive.

But the divinest day was Wednesday. From the fire-opal of the sunrise to the cloudy amethyst of twilight, it was a day of jewels; a day of sapphire sea and diamond spray, of skylarks singing in the far blue heights and sunbeams flaming on the yellow gorge; a day of peace on earth and goodwill—even toward men. One could not hate uncle himself on such a day.

Jack was up with the dawn and on the beach before sunrise. It was low water, and he scrambled out on to the long, jagged reef which had caused so many wrecks that the precipice above it was called "Deadman's Cliff." When he was tired of slipping about on the tangle and cutting his feet with the sharp points of barnacles, he lay down beside a shallow rock pool and looked into the sunlit water. It was full of brilliant anemones, green and pink and orange, open wide and holding up hundreds of painted arms. In one corner was a fairy forest of zoophytes, with a sea-small trying earnestly to force a passage through.

Suddenly, behind a little clump of sea-weed, there was a flash of prismatic color, and silken ripples passed over the surface of the pool. He lay still, watching. Presently a tiny fish, some two inches long, slipped out through the sea-weed, and began to swim round and round the pool, glittering in pink and silver. He plunged his hand into the water with a swift, dexterous movement, and caught the fish.

He lifted the little creature and held it in the sunshine, watching the flashing colors pass and change along its sides as it plunged and struggled in his hand. Then suddenly he saw how beautiful it was, and put it gently back into the water, and let it dart away. One had no right to interfere with a thing whose body was made all of rainbows.

His hand was still lying in the water, and he glanced down at it carelessly. There were no rainbows on it; but it was beautiful; more beautiful even than the fish. He opened and shut it under the water; and watched the working of the muscles, and the strong, smooth curve of the wrist. Yes, it was beautiful, and it was a part of him.

That afternoon was again a half-holiday. Billy Greggs had suggested that they should go fishing, as Saturday's expedition had not come off; but Jack refused; he wanted to be quite alone, and clamber on the rocks and look down through deep fissures at the ebbing tide.

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"Hullo, Mill!" he said cheerfully as he passed.

There was no answer, and he saw her shoulders shake a little; she was crying. He turned back.

"Why, what's wrong? Uncle been nagging again?"

She lifted up a tear-stained face. "I'm to stop in . . . all the afternoon! And I did want to go and take Daisy to bathe: Dr. Jenkins ordered her sea-baths!"

Daisy, the broken-nosed doll lying on the grass beside her, was too far gone for any sea-baths to help, or, for that matter, to injure; but Molly could scarcely be expected to realize that.

"It's a jolly shame!" said Jack indignantly; he had been kept in so often himself that he could feel for her. "Poor old girl! What had you been doing?"

The question brought a burst of tears.

"I hadn't done anything! I wouldn't mind if I'd been naughty, but I hadn't! It's all because Mary Anne's cooking, and uncle says I mustn't go alone."

"But you don't go with Mary Anne other days. Where are those girls you always play with?"

"Emma's away from home, and Jane's Scott couldn't come. I can't help that! If I'd been naughty it would have been just the same. It's not fair."

Jack's forehead contracted; this was an echo of his own grievance. Either things should be arranged according to convenience, and there should be no rewards and punishments at all, or people should be punished only when they were to blame. Uncle, and, apparently, uncle's God, had a very elaborate system for dealing with offenders according to desert; but the practical result of it seemed always to be that, if you were unlucky, you were punished for your misfortunes. He glanced at the sunlit cliffs with a sigh; he had been counting so on perfect holiday alone.

"Don't cry, old girl," he said. "Let's go and ask Aunt Sarah whether you may come with me."

Mr. Raymond, fortunately, was out; and Aunt Sarah, though a little surprised at an unusual request from Jack, who was generally the most unsociable of boys, made no difficulties; so the two children went down the steep lane together, Jack a little sobered and trying not to feel disappointed, Molly trotting beside him, radiant with happiness.

In ten minutes he had forgotten all about his disappointment. More delightful even than the flashing water itself was Molly's joy in it. With amazement he discovered that this little creature, whom he had always looked down upon, possessed, at nine years old, a sense of beauty to which he, with all his superiority of a big boy, had only now awakened. She hugged herself with ecstasy at the sight of the green waves dashing up between wet rocks and flinging showers of bright spray into the sunlight. He took her to a favorite spot of his, a narrow rock platform on which one could kneel beside a hole in the granite, and look through into a cavern far below where the water foamed and thundered. As he knelt in his arm about her, holding her carefully so that she should not fall, he felt the little body quiver against his side, and drew her back from the edge of the hole.

"You're frightened! I won't let you fall!"

Then he saw that it was not fear which made her tremble. Her eyes were big and shining as she looked up at him.

"Jack," she said, "do you think God lives down there?"

When the tide ebbed he took her down to the reef and showed her wonderful things. They fed anemones with scraps of dead limpets tied with strands of Molly's hair, which she tugged out in the recklessness of her excitement; and drew the bait up again, half-devoured, to see the anemone "turn sulky" and shrink into a shapeless lump of jelly. They undressed Daisy and bathed her thoroughly, and dried her with grubby pocket-handkerchiefs, and plastered her broken nose with slimy sea-weed; oh, if the Gang had seen his captain playing with his sister's doll!

He mimicked his hideous face, and let him go again. At last they sat down side by side to eat their cherries, their naked feet in a rock pool.

Molly threw a cherry stone into the pool; and presently Jack saw her telling a story to herself as she leaned over looking down into the water; she had quite got over her shyness with him now.

"So the cherry grew up in the sea, and was a sea cherry tree; and there were sea cherries all over it. . . . And one day the shrimp came by and saw the sea cherries, and he thought: 'I must make some of those home for my baby shrimp!'"

"Molly," said Jack suddenly, "do you ever tell stories to Aunt Sarah? No, I don't mean fibs-of-course, everybody tells fibs; I mean stories about shrimps, and cherries, and things?"

She looked round, shocked at such a question.

"Why, no!"

"Jack was quite abashed. 'Oh, well,' he said apologetically, 'I couldn't know, you see, I thought, perhaps, as you're good, and she likes you . . .'"

"It's the easiest way," she answered seriously, "if you're good, they let you alone."

To Jack the answer was a revelation. So Molly, too, lived in a secret world that was all her own, and kept the grown-ups and their dirty hands at arm's length! Her goodness and his badness were means to the same end; the difference was only one of method.

"The plucky little scrap of a thing!" he thought; and looked at her with new respect.

When all the cherries were eaten Molly lay down on the warm rock and went to sleep with her tumbled head against her arm. Jack put her hat over her eyes to shade them from the sun, and sat still, looking out across the blue, shimmering water. Presently he turned and looked down at Molly. She was fast asleep. One

bare foot was tucked up under her; the other lay stretched out on the rock, the smooth, clear skin wet and glistening in the sun. He sat still for a long time, looking at her very solemnly; then he bent down and stroked the little naked foot. It was the first voluntary caress that he had given in his life to any human creature.

(To be continued.)

RURAL FIRE PREVENTION.

How to Reduce Fire Loss on the Farm and in the Village.

Farmers and villagers should be among the most active of fire protectionists. While most villages have some fire fighting system, few have paid departments. Living isolated from auto pumping fire engines, chemical and other apparatus, and fire alarm boxes, the farmer or the villager must constitute himself an individual fire department. It is in the autumn and winter when the stoves, the open fireplaces and the kerosene lamps come into use that the fire danger is greatest. Eternal vigilance is the price of safety.

Many country and village homes have a "store room" into which, during the cold months, rubbish and debris are thrown indiscriminately. Newspapers, rags, old clothes, etc., constituting the most inflammable collection, are thrown into this room, usually the worst—from the fire protection standpoint—in the house. Most villagers use the kerosene lamp or possibly a tall, candle while searching in the cellar or store room. The lamp or candle is put down, a rat runs out, and, in the excitement, especially if a woman is present, the light is frequently knocked over, and a blaze is almost certain to result. Water is hard to get, pumps freeze up, and the farmer or villager is powerless when the fire develops.

During the Summer.

English sparrows carry nest-making material into cracks and crannies, building nests close to chimneys and flues. Chimney swallows, nesting in the stacks, knock the mortar from the bricks and make holes through which sparks find their way to the sparrow's nest. A mysterious fire results, generally on the coldest night of the year.

All flues and chimneys should be examined before the fires are lighted in autumn. Water should be drawn at night and placed in pails where it will not freeze. Roofs should be examined and cleared of curling shingles and other spark catchers.

The room should be the most carefully kept room in the house. Rats, mice and squirrels should be cleared out. Lanterns should be kept filled, cleaned and with wicks of proper length. A dirty, short-wicked lantern, full of oil, is a bad fire hazard.

All dead herbage should be removed from the house and out-buildings. Sparks travel far on a winter gale and, alighting on dry herbage, are dangerous. Bonfires are a bane.

Most persons who have large yards could well afford to build a small furnace of brick, covering the stack with wire netting, and thus burn the refuse without danger. Smoking about the barns should be prohibited, and lanterns used in barns should be hung where stock cannot kick them over.

At all times, the lantern should be kept in a safe place.

A Small Electric Torch

is a good investment where hay and fodder must be reached in the darkness. Matches should be kept in a tin box tightly covered and placed out of the reach of small children.

No member of the family should search in cupboards or drawers with a match for a light. This is an important rule which is frequently violated.

Where wood is the heating fuel, there should be a wire front over the fireplace to stop the sparks. Where coal is used, a wide fender will often stop a threatened blaze. Coal, "snapping" out into the room, causes many fires. The place for ashes is a metal can and the place for the can is where its sides will not come into contact with wood. Because they do not show sparks is no reason for believing that wood or coal ashes are not dangerous.

Remember that ashes, especially the finer kinds, hold heat for a long time. The foregoing cautions may seem simple, but are frequently forgotten. It is the unusual that often happens.

Teachers in village and country schools should educate the children to think of the dangers. One sharp-eyed boy is as good as a fire department—Conservation.

HUNGRY FOR WAR NEWS.

Slavs Have Now Taken Strongly to Reading Newspapers.

So intense is the interest in the war among the Russian peasants, says a writer in the Novoe Vremya of Petrograd that every train stopping at a wayside station is besieged by peasants of both sexes and all ages stretching their hands to the passengers at the windows and crying: "Give us a paper!"

Before the war the Russian peasant looked upon a newspaper as a material for rolling up a cigarette. Now he reads it to learn a little more about the great war in which his heart lies. Every bit of old newspaper is received as a crust of bread by a starving beggar. This prompts the writer to advocate the establishment of a great "People's Paper," to be run by the State, not only as a newspaper for the masses hungering for news, but also as a means to popular education.

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STEERING A BIG STEAMER.

Captain Gives Orders From the Roof or the Bridge.

Did you ever stand in the pilot house of a big steamer and watch the wheelman at his work? If the vessel is entering port, drawing up to a wharf, or leaving one, or threading her way through a crooked channel, he is pretty sure to have his hands full. The captain gives his orders as he stands upon the roof or on the bridge, the wheelman throws the helm this way or that, and the boat sweeps round a short curve, or turns sharply to the right, or left to avoid a collision. The engineer, also, must do his share in guiding her. Down in the engine-room is a bell, or very often a small steam whistle, connected with the bridge and the pilot house by a cord or a wire. One stroke of the bell or one short blast of the whistle means "go ahead," or if the engine is already in motion, "stop," two means "back," three "go ahead slowly," four, "full speed."

But when the steamer has left the harbor behind and is out on the open sea, with a straight course of hundreds or thousands of miles before her, then one would suppose that there was nothing for the wheelman to do but put her on the right track and then hold the rudder steady. But this will not do at all. The steamer never was built and never will be built that can keep an absolutely straight course, no matter how steadily the rudder may be held.

Perhaps the wind catches her bow and pushes it slowly around, or the waves toss her to one side or the other. Or perhaps the propeller is not perfectly true and pushes sideways ever so little, or there may be some trifling defect in the modelling of the hull, which is sufficient to turn her from her path.

Whatever it may be the first thing one knows she is out of her course, and the rudder must be used to bring her back. Every time she varies from a straight line her voyage is lengthened a little, and every time the rudder is swung to port or starboard it is as a drag and her speed is reduced.

The best wheelman is the one who is most vigilant to notice and correct the slightest deviation before it can seriously affect the vessel's progress.

NEW MICROBE OF TRENCHES.

Army Surgeons Fight Blindly Against War Bacteria.

A mysterious new microbe that thrives without oxygen has been unearthed by modern trench warfare and has confronted medical science with another riddle which Metchnikoff, Sir Almroth Wright, Dr. Carrel, and other famous scientists are now working night and day to solve.

The new microbe which resembles in most respects a microbe already discovered in the laboratory of Professor William H. Welch of Baltimore—the bacillus 'perfringens'—is a deadly enemy to the armies in the field and has caused untold suffering and reaped a rich harvest of dead. Its mortal activities have hitherto set at naught the profundity of learning and experience now being brought to bear in military hospitals against war wounds and sickness.

Nowhere is the struggle against this devastating germ being waged with greater earnestness or more effect than at the magnificent American Ambulance Hospital at Neuilly, by the gates of Paris, yet in the words of Dr. Edmund Gros, one of the leading members of the American medical staff, "We feel we stand where we did before Lister discovered antiseptic treatment."

A boy on mischief bent may go straight to the bad.

FRENCH AVIATORS' TACTICS.

Airmen Fly in Flocks When Harassing Germans.

Some details of the mode of operations of the French aviators on the western front are given in a letter from a Hungarian aviator serving with the German armies in France. "The French aviators," he writes, "now fly usually in flocks or squads of considerable strength, both for reconnoitring purposes and for attacking our aviators who are on reconnaissance duty. As the French possess a huge number of machines and block our way systematically we have had to follow their example. Some pitched battles between comparatively large fleets of aeroplanes are thus among the possibilities of the immediate future."

"When the French desire to prevent us from carrying out a reconnaissance a dozen aeroplanes ascend to a height of 1,000 feet and patrol our line. An equal number rise to 9,000 feet and fly along our front, taking the opposite direction from the first group. Should one of our machines attempt to pass through the meshes of this net the two French aviators who happen to be nearest attack it simultaneously, one from above and the other from below. If that is not sufficient, two more others fly to their assistance."

"The French adopt similar methods when they bombard our aviation centres, railway stations and camps. The French air service is organized into what they call 'squadrons,' which is thoroughly practiced in maneuvering together like a fleet at sea. In an attack on a German land position the 'squadrons' consists of a very powerful machine which leads the way, a few other scouts to see that the right direction is maintained and then the bomb-carrying machines. The squad is handled very skillfully."

THE EVENING STAR.

Gunners Believe Jupiter Is An Aeroplane Searchlight.

Jupiter, looming up especially brilliant in the eastern sky not long after sunset nowadays, has been frequently mistaken for the searchlight of an aeroplane flying over Paris. Gunners at the front have made the same mistake and prepared to train their anti-aircraft weapons against it.

The well-known astronomer, Abbe Moreux, says he has received a great many letters from them asking particulars about this great light in the east, brought to their notice for the first time by the war. Abbe Moreux infers from the mass of correspondence received that thousands of soldiers obliged to pass the night under the open sky, are acquiring an interest in the wonders and beauties of nature that otherwise they would have passed their lives without.

How German Soldiers Are Paid.

The Belgian papers remark upon the broken-down, forlorn appearance of the German soldier of to-day as compared with the well-set-up and admirably equipped soldier of just over a year ago. Their rifles are the worst part of their equipment, at any rate of those in Belgium, and many date from over a generation ago. The men themselves complain that they are no longer properly paid. Instead of coin of the realm, they are paid with army canteens, but by nobody else.

It was Oliver Cromwell who first instituted the Board of Trade.

Elsie—"Papa says he thinks he gave you quite a start when you asked for my hand." Jack—"Oh, I don't call that a start! He reached me before I got to the door!"

From Erin's Green Isle

NEWS BY MAIL FROM IRELAND'S GREEN SHORES.

Happenings in the Emerald Isle of Interest to All True Irishmen.

The Department of Agriculture is arranging to hold a series of meetings throughout the country to urge the necessity of production of home-grown food.

Of the 190,000 registration forms issued in Dublin, 17,000 only were returned to the Chief Commissioner of Police.

At the Galway Petty Sessions two conductors of the Galway and Salt-hill Tramway Co. were fined 12 cents each for permitting overcrowding on the horse-drawn trams.

A serious outbreak of fire occurred at the City Electric Power Station, Belfast. Fortunately the city electric supply was not interrupted.

The death is announced in Belfast of Mr. Hugh Aiken, for many years travelling agent of the Sabbath School Society for Ireland, in connection with the Presbyterian church.

Sir Albert Meldon has given his services to the Government as resident magistrate in Meath and elsewhere in consequence of the war.

The Admiralty is ascertaining whether supplies of seamen's boots and shoes can be obtained in Ireland, and have forwarded samples of requirements to the Dublin Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. A. A. Samuels, K.C., speaking at a meeting in Glensagney in connection with the Primrose League, said that there never was a war that was more Ireland's, and Ireland was never in more peril than she is to-day of invasion.

With the view of inducing the employees of the County Down Railway Co. to invest in the war loan, the directors are prepared to purchase some of the stock and allow their employees to redeem it by contributions.

The Down County Council has passed a resolution expressing the opinion that the Registration Act as applied to Ireland will be quite useless and a waste of public money.

The reservoirs which are expected to supply the town of Granard with water have gone dry for some time and deprived the residents of their usual supply.

The body of an American citizen named Linden Bates, a victim of the Lusitania outrage, for which a sum of \$500 was offered by the American Consul at Queenstown, has been found at Killorgan, on the coast of Galway.

A toy factory, under the auspices of the Suffrage Emergency Council, has been established in Dublin to afford employment to milliners who have been thrown out of work by the war.

Amongst a large quantity of mushrooms found growing on his lands at Lurgan by Mr. John Heaney, was one weighing 8 ozs., with a circumference of 26 inches.

Owing to the large number of young men who have volunteered in many districts of Tyrone, a shortage in laborers is being experienced by contractors and farmers in this district.

Under the Defence of the Realm Act, notice has been served upon the O'Rahilly, treasurer and one of the principal founders of the Irish Volunteers, ordering his deportation from the counties of Kerry, Limerick and Cork. The order was signed by the officer commanding the southern district.

BRUSH PILING AND BURNING.

Fire Hazard Materially Reduced By This Means.

The veteran Ottawa lumberman, Mr. J. R. Booth, has caused the piling, ready for burning at a safe time, of inflammable debris, on a narrow strip of his limits parallel to a portion of the Canadian Northern Ontario Railway, east of North Bay. This progressive action in connection with forest fire prevention will materially reduce the fire hazard to valuable timber lands in the vicinity.

Similar action by other limit-holders would undoubtedly be a paying investment.

Some of the governmental fire-protection agencies have given attention to the general situation caused by the accumulation of logging debris in proximity to railway lines. The Forest Act of British Columbia provides that the Provincial Forest Board may declare inflammable material which endangers life or property a public nuisance, and may order its removal.

In Quebec, the provincial government has under consideration the issuance of an order-in-council requiring the holders of licenses on Crown lands to dispose of inflammable debris on a strip one hundred feet wide, adjacent to railway rights-of-way. Such action will well accord with the progressive attitude of the Quebec government toward the conservation of its forest resources.

Mean Cat. "Algernon called on me yesterday afternoon."

"Yes," he told me he had some time to kill."

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