

## HASTE NOT! REST NOT!

Without haste! without rest!  
Bind the motto to thy breast;  
Bear it with thee as a spell;  
Storm or sunshine, guard it well!  
Heed not flowers that round thee bloom;  
Bear it onward to the tomb!

Haste not! Let not thoughtless deed  
Mar for aye the spirit's speed!  
Ponder well, and know the right,  
Onward then with all thy might!  
Haste not! years can ne'er atone  
For one reckless action done.

Rest not! Life is sweeping by,  
Do and dare, before you die;  
Something mighty and sublime  
Lies behind to conquer time!  
Glorious 'tis to live for aye,  
When these forms have passed away.

Haste not, rest not! calmly wait;  
Meekly bear the storms of fate!  
Duty be thy polar guide;  
Do the right, what'er betide!  
Haste not! rest not! conflicts past,  
God shall crown thy work at last.

—Johann W. Von Goethe.

## THE FOUR MACNICOLS.

BY WILLIAM BLACK.

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## CHAPTER V.

## THE HIGH-ROAD.

That was not a very good year for the herring-fishing on this part of the coast; but, at all events, Rob MacNicol learned all the lore of the fishermen, and grew as skilled as any of them in guessing at the whereabouts of the herring, while at the end of the season he had more than replaced the twelve pounds he had used of the common fund.

Then he returned to the tailor's boat, and worked with his brothers and cousin. He was proud to know that he had a share in a fishing-skiff, but he was not too proud to turn his hand to anything else that might help.

These MacNicol boys had grown to be greatly respected in Erisaig. The audacity of four "wastrel laddies" setting up to be fishing on their own account had at first amused the neighbors; but their success and their conduct generally soon raised them above ridicule, and the women especially were wroth in their commination.

They saw how Rob gradually improved the appearance of his brothers and cousin. All of them had boots and stockings now. Not only that, but they had white shirts and jackets of blue cloth to go to church with on Sunday; and each of them put twopenny in the collection-plate, just as if they had all been sons of a rich tradesman.

Moreover, they were setting an example to the other boys about. Four of these, indeed, combined to start a caddy-fishing business similar to that of Rob's. Neil was rather angry, but Rob was not afraid of any competition. He asked the new boys to come and see how he had rigged up the gynpols. He said there were plenty of fish in the sea, and the market was large enough.

But when the new boys asked him to lend them some money to buy new ropes, he distinctly declined. He had got on without borrowing himself.

It was a long and dreary winter, but Nicol had nearly finished with his schooling, and the seine-net had been largely added to, and every inch of it overhauled. Then the caddy-fishing began again; and soon Rob—who was now nearly eighteen, and remarkably firm-set for his age—would be away after the herring.

One day as Rob was going along the main thoroughfare of Erisaig, the banker called him into his office.

"Rob," said he, "have ye seen the skiff at the building-yard?"

"Ay," said Rob, rather wistfully, for many a time he had stood and looked at the beautiful lines of the new craft; "she's splendid boat."

"Though the herring-skiffs are so called, they are comparatively large and powerful boats, and will stand a heavy sea."

"And ye've seen the new drift-net in the shed?"

"Ay, I have that."

"Well, ye see, Rob," continued Mr. Baillie regarding him with a good-natured look, "I had the boat built, and the net bought as a kind of speculation, and I was thinking of getting a crew through from Tarbert. They say the herring are beginning to come about some of the western lochs. Now, I have been hearing a good deal about you, Rob, from the neighbors. They say that you and your brothers and cousin are sober and diligent lads, and that you are good-seamen and careful. Then you have been a while at the herring-fishing yourself. Now, do you think you could manage that new boat?"

"Me!" said Rob, with his eyes staring at his face aflame.

"I go by what the neighbors say, Rob. They say ye are a prudent lad, not over-venturesome; and I think I could trust my property to ye. What say ye?"

In his excitement at the notion of being made master of such a beautiful craft, Rob forgot the respect he ought to have shown in addressing so great a person as the banker. He blurted out:

"Man, I would just like to try!"

"I will pay ye a certain sum per week while the fishing lasts," continued Mr. Baillie, "and ye will hire what crew ye think fit. Likewise, I will give ye a percentage on the takes. Will that do?"

Rob was quite bewildered. All he could say was,

"I am obliged to ye, sir. Will ye wait for a minute till I see Neil?"

And very soon the wild rumor ran through Erisaig that no other than Rob MacNicol had been appointed master of the new skiff, the *Mary of Argyll*; and that he had taken his brothers and cousin as his crew.

Some of the women shook their heads, and said it was a shame to let such mere lads go to the herring-fishing, for some day or other they would be drowned; but the men, who knew something of Rob's seamanship, had no fear at all; and their only doubt was about the younger lads being up to the heavy work of hauling in the nets in the morning.

But their youth was a fault that would mend week by week. In the mean time, Rob, having sold out his share in MacDougall's boat, bought jerseys and black boots and yellow oil-skins for his companions; so that the new crew, if they were rather slightly built, looked smart enough as they went down to the slip to overhaul the *Mary of Argyll*.

With what a pride they regarded the long and shapely lines of her—the yellow beams shining with varnish; the tall mast at the bow, with its stout cordage; the brand-new stove, that was to boil their tea for them in the long watches of the night; the magnificent oars; the new sheets and sails—everything spark and span!

And this great mass of ruddy netting lying in the shed, with its perfect floats and accurate sinkers—this was not like the makeshift that had captured the cuddies.

Then on the morning that the *Mary of Argyll* put to sea on her trial trip, her owner was on board, but he merely sat on a thwart—was Rob who was at the tiller. Rob wanted to try the boat, the owner wanted to observe the crew.

And, first of all, she sailed lightly out of the harbor, with the wind on her beam; then outside, the breeze being fresher, they let her away down Loch Scrone, with the brilliant new lug-sail bellied out; then they brought her round, and fought her up against the stiff wind—Rob's brief words of command being obeyed with the rapidity of lightning.

"Well, what do ye think of her?" said Mr. Baillie to his young skipper.

Rob's face was aglow with pride.

"I think she's like a race-horse!" he said. "I think she would lick any boat in Erisaig Bay."

"But it is not to run races I have handed her over to ye. You must be careful, Rob, and run back if there's any squally weather about. I'll no be vexed if ye're over-cautions. For ye know if anything was to happen to one of the lads, the people would say I had done wrong in hippening a boat to such a young crew."

"Well, sir," said Rob, boldly, "ye have seen them work the boat. Do they look like lads who do not know what sailing a boat is."

Mr. Baillie laughed and said no more.

Appening—trusting.

Then came the afternoon on which they were to set out for the first time after the herring. All Erisaig came out to see; and Rob was a proud lad as he stepped on board (with the lazy indifference of the trained fisherman very well imitated) and took his seat as stroke-oar.

The afternoon was lovely; there was not a breath of wind; the setting sun shone over the bay; and the *Mary of Argyll* went away across the shining waters with the long, white oars dipping with the precision of clockwork. It was not until they were at the mouth of the harbor that something occurred which seemed likely to turn this brave setting out into ridicule.

This was Daft Sandy, who rowed his punt right across the path of the *Mary of Argyll*, and as she came up, called to Rob.

"What is it ye want?" Rob called to him.

"I want to come on board, Rob," the old man said, as he now rowed his punt up to the stern of the skiff.

"I have no tobacco, and I have no whiskey," Rob said, impatiently. "There'll be no tobacco nor whiskey on board this boat so long as I have anything to do with her; so ye needna come for that, Sandy."

"It's no for that," said Daft Sandy, as, with the painter of his boat in one hand, he gripped the stern of the skiff with the other.

Now Rob was angry. Many of the Erisaig people would still be watching their setting-out; and was it to be supposed that he had taken this doited old body as one of the crew? But then Daft Sandy was at this moment clambering into the boat; and Rob could not get up and fight with an old man, who would probably tumble into the water.

"Rob," said he, in a whisper, as he fastened the painter of his punt, "I promised I would tell ye something. I'll show ye how to find the herring."

"You!" said Rob, derisively.

"Ay, me, Rob; I'll make a rich man of you. I will tell you something about the herring that not any one in Erisaig knows—that not any one in all Scotland knows."

"Why haven't you made a rich man of yourself, Sandy?" said Rob, with more good nature.

The half-witted creature did not seem to see the point of this remark.

"Ay, ay," he said, "many is the time I was thinking of telling this one or telling that one; but when I would go near it was always 'Daft Sandy!' and 'Daft Sandy!' and there was always the pelting wi' the broken herring—except from you, Rob. And I was saying to myself that when Rob MacNicol has a boat of his own, then I will show him how to find the herring, and no one will know but himself."

By this time the MacNicol had taken to their oars again, and they had pulled outside the harbor, the old punt still astern. Then Rob had to speak plainly,

"Look here, Sandy; I will not put ye ashore by force. But I canna have your punt at there. It'll be in the way of the nets."

But the old man was more eager than ever. If they would only pull into the bay hard by, he would anchor the punt and leave it beached for Rob to take him for that night's fishing. He had discovered a sure sign of the presence of herring—unknown to any of the fishermen.

What was the phosphoree once in the sea!—the nights were too clear for that. What was the mere breaking of the water—a moving shoal that might escape. But this sign that the old man had discovered went to show the presence of large masses of fish, stationary and deep; it was the appearance on the surface of the water of small air-bubbles.

He was sure of it. He had watched it. It was a secret worth a bankful of money. And again he besought Rob to let him accompany him. Rob had stopped the lads when they were throwing herring at him; Rob alone should have the benefit of this valuable discovery of his.

Rob MacNicol was doubtful, for he had never heard of this thing before; but he could not resist the importunities of the old half-witted creature.

They pulled in and anchored the punt; then they set forth again, rowing slowly as the light faded out of the sky, and keeping a watch all around on the almost glassy seas.

There was no sign of any herring; no solar geese sweeping down; no breaking of the water; and none of the other boats, so far as they could make out, had as yet shot their nets.

The night was coming on, and they were far away from Erisaig; but still old Sandy kept up his watch, studying the surface of the water as if he expected to find pearls floating there. And at last, in great excitement, he grasped Rob's arm. Leaning over the side of the boat, they could just make out in the dusk a great quantity of minute air-bubbles rising to the surface of the sea.

"Put some stones along with the sinkers, Rob," the old man said, in a whisper, as if he were afraid of the herring; "go deep, deep, deep."

Well, they quietly let out the seemingly interminable drift-net as they pulled gently along, and when that was accomplished they took in the long oars again. Nicol lit up the little stove, and proceeded to boil the tea. The bundle containing their supper was opened, and Sandy had his share and his can of tea like the others.

They had a long time of waiting to get over through the still summer night; but still Rob was strangely excited, wondering whether Sandy had really, in pottering about, discovered a new indication of the whereabouts of the herring, or whether he was to go back to Erisaig in the morning with empty nets.

There was another thing, too. Had he shown himself too credulous before his companions? Had he done right in listening to what might be only a foolish tale? The others began to doze off; Rob not. He did not sleep a wink all night.

Well, to let out a long drift-net, which sometimes goes as deep as fifteen fathoms, is an easy affair; but to haul it in again is a sore task; and when it happens to be laden, and heavily laden, with silver-gleaming fish, that is a break-back business for four young lads. But there is such a thing as the nervous, eager, joyous strength of success; and if you are hauling in yard after yard of a dripping net, only to find the brown meshes starred at every point with the shining silver of the herring, then even young lads can work like men. Daft Sandy was laughing all the while.

"Rob, my man, what think ye o' the air-bubbles now? Maybe Daft Sandy is no sae daft. And do you think I would be going and telling anyone but yourself, Rob? Do you think I would be going and telling any one that was throwing the broken herring at me, and always a curse for me when I went near the skiffs, and not once a glass of whiskey for an old man? Well, Rob, I will not ask you for a glass of whiskey. If you say it is a teetotal boat, it is a teetotal boat; but you will not forget to give me whole herring for bait when you are going out of the bay?"

Rob could not speak; he was breathless. Nor was their work nearly done when they had got in the net, with all its splendid silver treasure. There was not a single breath of wind; they had to set to work to pull the heavy boat back to Erisaig. The gray of the dawn gave way to a glowing sunrise; when they at length reached the quay, dead-beat with fatigue and want of sleep, the people were all about.

They were dead-beat, but there were ten crans of herring in that boat. And you should have seen Rob's air when he counselled Neil and Duncan and Nicol to go away home and have a sleep, and when he joyfully called on two or three of the boys on the quay to come in and strip the nets.

But the three McNicol were far too excited to go away. They wanted to see the great heap of fish laddled out in baskets on to the quay. Mr. Baillie came along not long after that, and shook hands with Rob, and congratulated him; for it turned out that, while not another Erisaig boat had that night got more than from two to three crans, the *Mary of Argyll* had turned out ten crans—as good herring as ever were got out of Loch Scrone.

Well, the MacNicol lads were now in a fair way of earning an independent and honorable living; and this sketch of how they had struggled into that position from being mere wastrels, living about the shore like so many curlews, may fly cease here. Sometimes they had good luck, and sometimes bad luck; but always they had the advantage of that additional means of discovering the whereabouts of the herring that had been imparted to them by Daft Sandy.

And the last that the present writer heard of them was this—that they had bought outright the *Mary of Argyll* and her nets from the banker; and that they were building for themselves a small stone cottage on the slope of the hill above Erisaig; and that