

GLENGARRY SCHOOL DAYS

STORY OF EARLY DAYS IN GLENGARRY

By RALPH CONNOR—REV. C. W. GORDON

During the days of the planting they became great friends, and to their mutual good. The mother's keen eyes noted the change both in Hughie and in her husband, and was glad for it. It was she that suggested to Billy Jack that he needed help in the back pasture with the stones. Billy Jack, quick to take her meaning, eagerly insisted that help he must have, indeed he could not get on with the plowing unless the stones were taken off. And so it came that Hughie and the old man, with old Fly hitched up in the stone-boat, spent two happy and not unprofitable days in the back pasture. Gravely they discussed the high themes of God's sovereignty and man's freedom, with all their practical issues upon conduct and destiny. Only once, and that very shyly, did the old man bring round the talk to the subject of their first conversation that meant so much to them both.

"The Lord will not be wanting to shame us beyond what is necessary," he said. "There are certain sins which he will bring to light, but there are those that, in his mercy, he permits us to hide; provided always," he added, with emphasis, "we are done with them."

"Yes, indeed," assented Hughie, eagerly, "and who wouldn't be done with them."

"If that were always true a man would soon be rid of his evil heart. But," he continued, as if eager to turn the conversation, "you will be talking with my woman about it. She's a wonderful wise woman, yon."

Somehow the opportunity came to Hughie to take the old man's advice. On Saturday evening, just before leaving for home, he found himself alone with Mrs. Finch sitting beside the open window, watching the sun go down behind the trees.

"What a splendid sunset!" he cried. He was ever sensitive to the majestic drama of nature.

"Ay," said Mrs. Finch, "the clouds and the sun make wonderful beauty together, but without the sun the clouds are ugly things."

Hughie quickly took her meaning. "They are not pleasant," he said. "No, not pleasant," she replied, "but with the sunlight upon them they are wonderful."

Hughie was silent for some moments, and then suddenly burst out, "Mrs. Finch, does God forget sins, and will he keep them hid, from people, I mean?"

"Ay," she said, with quiet conviction, "he will forget, and he will hide them. Why should he lay the burden of our sins upon others? And if he does not why should we?"

"Do you mean we need not always tell? I'd like to tell my—some one."

"Ay," she replied, "it's a weary wark and a lanely to carry it oor lane, but it's an awfu' grief to hear o' another's sin. An awfu' grief," she repeated to herself.

"But," burst out Hughie, "I'll never be right till I tell my mother."

"Ay, then it is she would be carrying the weight o' it."

"But it's against her," said Hughie, his hands going up to his face. "Oh, Mrs. Finch, it's just awful mean. I don't know how I did it."

"Ye can tell me, laddie, if ye will," said she, kindly, and Hughie poured forth the whole burden that had lain so long upon him, but he told it laying upon Foxy small blame, for during those days his own part had come to bulk so large with him that Foxy's was almost forgotten.

For some moments after he had done Mrs. Finch sat in silence, leaning forward and patting the boy's bowed head. "Ay, but he is rightly named," she said, at length.

"Who?" asked Hughie, surprised. "Yon store-keepin' chiel." Then she added, "But ye're done wi' him and his tricks, and ye'll stand up against him and be a man for the wee laddies."

"Oh, I don't know," said Hughie,

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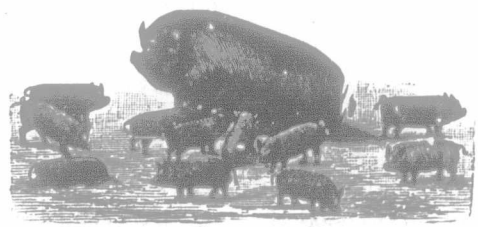
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