

# BOYS AND GIRLS

## Black Rock.

(A tale of the Selkirks, by Ralph Connor.)  
CHAPTER XIV.—Continued.

The week that followed was a happy one for us all; but for the mother it was full of the brim with joy. Her sweet face was full of content, and in her eyes rested a great peace. Our days were spent driving about among the hills, or strolling through the maple woods, or down into the tamarack swamp, where the pitcher plants and the swamp lilies and the marigold waved above the deep moss. In the evenings we sat under the trees on the lawn till the stars came out and the night dews drove us in. Like two lovers, Graeme and his mother would wander off together, leaving Jack and me to each other. Jack was reading for divinity, and was really a fine, manly fellow, with all his brother's turn for Rugby, and I took to him amazingly; but after the day was over we would gather about the supper table, and the talk would be of all things under heaven—art, football, theology. The mother would lead in all. How quick she was, how bright her fancy, how subtle her intellect, and through all a gentle grace, very winning and beautiful to see!

Do what I would, Graeme would talk little of the mountains and his life there

'My lion will not roar, Mrs. Graeme,' I complained, 'he simply will not.'

'You should twist his tail,' said Jack.

'That seems to be the difficulty, Jack,' said his mother, 'to get hold of his tale.'

'Oh, mother,' groaned Jack; 'you never did such a thing before! How could you? Is it this baleful Western influence?'

'I shall reform, Jack,' she replied brightly.

'But, seriously, Graeme,' I remonstrated, 'you ought to tell your people of your life—that free, glorious life in the mountains.'

'Free! Glorious! To some men, perhaps!' said Graeme, and then fell into silence.

But I saw Graeme as a new man the night he talked theology with his father. The old minister was a splendid Calvinist, of heroic type, and as he discoursed of God's sovereignty and election, his face glowed and his voice rang out.

Graeme listened intently, now and then putting in a question, as one would a keen knife-thrust into a foe. But the old man knew his ground, and moved easily among his ideas, demolishing the enemy as he appeared, with jaunty grace. In the full flow of his triumphant argument, Graeme turned to him with sudden seriousness.

'Look here, father! I was born a Calvinist, and I can't see how any one with a level head can hold anything else, than that the Almighty has some idea as to how he wants to run his universe, and he means to carry out his idea, and is carrying it out; but what would you do in a case like this? Then he told him the story of poor Billy Breen, his fight and his defeat.

'Would you preach election to that chap?'

The mother's eyes were shining with tears.

The old gentleman blew his nose like a trumpet, and then said gravely—

'No, my boy, you don't feed babes with meat. But what came to him?'

Then Graeme asked me to finish the tale. After I had finished the story of Billy's final triumph and of Craig's part in it, they sat long silent, till the minister, clearing his throat hard and blowing his nose more like a trumpet than ever, said with great emphasis—

'Thank God for such a man in such a place! I wish there were more of us like him.'

'I should like to see you out there, sir,' said Graeme admiringly; 'you'd get them, but you wouldn't have time for election.'

'Yes, yes!' said his father warmly! 'I should love to have a chance just to preach election to these poor lads. Would I were twenty years younger!'

'It is worth a man's life,' said Graeme earnestly. His younger brother turned his face eagerly toward the mother. For answer she slipped her hand into his and said softly, while her eyes shone like stars—

'Some day, Jack, perhaps! God knows.' But Jack only looked steadily at her, smiling a little and patting her hand.

'You'd shine there, mother,' said Graeme, smiling upon her; 'you'd better come with me.' She started and said faintly—

'With you?' It was the first hint he had given of his purpose. 'You are going back?'

'What! as a missionary?' said Jack.

'Not to preach, Jack; I'm not orthodox enough,' looking at his father and shaking his head; 'but to build railroads and lend a hand to some poor chap, if I can.'

'Could you not find work nearer home, my boy?' asked the father; 'there is plenty of both kinds near us here, surely.'

'Lots of work, but not mine, I fear,' answered Graeme, keeping his eyes away from his mother's face. 'A man must do his own work.'

His voice was quiet and resolute, and glancing at the beautiful face at the end of the table, I saw in the pale lips and yearning eyes that the mother was offering up her firstborn, that ancient sacrifice. But not all the agony of sacrifice could wring from her entreaty or complaint in the hearing of her sons. That was for other ears and for the silent hours of the night. And next morning when she came down to meet us her face was wan and weary, but it wore the peace of victory and a glory not of earth. Her greeting was full of dignity, sweet and gentle; but when she came to Graeme she lingered over him and kissed him twice. And that was all that any of us ever saw of that sore fight.

At the end of the week I took leave of them, and last of all of the mother.

She hesitated just a moment, then suddenly put her hands upon my shoulders and kissed me, saying softly, 'You are his friend; you will sometimes come to me?'

'Gladly, if I may,' I hastened to answer, for the sweet, brave face was too much to bear; and till she left us for that world of which she was a part, I kept my word, to my own great and lasting good. When Graeme met me in the city at the end of the summer, he brought me her love, and then burst forth—

'Connor, do you know, I have just discovered my mother! I have never known her till this summer.'

'More fool you,' I answered, for often had I, who had never known a mother, envied him his.

'Yes, that is true,' he answered slowly; 'but you cannot see until you have eyes.'

Before he set out again for the west I gave him a supper, asking the men who had been with us in the old 'Varsity days. I was doubtful as to the wisdom of this, and was persuaded only by Graeme's eager assent to my proposal.

'Certainly, let's have them,' he said; 'I shall be awfully glad to see them; great stuff they were.'

'But I don't know, Graeme; you see—well—hang it!—you know—you're different, you know.'

He looked at me curiously.

'I hope I can still stand a good supper, and if the boys can't stand me, why, I can't help it. I'll do anything but roar, and don't you begin to work off your menagerie act—now, you hear me!'

'Well, it is rather hard lines that when I have been talking up my lion for a year, and then finally secure him, that he will not roar.'

'Serve you right,' he replied, quite heartlessly; 'but I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll feed \* Don't you worry,' he added soothingly; 'the supper will go.'

And go it did. The supper was of the best; the wines first-class. I had asked Graeme about the wines.

'Do as you like, old man,' was his answer; 'it's your supper, but,' he added, 'are the men all straight?'

I ran them over in my mind.

'Yes; I think so.'

'If not, don't you help them down; and anyway, you can't be too careful. But don't mind me; I am quit of the whole business from this out.' So I ventured wines, for the last time; as it happened.

(To be Continued.)

## A Queer Little Deep Sea Fisherman.

He needs no comforter or mits,  
This toiler of the deep,  
Nor helmet warm, or steering gloves,  
His lonely watch to keep,

For when at morn he takes his stand  
His calling to pursue,  
He dons a covering wherein  
He's wholly lost to view.

The mud and sand he stirs and stirs  
To form a sort of screen,  
And hidden thus no soul could guess  
What there was to be seen!

Then mid the flowing tide he lifts  
Three baited rods on high,  
For well he knows their glittering tips  
Will draw the curious fry.

And underneath in readiness,  
His great mouth opened wide,  
This cunning fisherman awaits  
Whatever may betide.

They come, they go, they look, they long;  
Oh, foolish little fish,  
Ye little know what danger lies  
In gaining what ye wish!

'Tis mine, 'tis mine,' their leader cries,  
'Mine is the glittering prize,'  
When lo! around them mud and sand  
And deeper darkness rise.

And only one, a little sprat,  
Now lone and desolate,  
Escaped to tell how they were caught,  
And mourn their cruel fate.

—E. G. Stuart, in 'Toilers of the Deep.'

When I was about five years old my father used to smoke a great deal. He saw that this was ruining his health. He made up his mind that every time he would go to buy a cigar he would keep that money and put it in my bank and in a short time he had broken himself of the habit and he was a healthier man and my bank was richer.—'Union Signal.'