

# Our Story.

## A DAUGHTER OF FIFE.

LIA BARR, AUTHOR OF "JAN VEDDER'S WIFE."

### CHAPTER I

#### TEACHING OF THE BOAT

Day sea,  
winny water,  
and thy plash,  
they lish  
on the shore,  
as they roar,  
as hoar,

Dr. Blackie.

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ge of the sea,  
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da

o' our ain job. But I hae news for you, and if you'll mak' a cup o' tea, and toast a Pinnin haddie, we'll talk it o'er."

The Promoter cottage was in a bend of the hills, but so near the sea that the full tide broke almost at its door, and then drew the tinkling pebbles down the beach after it. It was a low stone dwelling, white-washed and heather-roofed, and containing only three rooms. David and Maggie entered the principal one together. Its deal furniture was spotless, its floor cleanly sanded, and a bright turf fire was burning on the brick hearth. Some oars and creels were hung against the wall, and on a pile of nets in the warmest corner, a little laddie belonging to a neighbour's household was fast asleep.

Maggie quickly threw on more turf, and drew the crane above the fire, and hung the kettle upon it. Then with a light and active step she set about toasting the cake and the haddie, and making the tea, and settling the little round table. But her heart was heavy enough. Scarcely a week before her father and three eldest brothers had gone out to the fishing, and perished in a sudden storm; and the house place, so lately busy and noisy with the stir of nearly half-a-dozen menfolk, was now strangely still and lonely.

Maggie was a year older than her brother David, but she never thought of assuming any authority over him. In the first place he had the privilege of sex; in the next, David Promoter was generally allowed to be "extraneous" wise-like and unwarily "a' his ways." In fact there had been an intent of breaking through the family traditions and taking him to the University of Aberdeen. Last Promoter had smoked his pipe very often, and his hope of a minister in his family. Others and sister had also learned to be as ad as destined by Providence to pour upon the household. No busy had marred their intended younger brother's behalf. Their taught them that Jacob's and re not likely to be the only ones ger sons should be chosen for and Will Promoter, the eldest of for all, when he said, "Send ayther; gladly we will a' of us may be we shall live to see ot o' the fishing boats."

ended sacrifice had been a selfish one, it had nevertheless ay it had been refused was the David's heart with doubt and des- with his head in his hands, gazing that March afternoon. Maggie was him, though he did not perceive it, and most unconscious mental act was compar- with his dead brothers. They had been ily strong fair fishers, with that open air look n get who continually set their faces to the winds and waves. David was different altogether. He was, exceedingly tall, and until years filled in his huge framework of bone and muscle, would very likely be called "gawky." But he had the face of a mediæval ecclesiastic; spare, and sallow, and pointed at the chin. His hair, black and exceed- ing fine, hung naturally in long, straggling masses; his mouth was straight and perhaps a little cruel; his black, deep set eyes had the glow in them of a passionate and mystical soul. Such a man, if he had not been reared in the strictest sect of Calvin- ism, would have adopted it—for it was his soul's native air.

That he should go to the university and become a minister seemed to David as proper as that an apple tree should bear an apple. As soon as it was suggested, he felt himself in the Moderator's chair of the General Assembly. "Why had such generous and holy hopes been destroyed?" Maggie knew the drift of his thoughts, and she hastened her preparations for tea; for though it is a humiliating thing to admit, the most sacred of our griefs are not independent of mere physical comforts. David's and Maggie's sorrow was a deep and poignant one, but the refreshing tea and cake and fish were at least the vehicle of consolation. As they ate they talked to one another, and David's brooding despair was for the hour dissi- pated.

During the days of alternating hope and disap- pointment following the storm in which the Promo- ters perished, they had not permitted themselves to think, much less to speak of a future which did not include those who might yet return. But hope was over. When Promoter's mates beached his boat, both David and Maggie understood the rite to be a funeral one. It was not customary for wo- men to go to funerals, but Maggie standing afar off, amid the gray thick fog, had watched the men drag the unfortunate craft "where a boat ought never to be;" and when they had gone away, had stood by the lonely degraded thing, and felt as sad and hopeless, as if it had been the stone at a grave's mouth.

All the past was past; they had to begin a life set to new methods and motives: "and the sooner the better," thought Maggie, "if father were here, he wad say that."

"David?"  
"Weel?"  
"Is the tea gude? And the fish, and the cake?"  
"Ay, they're gude. I didna think I was sac hungry. I'm maist 'shamed to enjoy them sac hearty."

"Life's wark wants life's food; and we canna sit wi' idle hands anither seven days. You were say- ing you had news what will it be?"

"Ay, I had forgotten. Willie Johnson's Willie has brought back with him a young man. He wants a quiet room to himself, and there's nae- body in Pittenloch can gie him one, if it be na us, or the Widow Thompson. He's offered a crown a week for ane."

"You should hae said instanter we'd be thankfu'. My certie! A crown a week, that's a fair godsend, David."

"The widow has the first right to the godsend; if she canna tak' it, she'll send it our way, Maggie."

"David, there is £50 in Largo Bank."

"I ken that."

"You'll tak' it. It will gie you a' the start you need at Aberdeen. Fyather said £30 a year wad do, wi' a careful hand to guide it. You'll be help- ing yourself wi' a bit teaching afore it is a' gone."

"I'll no touch it. What are you talking about? Oor fyather saved it for his auld age and his bury- ing."

"And he'll ne'er be auld now, David; and God has found him a grave that only he kens o'! I can spin, and weave, and sew, and the lassies round about have keepit my needle aye busy. Why not? I served my time in Largo, and I can cut a skirt or jockey, and make a kirk gown, better than any one near."

"You'll be wanting to marry ere lang, Maggie. Angus Riith thinks much o' you; and £50 wad

buy his share in Cupar's boat. I sall hae the cot- tage, and the £50 is to be for your wedding and pleshing."

"This is na a time to talk o' wedding, David; and there is na any promise made to Angus Riith! Go into Kinkell the morn and speak wi' the minister; he is a wise man, and we will balth o' us do the thing he says."

After this, the conversation drifted hither and thither, until the meal was finished. Then while Maggie tidied up the room, David opened the door and stood thoughtfully within its shadow. "There's a voice in the sea to-night," he said mournfully, "and when the tide turns back, the wind will have its way."

"Can you see aught?"

"Naethin. There's a heavy mist and a thick smur—but I hear steps on the shingle. I'm think- ing it will be Johnson wi' the stranger I spoke o'."

"Ay, weel, I hae gotten my feet dressed," and she looked down with approval at her ribbed gray stockings, and low shoes, the brass clasps of which she had just latched.

David did not answer her, for he was bidding his visitors welcome. Then Maggie turned round with the freshly lit "cruise" in her hand, and her eyes were caught by two other eyes, and held as if by a spell. She was conscious, as she stood blushing, that the stranger had been astonished at her ap- pearance, but she certainly did not dream that it was her great beauty which had for one moment made him incapable of controlling his sense of it. It was only one moment, in the next he turned to David, and offered to pay him two shillings a day for the use of his vacant room, and a share of his simple fare.

The interview lasted but a very short time. Maggie said, she could have the room ready for him by noon of the following day, and as soon as the matter was settled, he went. He had not sat down, and so everyone else had remained stand- ing; but at the open door he caught Maggie's eyes once more, and with a slight movement of adieu to her, he disappeared. She trembled, and turned hot and cold, and felt as if she must cry. It was with difficulty she hid her emotion from her brother, who looked queerly at her as he said, "I ne'er saw any man look like that man."

"He had a bonnie braidcloth coat on."

"Sae handsome and sae stately; and if kings hae any grander way, there's nae wonder folks bow down to them. I aye thocht that Dr. Balmuto had the maist compelling look wi' him; but I think yonder man woulna fear him, e'en though the doctor had on his Geneva bands and his silk gown."

"What's his name, David?"

"I dinna ken. I never thocht to ask him."

Then a singular sadness, one quite distinct from the shadow of their known sorrow, settled upon both brother and sister. Was it a sorrow of apprehen- sion? one of those divinations which we call pre- sentiments. Neither David or Maggie questioned it; they were not given to analyzing their feelings, indeed they were totally unacquainted with this most useless of mental processes.

But nevertheless, the stranger had left an in- fluence, and for half an hour they sat silently mus- ing. Maggie was the first to break its spell. In a low voice as she bent lower to the dying fire, she began to talk of the dead for whom "God had found graves;" and to recall little incidents of their hard unselfish lives, which particularly touched David's and her own experience.

"If they were here to-night, Davie—oot on the dark sea—tossed up and down—pulling in the nets or lines wi' freezing hands—hungry anxious, fearful o' death—wad we wish it?"

"Na, na, na, Maggie! When they are noo, the light doonna fade, and the heart doonna fail, and the full cup never breaks. Come, let us ask o' the Book thegither. I dinna doot, but we sall get just the word we are needing."

Maggie rose and took it from its place on the broad shelf by the window, and laid it down upon the table. David lifted the light and stood beside her. Then with a reverent upward glance, he opened the well-used leaves:—

"Maggie, what needed we mair? Listen to the word o' the Lord;" and with a voice tender and triumphant he read aloud—

"Then are they glad because they be quiet: so He bringeth them unto their desired haven."

(To be continued.)

### FRIENDLY WORDS.

As one who, walking in the twilight gloom,  
Hears round about him voices as it darkens,  
And, seeing not the forms from which they come,  
Pauses from time to time, and turns and hearkens;

So, walking here in twilight, O my friends!  
I hear your voices, softened by the distance,  
And pause and turn to listen, as each sends  
His words of friendship, comfort and assistance.

—Longfellow

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of vapour outstepping across the level sands. From a little distance, she appeared like a woman standing amid gray clouds—a sombre, solid figure; whose attitude was one of grave thoughtfulness. Approaching nearer, it was evident that her gaze was fixed upon a fishing boat which had been drawn high upon the shingle; and from which a party of heavy-footed fisher men were slowly retreating.

She was a beautiful woman; tall, supple, erect: with a positive splendor of health and colour. Her dress was that of the Fife fisher girl; a blue flannel jacket, a very short white and yellow petticoat, and a white cap drawn over her hair, and tied down with a lilac kerchief knotted under the chin. This ker- chief outlined the superb oval of her face; and made more remarkable the large gray eyes, the red carved mouth, and the wide white brow. She was barefooted, and she tapped one foot restlessly upon the sea sands, to relieve, by physical motion, her mental tension and sorrow.

It was Maggie Promoter, and the boat which had just been so solemnly "beached" had been her father's. It was a good boat, strong in every tim- ber, an old world Buckie skiff, notorious for fend- ing in fendering seas; but it had failed Promoter in the last storm, and three days after he and his sons had gone to the bottom had been found float- ing in Largo Bay.

It had been a conscious criminal, a boat which had willfully and carelessly sacrificed life, it could hardly have been touched with more dislike; and in accordance with the ancient law of the Buchan and Fife fishers, it was "put from the sea." Never again might it toss on the salt free waves, and be trusted with fishers' lives. Silently it was drawn high up on the desolate shingle, and left to its long and shameful decay.

Maggie had watched the ceremony from a little distance; but when the fishers had disappeared in the gathering mist, she slowly approached the boat. There it lay, upside down, black and lonely, far beyond the highest mark of any pitying tide. She fancied that the insensate timber had a look of shame and suffering, and she spoke to it, as if it had a soul to comprehend her:—

"Lizzie! Lizzie! What cam' o'er you no to hide right side up? Four gude men to your keep- ing, Lizzie, and you lost them a'. Think shame o' yersel', think shame o' yersel', for the sorrow you hae brought! You'll be a heart grief to me as lang as you lie there; for I named you mysel', for thinking o' what would come o' it."

For a few minutes she stood looking at the con- demned and unfortunate boat in silence; then she turned and began to walk rapidly toward the near- est cluster of cottages. The sea fog was rolling in thick, with the tide, and the air was cold and keen. A voice called her through it, and she answered the long-drawn "Maggie" with three cheerful wads, "I'm coming, David." Very soon David loomed through the fog, and throwing a plaid about him, said, "What for did you go near the boat, Maggie! When you ken where ill luck is, you should keep far from it."

"A better looking or a bonnier boat I ne'er saw, David."

"It's wi' boats, as it is wi' men and women; some fer destruction, some for salvation. The Powers above hae the ordering o' it, and it's a' right, Maggie."

"That's what folks say. I'm dooting it mysel'. It's our ain fault wame way. Noo there would be a dalee plumb in yonder boat, though we didna ken it."

"Weel, weel, she failed in what was expected o' her, and she's got her deserts. We must take care