

(Written for the "Canadian Illustrated News.")

## SONG.

## THOU HAST LEFT ME.

## I.

Thou hast left me and severed the chain  
That bound me to gladness a while,  
And over the distant main  
Thou art gone from thine own sweet isle.

## II.

Thou hast left me for wealth and fame,  
And the honour men's lips may give,  
But in one true heart thy name  
In affection shall ever live.

## III.

Thou hast left me, and hast thou forgot  
Thy love and thy pledged vow,  
Or does ever a kindly thought  
Of the old time come o'er thee now?

## IV.

Thou hast left me, and never again  
Shall I live in the light of thy smile,  
For far o'er the distant main  
Thou art gone from thine own sweet isle.

JOHN READE.

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## WILFRID CUMBERMEDE.

## An Autobiographical Story.

BY GEORGE MACDONALD,  
Author of "Alec Forbes," etc.

## CHAPTER V.—Continued.

My reader will please to remember that up to this hour I had never seen a lady. I cannot by any stretch call my worthy aunt a lady: and my grandmother was too old, and too much an object of mysterious anxiety, to produce the impression of a lady upon me. Suddenly I became aware that a lady was looking down on me. Over the edge of my horizon, the circle of the hollow that touched the sky, her face shone like a rising moon. Sweet eyes looked on me, and a sweet mouth was tremulous with a smile. I will not attempt to describe her. To my childish eyes she was much what a descended angel must have been to eyes of old, in the days when angels did descend, and there were Arabs or Jews on the earth who could see them. A new knowledge dawned in me. I lay motionless, looking up with worship in my heart. As suddenly she vanished. I lay far into the twilight, and then rose and went home, half bewildered, with a sense of heaven about me which settled into the fancy that my mother had come to see me. I wondered afterwards that I had not followed her; but I never forgot her, and, morning, mid-day, or evening, whenever the fit seized me, I would wander away and lie down in the hollow, gazing at the spot where the lovely face had arisen, in the fancy, hardly in the hope, that my moon might once more arise and bless me with her vision.

Hence I suppose came another habit of mine, that of watching in the same hollow, and in the same posture, now for the sun, now for the moon, but generally for the sun. You might have taken me for a fire-worshipper, so eagerly would I rise, when the desire came upon me, so hastily in the clear gray of the morning would I dress myself, lest the sun should be up before me, and I fail to catch his first lace-like rays dazzling through the forest of grass on the edge of my hollow world. Bare-footed I would send like a hare through the dew, heedless of the sweet air of the morning, heedless of the few bird-songs about me, heedless even of the east, whose saffron might just be burning into gold, as I ran to gain the green hollow whence alone I would greet the morning. Arrived there, I shot into its shelter, and threw myself panting on the grass, to gaze on the spot at which I expected the rising glory to appear. Ever when I recall the custom, that one lark is wildly praising over my head, for he sees the sun for which I am waiting. He has his nest in the hollow beside me. I would sooner have turned my back on the sun than disturbed the home of his high-priest, the lark. And now the edge of my horizon begins to burn; the green blades glow in their tops; they are melted through with light; the flashes invade my eyes; they gather; they grow, until I hide my face in my hands. The sun is up. But on my hands and my knees I rush after the retreating shadow, and, like a child at play with its nurse, hide in its curtain. Up and up comes the peering sun; he will find me; I cannot hide from him; there is in the wide field no shelter from his gaze. No matter then. Let him shine into the deepest corners of my heart, and shake the cowardice and the meanness out of it.

I thus made friends with Nature. I had no great variety even in her, but the better did I understand what I had. The next summer, I began to hunt for glow-worms, and carry them carefully to my hollow, that in the warm, soft, moonless nights they might illumine it with a strange light. When I had been very successful, I would call my uncle and aunt to see. My aunt tried me by always having something to do first. My uncle, on the other hand,

would lay down his book at once, and follow me submissively. He could not generate amusement for me, but he sympathized with what I could find for myself.

"Come and see my cows," I would say to him.

I well remember the first time I took him to see them. When we reached the hollow, he stood for a moment silent. Then he said, laying his hand on my shoulder,

"Very pretty, Willie! But why do you call them cows?"

"You told me last night," I answered, "that the road the angels go across the sky is called the milky way—didn't you, uncle?"

"I never told you the angels went that way, my boy."

"Oh! didn't you? I thought you did."

"No, I didn't."

"Oh! I remember now: I thought it was a way, and nobody but the angels could go in it, that must be the way the angels did go."

"Yes, yes, I see! But what has that to do with the glow-worms?"

"Don't you see, uncle? If it be the milky way, the stars must be the cows. Look at my cows, uncle. Their milk is very pretty milk, isn't it?"

"Very pretty, indeed, my dear—rather green."

"Then I suppose if you could put it in auntie's pan, you might make another moon of it?"

"That's being silly now," said my uncle; and I ceased, abashed.

"Look, look, uncle!" I exclaimed, a moment after; "they don't like being talked about, my cows."

For as if a cold gust of wind had passed over them, they all dwindled and paled. I thought they were going out.

"Oh dear, oh dear!" I cried, and began dancing about with dismay. The next instant the glow returned, and the hollow was radiant.

"Oh the dear light!" I cried again. "Look at it, uncle! Isn't it lovely?"

He took me by the hand. His actions were always so much more tender than his words!

"Do you know who is the light of the world, Willie?"

"Yes, well enough. I saw him get out of bed this morning."

My uncle led me home without a word more. But next night he began to teach me about the light of the world, and about walking in the light. I do not care to repeat much of what he taught me in this kind, for, like my glow-worms, it does not like to be talked about. Somehow it loses colour and shine when one talks.

I have now shown sufficiently how my uncle would seize opportunities for beginning things. He thought more of the beginning than of any other part of a process.

"All's well that begins well," he would say. I did not know what his smile meant as he said so.

I sometimes wonder how I managed to get through the days without being weary. No one ever thought of giving me toys. I had a turn for using my hands; but I was too young to be trusted with a knife. I had never seen a kite, except far away in the sky: I took it for a bird. There were no rushes to make water-wheels of, and no brooks to set them turning in. I had neither top nor marbles. I had no dog to play with. And yet I do not remember once feeling weary. I knew all the creatures that went creeping about in the grass, and although I did not know the proper name for one of them, I had names of my own for them all, and was so familiar with their looks and their habits, that I am confident I could in some degree interpret some of the people I met afterwards by their resemblances to these insects. I have a man in my mind now who has exactly the head and face, if face it can be called, of an ant. It is not a head, but a helmet. I knew all the butterflies—they were mostly small ones, but of lovely varieties. A stray dragonfly would now and then delight me; and there were hunting-spiders and wood-lice, and queerer creatures of which I do not yet know the names. Then there were grasshoppers, which for some time I took to be made of green leaves, and I thought they grew like fruit on the trees till they were ripe, when they jumped down, and jumped for ever after. Another child might have caught and caged them; for me, I followed them about, and watched their ways.

In the winter, things had not hitherto gone quite so well with me. Then I had been a good deal dependent upon Nannie and her stories, which were neither very varied nor very well told. But now that I had begun to read, things went better. To be sure, there were not in my uncle's library many books such as children have now-a-days; but there were old histories, and some voyages and travels, and in them I revelled. I am perplexed sometimes when I look into one of these books—for I have them all about me now—to find how dry they are. The shine seems to have gone out of them. Or is it that the shine has gone out of the eyes that used to read them? If so, it will come again some day. I do not find that the shine has gone out of a beetle's back; and I can read *The Pilgrim's Progress* still.

## CHAPTER VI.

## I CONSOLE.

ALL this has led me, after a roundabout fashion, to what became for some time the chief delight of my winters—an employment, moreover, which I have taken up afresh at odd times during my life. It came about thus. My uncle had made me a present of an old book with pictures in it. It was called *The Precursor*—one of Dodsley's publications. There were wonderful folding plates of all sorts in it. Those which represented animals were of course my favourites. But these especially were in a very dilapidated condition, for there had been children before me somewhere; and I proceeded, at my uncle's suggestion, to try to mend them by pasting them on another piece of paper. I made bad work of it at first, and was so dissatisfied with the results, that I set myself in earnest to find out by what laws of paste and paper success might be secured. Before the winter was over, my uncle found me grown so skilful in this manipulation of broken leaves—for as yet I had not ventured further in any of the branches of repair—that he gave me plenty of little jobs of the sort for amongst his books there were many old ones. This was a source of great pleasure. Before the following winter was over, I came to try my hand at repairing bindings, and my uncle was again so much pleased with my success, that one day he brought me from the county town some sheets of parchment with which to attempt the fortification of certain vellum-bound volumes which were considerably the worse for age and use. I well remember how troublesome the parchment was for a long time; but at last I conquered it, and succeeded very fairly in my endeavours to restore to tidiness the garments of ancient thought.

But there was another consequence of this pursuit which may be considered of weight in my history. This was the discovery of a copy of the Countess of Pembroke's *Aradia*—much in want of skilful patching, from the title-page, with its hoar smelling at the rose-bush, to the graduated lines and the *Venus*. This book I read through from head to foot—no small undertaking, and partly, no doubt, under its influences, I became about this time conscious of a desire after honour, as yet a notion of the vagrant. I hardly know how I escaped the taking for granted that there were yet knights riding about on war-horses, with couched lances and fierce spurs, everywhere, as in days of old. They might have been roaming the world in all directions, without my seeing one of them. But somehow I did not fall into the mistake. Only with the thought of my future career, when I should be a man and go out into the world, came always the thought of the sword which hung on the wall. A longing to handle it began to possess me, and my old dream returned. I dared not, however, say a word to my uncle on the subject. I felt certain that he would slight the desire, and perhaps tell me I should hurt myself with the weapon; and one whose heart glowed at the story of the battle between him on the white horse with carnation mane and tail, in his armour of blue radiated with gold, and him on the black-spotted brown, in his dusky armour of despair, could not expose him to such an indignity.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE SWORD ON THE WALL.

WHERE possession was impossible, knowledge might yet be reached; could I not learn the story of the ancient weapon? How came that which had more fitly hung in the hall of a great castle, here upon the wall of a kitchen? My uncle however, I felt, was not the source whence I might hope for help. No better was my aunt. Indeed I had the conviction that she neither knew nor cared anything about the useless thing. It was her tea-table that must be kept bright for honour's sake. But there was grannie!

My relations with her had continued much the same. The old fear of her lingered, and as yet I had had no inclination to visit her room by myself. I saw that my uncle and aunt always behaved to her with the greatest kindness and much deference, but could not help observing also that she cherished some secret offence, receiving their ministrations with a certain condescension which clearly enough manifested its origin as hidden cause of complaint and not pride. I wondered that my uncle and aunt took no notice of it, always addressing her as if they were on the best possible terms; and I knew that my uncle never went to his work without visiting her, and never went to bed without reading a prayer by her bedside first. I think Nannie told me this.

She could still read a little, for her sight had been short, and had held out better even than usual with such. But she cared nothing for the news of the hour. My uncle had a weekly newspaper, though not by any means regularly, from a friend in London, but I never saw it in my grandmother's hands. Her reading most mostly in the *Spectator*, or in one of De Foe's works. I have seen her reading Pope.

The sword was in my bones, and as I judged

that only from grannie could I get any information respecting it, I found myself beginning to inquire why I was afraid to go to her. I was unable to account for it, still less to justify it. As I reflected, the kindness of her words and expressions dawned upon me, and I even got so far as to believe that I had been guilty of neglect in not visiting her oftener and doing something for her. True, I recalled likewise that my uncle had desired me not to visit her except with him or my aunt, but that was ages ago, when I was a very little boy, and might have been troublesome. I could even read to her now if she wished it. In short, I felt myself perfectly capable of entering into social relations with her generally. But if there was any flow of affection towards her, it was the sword that had broken the seal of its fountain.

One morning at breakfast I had been sitting gazing at the sword on the wall opposite me. My aunt had observed the steadiness of my look.

"What are you staring at, Willie?" she said. "Your eyes are fixed in your head. Are you choking?"

The words offended me. I got up and walked out of the room. As I went round the table I saw that my uncle and aunt were staring at each other very much as I had been staring at the sword. I soon felt ashamed of myself, and returned, hoping that my behaviour might be attributed to some passing indisposition. Mechanically I raised my eyes to the wall. Could I believe them? The sword was gone—absolutely gone! My heart seemed to swell up into my throat; I felt my cheeks burning. The passion grew within me, and might have broken out in some form or other, had I not felt that would at once betray my secret. I sat still with a fierce effort, consoling and strengthening myself with the resolution that I would hesitate no longer, but take the first chance of a private interview with grannie. I tried hard to look as if nothing had happened, and when breakfast was over, went to my own room. It was there I carried on my pasting operations. There also at this time I drank deep in the *Pilgrim's Progress*; there were swords, and armour, and giants and demons there; but I had no inclination for either employment now.

My uncle left for the farm as usual, and to my delight I soon discovered that my aunt had gone with him. The ways of the house were as regular as those of a bee-hive. Sitting in my own room I knew precisely where and one must be at any given moment; for although the only clock we had was often standing than going, a perfect instinct of time was common to the household, Nannie included. At that moment she was sweeping up the hearth and putting on the kettle. In half an hour she would have tidied up the kitchen, and would have gone to prepare the vegetables for cooking; I must wait. But the sudden fear struck me that my aunt might have taken the sword with her—might be going to make away with it altogether. I started up, and rushed about the room in an agony. What could I do? At length I heard Nannie's patters clatter out of the kitchen to a small outhouse where she pared the potatoes. I instantly descended, crossed the kitchen, and went up the winding stone stair. I opened grannie's door, and went in.

She was seated in her usual place. Never till now had I felt how old she was. She looked up when I entered, for although she had grown very deaf, she could feel the floor shake. I saw by her eyes which looked higher than my head, that she had expected a taller figure to follow me. When I turned from shutting the door, I saw her arms extended with an eager look, and could see her hand trembling ere she told them about me, and pressed my head to her bosom.

"O Lord!" she said, "I thank thee. I will try to be good now. O Lord, I have waited, and thou hast heard me. I will believe in thee again!"

From that moment I loved my grannie, and felt I owed her something as well as my uncle. I had never had this feeling about my aunt.

"Grannie!" I said, trembling from a conflict of emotions; but before I could utter my complaint, I had burst out crying.

"What have they been doing to you, child?" she asked, almost fiercely, and sat up straight in her chair. Her voice although feeble and quivering was determined in tone. She pushed me back from her and sought the face I was ashamed to show. "What have they done to you, my boy?" she repeated, ere I could conquer my sobs sufficiently to speak.

"They have taken away the sword that—"

"What sword?" she asked, quickly. "Not the sword that your great-grandfather wore when he followed Sir Marmaduke?"

"I don't know, grannie."

"Don't know, boy? The only thing your father took when he— Not the sword with the broken sheath? Never! They daren't do it! I will go down myself. I must see about it at once!"

"O grannie, don't! I cried in terror, as she rose from her chair. "They'll not let me ever come near you again if you do."

She sat down again. After seeming to ponder for a while in silence, she said: