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THE INVISIBLE FOE

CHAPTER I

STEPHEN lay on his stomach, one sharp elbow comfortable in a velvet bed of moss, his chin cupped in his palm, his beautifully shaped head thrown back, his alert face lifted to the sky, his eager eyes following hungrily the flight of a bird.

Hugh, crunched up against the big oak tree, was making a chain of blossoms, and making it awkwardly enough, with many a restless boy-sigh, many a destruction of delicate spring wild flower.

Helen was playing by herself.

Nothing could have been more characteristic of the three children than their occupations of the moment.

Stephen usually was watching birds fly, when he was out of doors, and birds were to be seen. And the only time his uncle Richard had ever laid a hand (except in rare caress or in approbation) on the orphan boy, had been when Stephen, three months after his arrival at Deep Dale, had opened its cage, and lost Helen her pet canary—all because he "wanted to see just how he flies."

"And I did see, too," he had told Hugh an hour after his stoically endured caning. "It was worth more than a few smacks. Bet I can fly too, some day. You wait."

Hugh had said nothing. He was used to Stephen