

## For Honor's Sake.

(E. Boyd Bayly in 'Sunday at Home.')

### CHAPTER I.

It was a summer evening. The high winds that blow so often in summer over the plains of Canterbury, New Zealand, were lashing themselves into a gale. A heavy bank of cumulus cloud, like vast heaps of snow resting on their own gray shadow, swept majestically along the sky over the Port Hills, catching the higher crests as it went by, and swathing them in its level folds. The tops of the hills were dark and purple in the shade it cast. Farther down, fitful gleams of sunshine chased the shadows over the great, bossy slopes, and touched the dark plantations, and stretches of yellow tussocks on the plains below.

Through the district of Rakawahi (which means 'Sunny Corner') a little river wound its way towards the sea. In the distance it looked like nothing but a winding bed of water-cress, so choked was it by that imported pest of New Zealand water-courses;

ported him. Grief, such as sets its mark upon the rest of life, wrung out those heavy sobs convulsing the childish frame. Then he would lift himself, and tear handfuls of grass from the tussocks, kneading them on the ground in his impotent wrath.

'I'll kill him. I'll have it out of him, I will. I will. I'll serve him out—beast! Oh, mother—mother. Father!'

It was his birthday, and his father was dead. He was hired out for the summer—poor little man, only eleven years old that day; but workers were scarce in New Zealand then, and any bright boy of eleven had his price. This was a Saturday. He had been promised, ever since he came, that he should go home this evening and stay over Sunday with his mother, and the other boy on the farm had tricked him out of it.

It was a horrible thing to do, and it was done so cunningly. A good neighbor who was driving in to Christchurch that evening had offered to take him. Davie had been up at four o'clock to hurry his work, in a fever all day for fear of being late when Mr. Law-

they went a few hundred yards up the stream to a bend sheltered by the willows, where was a stretch of water comparatively free from cress. Davie plunged in: he could swim like a duck, and though he meant to stay in only a minute, the cool water was so delicious that he lingered, splashing and swimming round a clear space. He thought Ned was on the other side of a mass of water cress.

'I'm coming out now, he called. No answer. Davie swam to the bank and came out, shaking himself like a dog. Not a sign of Ned was to be seen, nor of his own clothes either.

The poor little fellow called and searched wildly—in vain. He had seen looked into every place where clothes could be, on that side of the river. Then he remembered thinking, when Ned answered him—from the water as he supposed—that he must have swum quite over to the other side. He could never have swum at all. With a sudden thought, Davie plucked up courage—glided between the willow-stems, and shot along an open bit to where a plank was laid across the stream—crossed it, and hid himself among the Maori-heads on the other side. The ground between them was soft, after recent rain. Davie spied a foot-step; he darted to it, his little bare feet hardly touching the ground, and tracked in and out among the stumps, in terror and despair, till a glimpse of white casico caused a bound of hope. He sprang towards it. There were his clothes all right, rolled together under the drooping grass on a low stump; and clothes are liberty! clothes are power!

With trembling hands he threw them on, hindering himself by excess of haste—wiped his little feet with his soiled socks, and put on the clean ones. But he dared not stay to take the working clothes back to the house; the risks were too dreadful. He rolled them into a bundle and set off, plunging over the round uncertain ground, to where the high road ran through the waste. This was his nearest way to the cross-road where Mr. Lawson was to pick him up.

The roads, in that level region, are more than Roman in their straightness. As the boy scrambled up the highway-side, he saw a buggy draw up where the roads crossed, hundreds of yards away. It was a moment of agony, yet of exultation also, for he was sure Mr. Lawson would wait for him. But scarcely had the buggy stopped, when a small figure sprang in. Mr. Lawson drove cheerfully away with the wrong boy, pleased to be doing a kindness, and Davie was left alone upon the bank.

He shouted and ran, but only for a moment: it was so plainly useless. Then, for a cruel half-hour, he waited at the corner, nursing a faint hope that that buggy was not the Lawson's. He knew it was, all the time: he knew the make of it and the gray horse, at any distance; and that must have been Ned who got in. Davie had not learned the language of swearing, but the spirit of it was in his heart. He wished he did know any words bad enough to curse Ned with.

It was of no use to sit there. With a child's instinct for seeking help from his elders, Davie took up his bundle and toiled wearily back by the way he came. The wind rose higher and higher, and whistled through the tossing Maori-heads. They thrashed to and fro to the gale: so did the weeping-willow beside the plank. Davie liked the storm: it felt something like thrashing Ned.

But as he reached the farther side of the



MAORI-HEADS.

but walking along its banks you discovered clear pools and spaces where the obstreperous plant had failed to cover it. A little below the so-called 'township' (a few houses not quite as far apart as the rest were) the river flowed past a wilderness of Maori-heads. Over scores of acres the ground was full of thick stumps of peaty earth, two or three feet high, each bearing a crown of long coarse drooping grass, like unkempt hair. The effect was that of a forest of oaks new-pollarded, standing deep in a lake of earth instead of water, wearing wild wigs. The stumps are like peat; the people cut them, and use them for fuel. The soil, when cleared, is rich in the extreme. I dare say that waste of Maori-heads has long been cleared and brought under the plough. Twenty-five years ago, their hard yellow locks streamed and rattled in the wind, a contrast to the mild weeping-willow on the other side of the stream, flinging its soft green leaves as the blast directed, with only a whispered rénonstrance.

Not far from the willows a little boy lay on the bank, in an agony of grief and rage. It was more than a childish passion that trans-

son came to the cross-roads. He could hardly pretend to swallow his tea. The clock had stopped; he had to ask Mrs. Lawson what was the time by her watch, and on the third time of asking, she was cross and said, 'Both—er the child, you have lots of time. Just do the knives and fetch in another bucket of water, and then you can get ready. You'll be long before time, then.'

Davie had not been used to sharp words at home, and they frightened him very much.

'I'll mind the time for you—see,' said Ned, the other boy, two years older than Davie, who rejoiced in an old silver watch which went occasionally. He pulled it out now and displayed it, without saying that it was twenty-five minutes behind time.

'I'll do your knives. Come and have a bathe—there's lots of time,' he said.

Davie was surprised, for Ned was not usually inclined to do a stroke of work that he could avoid. But being very ready to trust his fellow creatures, he fetched his Sunday clothes to dress in, after the bathe, and took up his bucket. Ned took another, and they ran down to the pump at the riverside, filled the buckets, and left them standing while