

a natural breakwater to the estuary, which ran, rock-sheltered, right up into the land, and on either side of which were built rugged flights of natural steps, from the bright water's edge to where, five hundred feet above, the grey wind-swept masses of granite looked jagged against the sky.

Then he watched his great painted float, as it ran here and there in the eddies of the tremendous Atlantic currents which swept along by the point. The sea sparkled, the sun shone, and the grey gulls floated above the deep blue transparent water, uttering a querulous cry from time to time, and then dipping down at the small shoals of fry which played upon the surface.

Far away seaward a huge vessel was going west, leaving behind a trail of smoke; on his right a white-sailed yacht or two glistened in the sun. In another direction, scattered here and there, brown-sailed luggers were passing slowly along; while behind the fisher lay the picturesque straggling old town known as East and West Hakemouth, with the estuary of the little river pretty well filled with craft, from the fishing luggers and trawlers up to the good-sized schooners and brigs which traded round the coast or adventured across the Bay of Storms, by Spain and through the Straits, laden with cargoes of pilchards for the Italian ports.

"Missed him," grumbled the fisher, withdrawing his line to rebait with a pearly strip of mackerel. "Humph! now I'm to be worried by those chattering girls."

The worry was very close at hand, for directly after balancing themselves on the rough rocks, and leaping from mass to mass, came two bright-looking girls of about twenty, their faces flushed by exercise, and more than slightly tanned by the strong air that blows health-laden from the Atlantic.

As often happens in real life as well as in fiction, the companions were dark and fair; and as they came laughing and talking, full of animation, looking a couple of as bonny-looking English maidens as the West Country could produce, their aspect warranted, in reply to the greetings of "Ah, Uncle Luke!" "Ah, Mr. Vine!" something a little more courteous than—

"Well, Nuisance?" addressed with a short nod to the dark girl in white serge, and "Do, Madelaine?" to the fair girl in blue.