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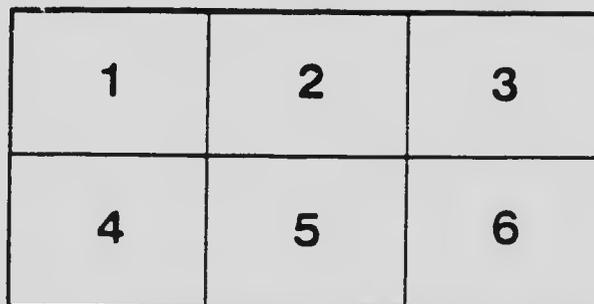
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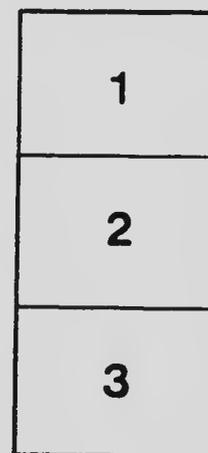
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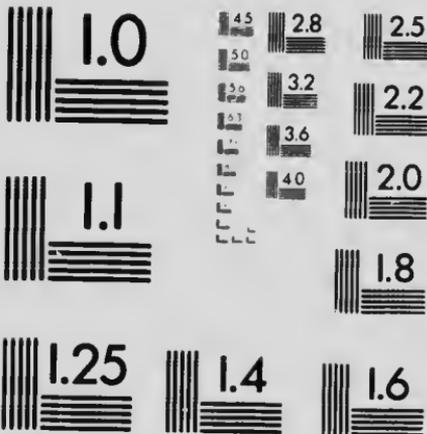
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**STRONGER
THAN HIS SEA**
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ROBERT WATSON

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STRONGER THAN HIS SEA

ROBERT WATSON



STRONGER THAN HIS SEA

BY

ROBERT WATSON

AUTHOR OF "MY BRAVE AND GALLANT GENTLEMAN,"
"THE GIRL OF O. K. VALLEY," ETC.

McCLELLAND AND STEWART
PUBLISHERS : : TORONTO

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1

TO DOREEN

Eyes of an azure blue
Searching the heart of you;
Hair of a soft, golden sheen;
Tiny the face of her;
'Witching the ways of her;
Born of the sprites is Doreen.

Dainty, ethereal;
Elfish material;
Nymph with the grace of a queen;
Fashioned so airylike;
Dances so fairylike;
Will-o'-the-wisp is Doreen.

From her you catch a glimpse
Into the Land of 'Tups,
Where this young mischief has been.
She fits the Merry Way;
Her's the Hip-hooray.
Hop-with-my-fancy, Doreen.

Curious, querulous;
Chatty and garrulous;
Prying, inquisitive, keen;
Constantly wondering,
Seldom found blundering
Wilful, persistent Doreen.

"Who-lights-the-stars-at-night?"
"Isn't-wrong-sometimes-right?"
"Why-is-the-grass-coloured-green?"
"What-makes-the-water-wet?"
"Tisn't-my-bed-time-yet."
"Tell-me-a-story," Doreen.

Skip while you may, my lass.
Quickly the moments pass.
Days have their nights in between
Hearts that are pure and bright
Fear neither dark nor light.
O, for the heart of Doreen.

R. W.



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STRONGER THAN HIS SEA

STRONGER THAN HIS SEA

CHAPTER I

Sandy Loses a Father

SANDY PORTER was five past. For the greater part of these long five years he had been standing, listening to the band and turning over the music, in a servile manner, for Andy Rogers, Geordie Tyler and Squinty McPherson.

Andy always beat the big drum, Geordie performed on the triangle and Squinty clanged the cymbals. When these three were at it, no ordinary wind instrument had the slightest chance of being heard, let alone enjoyed.

If Sandy's daddy happened to have a dog, Andy's was sure to have a dog with pups: if Sandy had a pair of new boots for Sunday, Geordie had a pair with heel-plates, tackets, leather laces and a loop at the back with which to pull them on, all complete: and when Sandy had a piece with jelly trickling over

the edges of it, Squinty would be sure to saunter along, clutching a similar dainty, only, he would have a layer of butter shining up through the jelly in mocking derision.

Nothing ever happened in Sandy's house, that had not taken place with tiresome regularity and monotony in the various abodes of the other three. And so, not being gifted with their powers of invention and enlargement, he was obliged, much against the grain, to listen quietly and resignedly to the many wonderful events which revolved round his companions; unless he might care to share in the passing glory of one or other of them, by becoming a perjuring witness and corroborating some particularly lurid flight of juvenile imagination, which, for its very existence, had to have the endorsement of a second party.

But Sandy's chance had come at last. He had something worth bouncing about now and it was assuredly his intention to make the most of it, just as soon as the wearisome rigmarole of such happenings was all over and he could, conveniently, get outside.

His position was unique; it was unassailable. His daddy was dead.

Sandy had been living in the little, two-roomed house beside the smiddy, on the outskirts of the weaving town of Piershaws, along with his mother, his sister Nelly, and his daddy. He didn't know his daddy very well, except on Sundays, for his daddy was always away in the morning before Sandy was awake and never seemed to arrive home at night, except by hearsay, and then only hours after the little

fellow's weary body was back again in slumberland. Sandy's mother blessed that fact, for it saved her the torture of answering a thousand questions and it helped to ease the pain at her heart, for her husband, Duncan Porter, was a soft-hearted, easy-going, easily-led mortal; fond of company and fonder still of drink.

Only two days before, she had said to her bairns, "Wash your faces and make yoursel's respectable-looking, for I'm going to take you to Cumberbank to see your auntie and your cousin Maggie."

The dizzying prospect of such an unexpected trip overjoyed the children, for, as far back as their little minds could travel, they had been away from home only once, and that was with the Sunday School picnic; and then, their mother had not been able to go with them.

With undue haste, they had got ready for their journey. Mrs. Porter closed the door behind her and Sandy and Nelly had romped on ahead. She had only reached as far as the entrance to the narrow lane which ran between her house and the old smiddy, when Sandy cried out to her, "See mammy, see the crowd o' folk. And they're coming ower the road."

Mrs. Porter's eyes followed the direction indicated and she saw two of the blacksmiths, Sam Tyler the joiner, and old George Saunders the retired lawyer and champion sly drinker of the town, carrying b. 'ween them an inert form.

As soon as she was noticed, the procession stopped

in indecision and there was a whispered argument before it moved on again.

Jean Porter knew at a glance that her husband was the unconscious object in the centre of the crowd. It was not by any means the first time he had been brought home, too intoxicated to superintend his own locomotion.

As they drew nearer, Saunders disconnected himself from the others and came forward, mopping his cavernous, hooked nose with a large, red, snuffy handkerchief and assuming as grave an expression as his bloated face would allow. Evidently he had been chosen as spokesman.

"Excuse me, Jean; 'hem, Mrs. Porter; but we've brought Duncan home."

He pointed to the object of his speech, as positive proof of the fact. "He could not come home himself, in the circumstances, for—for the night is far spent."

Mrs. Porter looked at Saunders angrily.

"Ay, but it'll no' be so far spent as Duncan's wages, I'm thinking," she said, "but keep your long-winded harangues for them that like them. I'm no' in a humour for listening. Duncan's drunk, and so are you. You're the one to blame for it. You always are. You've been the ruin o' him for six years back. Take him inside the hoose and don't stand there like a flock o' sheep. Fling him on the bed, or under it. I'm going a message and canna stop. Come on bairns."

Saunders stood aside, somewhat taken aback at the onslaught.

Mrs. Porter cast a glance at her husband, then her heart stood still. She had never seen him like this before. His eyes were open and glazed, his jaws were set hard and his limbs were rigid. She knew it was more serious than liquor this time; she softened immediately and took command.

"Bring him this way, men," she ordered tremulously, going on ahead. "Lay him on the bed. I'll take off his clothes. Somebody run for Doctor Walsh."

Sam Tyler hurried away for the doctor and the others filed out slowly, wiping their hands on their trousers, wagging their heads sorrowfully and talking in low voices about Duncan Porter being "No' such a bad sort, after all; always so ready to stand a dram." This eulogy, coming when it did and from men of their stamp, was a singularly bad omen, for it was only customary to overlook a neighbour's bad points and saddle him with imaginary good ones when it was certain that he was already dead or had not much longer to live.

Sandy and Nelly were shut up in the next room, out of the way, and Mrs. Porter had just finished undressing her husband, when the doctor arrived. His kindly eyes looked grave as he examined Duncan.

"Mrs. Porter," he said softly, "the worst has come. Duncan has had a stroke, and with his impaired health and the inroads he has made on his constitution I have no hope for him. He may never

regain consciousness. Now, if you are a wise woman you will not grieve, but will pray that he may be taken away; because, if he lives, he will never be the same again and will prove a troublesome and terrible burden."

He gave a few simple directions and told her he would call again in the morning.

But ere the morning came, Duncan Porter was beyond the aid of any mortal.

CHAPTER II

Ostracised

TO have someone dead in the house was a new experience to Sandy and he wondered why it was, if the dead person could not hear, that everybody in the house with it had to walk on their tip-toes and vent their thoughts in faint whispers. This terrible restriction was the hardest to bear of all and, in moments of forgetfulness, Sandy's voice rose, time and again, to its natural pitch, only to be toned down by his mother's sharp command for perfect quietness.

A hundred unanswerable questions were thoughtlessly showered upon the already well-nigh distracted woman.

"Will daddy never speak again? Where has he gone to? Will he send word when he gets there? Is the place a kind of jail? Who will get the nice dinners that used to be kept for daddy?"

Jean Porter answered her inquisitive children to the best of the ability of her poor, troubled mind, for she was afraid to think what was going to happen to her bairns and to herself, now that the only, albeit precarious, source of family revenue was cut off.

On the day of the funeral, Sandy was deeply impressed with a sense of his newly acquired importance. His face had been washed with soap and water and burnished with a dry cloth until his cheeks were like shining apples. His fair, curly hair was slaked with water and plastered against his scalp in a decided shed, although, from the very outset, some straggling, wiry tufts on the top showed signs of dissatisfaction which threatened to break out into open revolt just as soon as the water dried up a little.

Sandy's Sunday suit, unfortunately, happened to be a light-coloured one, made down from an old skirt which had at one time in its varied career belonged to a real titled lady, and, although that fact was something in its favour in Sandy's eyes, it had to be retouched before it could pass muster at a funeral. Consequently, its garish appearance was quieted by the affixing of a broad, black band on the right arm. This added distinction was a triumph for Sandy. He felt as if he had been promoted suddenly to something or another and imagined himself, in turn, a soldier, a policeman, the driver of the garbage cart and the postman.

But his pleasant reveries were more than slightly disturbed by the rubbing on the back of his neck of a huge nightmare of a white collar, considerably frayed around the edges and some four sizes too big for him. At times, his head threatened to slip through this aristocratic halter altogether. The infliction, combined with being forced to sit quietly

upon a high chair, dangling his legs and clasping his hands, helped to settle in his mind, for all time, that funerals, as a source of unalloyed enjoyment, were disappointing when compared with chasing cats off the siddy wall, and not at all the lively affairs that some folks tried to make believe they were.

Sam Tyler was the first to shuffle in for the ceremony and his presence cheered things up a little in Sandy's eyes. The visitor was followed in quick succession by three representatives from Duncan Porter's workshop, and, just before the minister arrived, Saunders put in an appearance. His name had been omitted, purposely, from the list of invitations, but he had not been absent from a funeral in the town for ten years and, invitation or no invitation, it was not his intention to miss paying his last respects this time, especially as he had helped to carry the corpse home. Saunders was decked out in his tile hat and surtout coat, and he bore himself with a little of the dignity which once had been his proud possession.

After a short service, the cortege proceeded down the lane, headed by the minister, with Sandy alongside sharing the honours, while Sam Tyler, Saunders, and the others trailed up in the rear.

It occasioned much delight to Sandy to see Geordie Tyler, Andy Rogers and Squinty McPherson among the group of juvenile spectators which is never absent from such star attractions as funerals, wild beast shows, Salvation Army meetings, fallen horses and dog fights, and he knew that he had scored heavily

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when they pointed in admiration and awe to his black band, which he displayed proudly and openly.

These young gentlemen, as is customary on all such occasions, held their noses tightly as the coffin was carried past, for, is it not well known among all boys and girls that, unless this precaution is observed, the infection of the deceased is sure to fall upon that person for his careless tempting of providence?

Several women folks stood at a respectful distance across the road, hiding their hands in front of them, under their aprons, and talking together in muffled tones. The forge was quiet for the moment and the smiddy door was filled with brawn and muscle and leather aprons.

A hearse was provided for the coffin, but, otherwise, it was what is commonly termed, "a walking funeral"; and Sandy was dead tired and heartily sick of it all long before the cemetery was reached.

However, on the way home again, his drooping spirits revived, for he was permitted to sit up on the "dicky" of the hearse, beside the driver, and he treated the latter with a familiarity bordering on kinship, because the driver had crape on his hat while he had crape on his arm.

Nevertheless, he was greatly relieved to get out of his borrowed collar and into his old clothes once more. After some insistence, he persuaded his mother to transfer his black band. He had good reasons, based on experience, and he felt that it would be of great value when he went out among the other boys.

The house was a dismal and dreary place that afternoon and he shuffled and fidgetted about, like a bear with the toothache.

"Can I no' get out, mammy?" he asked a thousand times.

"No, Sandy, you're better at home the day."

"Just for a wee while," he pestered.

"No, Sandy; it wouldna be right."

"Is it right to be in, mammy?"

"Ay, Sandy."

"How is it right to be in and wrong to be oot, mammy?"

"Oh! don't bother me, the day, laddie."

"But the boys are playing ootside, mammy; I can hear them. Forby, if my daddy was here he would let me go oot," he added reflectively.

At last Mrs. Porter gave her consent to his going, provided he promised to behave himself as a boy should whose father was newly buried.

With a whoop and a run, Sandy was out at the door, forgetful of all mourning aspects, the marbles in his pockets jingling joyously.

On rounding the corner of the smiddy, he espied Geordie Tyler, Andy Rogers and Squinty McPher-son, playing marbles, and so intent were they on their game that Sandy was almost on them before they noticed him.

All at once, Squinty jumped up with a cry, "Hold your noses. Here comes Sandy Porter just back from the funeral."

Sandy looked surprised and his face flushed, but he stood his ground.

"Away you go," commanded Andy, edging backwards, "you canna get playing with us if you havena been fumigated. We don't want to catch the measles."

"It didna happen to be the measles," replied Sandy perkily, "and it was nothing that was catching. He just caught a shock and died."

"Aw weel," said Andy, decidedly, "we don't want to catch one. They're gey dangerous."

"Don't be frightened," interjected Geordie Tyler, who was inclined to be friendly, having been considerably impressed by the limelight in which Sandy had been basking during the early part of the afternoon. "Shocks is no' catching; everybody kens that. Let him play if he has the bools."

"I have the bools," replied Sandy, rattling them in his pocket in proof, "but I'm no' going to play the day, seein' I had a daddy buried. I'll just watch."

This roused the ire of Andy Rogers once more.

"Think you're a great man because you were at a funeral," he growled sarcastically, resuming his position on one knee at the top hole. "Anybody could have a funeral like yon. It was only a walking one."

That was a sore blow to Sandy, for a walking funeral was a decided brand of poverty; unless the corpse happened to be a Good Templar or a Mason, and everybody knew his daddy was neither. How-

ever, his juvenile wit came to his rescue and he mumbled out slowly.

"It wasna a walking funeral. It was a half-and-half. My daddy got a drive going and I got one coming back."

"No it wasna a half-and-half, Sandy Porter," interjected Squinty, "for Geordie Tyler's faither was at it and he had to walk both going and coming. I heard his mither giving him a row for getting the foot o' his Sunday troosers all muddy."

"That's true enough," said Geordie, "and he says he's no' going again except when there's cabs and beefsteak pie."

"I'll tell my mammy what he said, and he'll no' get asked to any more o' our funerals. But I don't care," doggedly continued Sandy, "a walking funeral is a good lot better than none at all."

And, with this parting shot, he walked away from his jealous companions.

He stood at the smiddy door for a bit, watching big Ben McQuirter swinging his sledge, then he went slowly into the house, with great tears welling in his eyes. He sat down on the rug, at his mother's feet, put his head on her lap and sobbed till he fell asleep.

CHAPTER III

'The Landlord's Visit

A HEAVY responsibility now rested on Jean Porter. She had to pay rent and find food and clothes for herself and her two bairns. But she had lots of courage, so she set about to discover a way.

Several kind-hearted ladies in the town heard of her straits and offered her work in the form of a day's washing or scrubbing every now and then. Others gave her their sewing and knitting to look after, while not a few sent an occasional tit-bit to help along a larder that never seemed to be quite full enough to satisfy the appetites of her healthy, hungry bairns.

Soon, the terrible fear of utter failure left her and she saw that her position, while not an enviable one, was not going to be altogether hopeless; although it would require all her energy and frugality to keep her little home intact.

About a week after her husband's burial, she was sitting in the kitchen, darning, when she heard a sharp rap at the door. She rose quickly, for the peremptory knock was a familiar one. Well she knew who her visitor was. He had been on many

previous occasions, and his visits, although generally anticipated, were not always welcome to the folks of the neighbourhood. Jean Porter was a little surprised, because it was hardly the time for his regulation call.

It was Doctor Telford, her landlord; a tall, heavily-built individual, clad in a brown suit, brown bowler hat and brown leggings. A gold chain was strained across his bulging waistcoat and he carried a heavy, gold-mounted stick. He had seen fifty years of strenuous living; but looked younger and, in his own language, was sound in wind and limb. His face was stern, almost to dourness, but his eyes twinkled kindly, thus softening his otherwise gruff appearance.

Doctor Telford was admitted to be the greatest veterinarian expert in the country; he owned many of the houses in Piershaws, he owned the smithy and also a large, mixed farm. Some folks declared it would be only a matter of time ere he owned the whole town. He personally supervised everything he owned with the mind of a born master of detail. Self-made, he had no patience with any one who was not, and he showed no sympathy for the man or the woman who admitted failure.

As he sat down, he took in his surroundings slowly and carefully; and, doubtless, he was not a little pleased to notice that there were no holes or cracks in the plaster and that, here at least, it looked as if he would not be called upon to execute repairs for some time to come.

The bane of his existence was the constant call for repairs. Wherever he went, it clung to him like a shadow. With one good housewife, the roof would be leaking like a sieve; with the neighbouring tenant, a brick would be lodged somewhere in the chimney and the smoke would be finding another and a more disagreeable exit. Then, the eaves troughing had given way just over the doorway, with dire results. The coal-shed door would be off its hinges, if there was nothing wrong with the water-taps; and there would be an escape of gas coming from goodness knows where and like to blow them to the same place. So on, right along the line.

"Well, Mrs. Porter," began the doctor at last, quite pleasantly, "I was very sorry indeed to hear of your trouble. I hope you won't grieve over it. Grieving doesn't pay.

"I am a little before my usual time, but I came in to have a little talk with you. I dare say you will be thinking of moving away from here, now that Duncan's wages have ceased to come in," he went on, in a tone which almost expressed the hope that she would do so and thereby furnish him with an easy way of getting rid of a possible bad-paying tenant.

"If you want me to go, Doctor," replied Mrs. Porter with a troubled look, "I daresay I'll have to, but I would sooner stay where I am if you'll let me. I have paid my rent regularly up till now and I'll try to keep on paying it. I have the promise o' lots o' work, so I don't think you'll have much bother

with us. I like staying here. So do the bairns. And, we don't abuse the hoose."

"That's true enough," remarked the Doctor, rubbing his chin, "I noticed that when I came in."

At that moment, the door flew open and Sandy came running in. His eyes were jumping with excitement and he did not pay the slightest attention to the Doctor.

"Here, mammy," he cried, "see what I've got." He threw a penny into her lap. "It's for you. I got it for going a message for Mrs. Telford."

The Doctor got up, put his hand on Sandy's curly head and pivotted him round, looking at him curiously.

"Mrs. Telford gave you a penny, did she?" he said. "A ha' penny would have been enough for a little shaver like you. Why don't you go and spend it?"

"I wouldna do that," replied Sandy, "although I would like to. My mammy's to get all the money I work for. I got a piece with cheese on it, forby. I ate it and I kept the penny for mammy."

The Doctor smiled grimly.

"All right, sonny," he remarked. "If you keep it up, you will do; but it's the keeping it up that's the trouble. When you get bigger, come to me and I will give you work, lots of it, then you will have more pennies for your mammy."

He then turned to Mrs. Porter and asked, with the bland air of an innocent landlord who did not know: "What rent are you paying for this house?"

"Eight pounds a year," she replied, timidly, fearing a probable raise.

He made for the door and, when his hand was on the knob, he turned.

"Eight pounds a year," he repeated. "It isn't very much. We'll make it six pounds a year till your laddie's able to earn his keep; and, you can take your own time about paying it."

And he disappeared before the astonished woman could believe her ears or say a word in gratitude.

CHAPTER IV

Dominie Todrick's New Pupil

WHEN the school was taking up again, after the summer holidays, Mrs. Porter resolved that it was time Sandy's education had begun, no matter how scant it might have to be. He was now six years old and it was more than she could do to keep him out of mischief.

She broached the subject to him and he heartily favoured the idea, for, already, most of his play-mates were having their intellects cultivated; their mothers having discovered earlier than Mrs. Porter did, that the school was an ideal place to send the youngsters to be out of the way.

Mind training was of little moment to Sandy, in fact, he did not know that he possessed such a commodity as a mind, but it meant something to him to be able to chime in with the others, with some degree of authority, regarding what took place every day; and to him the school seemed to be a perfect fairyland of adventure and excitement.

Consequently, with many qualms, Mrs. Porter escorted her young hopeful to the nearest institute of learning, a large, sandstone erection on the Back Road,—beyond the Bowling Green,—set off by high walls and iron railings.

Sandy's breeks had been double-patched, with maternal care and forethought and he had been persuaded, after considerable coaxing, to wear his Sunday boots and a white collar.

A tremendous schoolbag was slung from his right shoulder. It was somewhat out of proportion with his own dimensions, and its broad shepherd-tartan check did not tend toward making the disparity any less. But nothing but the largest bag in the ironmonger's shop would content him, and he had his own way.

No one who has ever been a schoolboy can contend that Sandy's choice was at fault, for any boy worthy of the name looks forward to using his schoolbag for far more important purposes than the mere carrying of books.

The new pupil was duly ushered into the presence of Mr. Todrick, the headmaster, who, seated in his office, behind a big, flat-topped desk, was engaged in making ugly blue pencil marks across some neatly written exercise books belonging to his senior pupils.

Three boys, with scared faces, stood together at the far end of the room, blowing on their hands in painful anticipation.

Mr. Todrick was an elderly, soured bachelor, who had thrashed about three generations of the town into shape, and looked good for still another. His methods were old-fashioned, but his results seemed to satisfy the demands of the Board. He believed that every pupil should be as intimate with the tawse as he was with the rule of three and that an extra

Dominie Todrick's New Pupil 31

thrashing here and there, without any particular reason, never yet did a boy any harm.

He was feared by the scholars more than he was hated and his superannuation would have been hailed with a greater display of enthusiastic delight than would an unexpected half-holiday.

He had dark, shaggy eyebrows and dead, lustreless brown eyes which looked out on beauty and ugliness, innocence and guilt, with equal disfavour and with imperturbed and calculated coldness. A large mole decorated his chin and showed up strongly, even against its stubby background of black beard.

Raising his eyes suddenly, he shot a host of queries at Mrs. Porter.

"New scholar, eh? What's his name? His age? Where does he stay? Ever been at school before?"

"No, no sir," replied Mrs. Porter, answering his last question first and hoping he would repeat the others.

"What's his name?" he repeated.

"Alexander Porter, sir."

"His age?"

"Six years last month, sir. And this is his first time at school." She was quite proud of having remembered one of the dominie's questions without his having to ask it a second time. "He can say his A B C's, sir," she added.

"Alexander, let me hear you," he growled.

Sandy repeated his letters without a blunder, but, as he was doing so, his hand stole, thoughtlessly, to

the edge of the desk and he began to toy with the cover of an exercise book.

"Leave things alone, boy," cried the master. "Always learn to leave things alone."

Sandy's hand dropped to his side, but he was unabashed.

His mother trembled in her boots. "He's just a bairn, Mr. Todrick," she interposed.

"I won't detain you further, madam," said the schoolmaster, coldly, and she turned away with a heavy heart.

"Never mind, mammy: I'm no' frightened for him," cried Sandy.

"Silence, boy," thundered the master, and that was the last she heard, although she stood at the door for a moment expecting to hear Sandy cry for help.

Sandy fancied he had not been sufficiently questioned on the vast amount of knowledge he possessed, so he saw no wrong in volunteering something more.

He snapped his thumb and second finger, as he had heard was the correct thing to do.

"Please, mister."

"Don't 'mister' me, sir," interrupted the master. "When you address me, or any of your elders, say 'sir'. And this is what I keep in store for all bad boys."

He displayed an angry looking strap, and Sandy subsided.

"What were you about to ask me?" continued Mr. Todrick.

"Please, sir, I can say them backways."

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"Say what, backwards?"

"My A B C's, sir."

Sandy thought a great deal of this accomplishment, which had been taught him by Ben, the blacksmith, in his spare time during the dinner hours, at the smiddy. He was not called upon to display his phenomenal ability any further.

Mr. Todrick silenced him with a frown, and then led him to the infant department, which was under the supervision of Miss Kinney, a tall, thin, prim lady who wore eyeglasses set tightly on her small, tip-tilted nose. She could boast of, or rather confess to, having taught in the school almost as long as Mr. Todrick had; and long years of continuous teaching had somewhat soured her; yet, although she was inclined to severity, she always treated her pupils with justice. Her Christian name was Sarah, and, once, about 20 years previously, in a moment of forgetfulness, she had signed her name on the blackboard "S. Kinney" and Skinny she had been nicknamed ever since.

Sandy stood shyly on the floor, near her desk, and she addressed him with the usual initial question.

"What is your name?"

"Sandy Porter, sir," he answered.

Miss Kinney's brows went up and she glared at her new pupil.

"What do you mean by addressing me as 'sir'? Don't you know that the correct word is 'ma'am'?" she asked severely.

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"The man in there said it was 'sir'," replied Sandy innocently.

"Tut-tut. When you address a gentleman you say 'sir,' but when you speak to a lady you sa 'ma'am'. Do you think you can remember that?"

"Yes, si—ma'am."

"Now tell me what your correct name is?"

"Sandy," he replied again.

"Not at all,—not at all, Sandy is not your correct name. It is Alexander. Do you think you can remember that?"

"Yes, ma'am."

The room was overflowing with boys and girls of his own age. Blackboards, and pictures of wild beasts were hung around; the animals giving the place the interesting flavour of a menagerie. Sandy was directed to a vacant seat in the front bench and told to listen attentively to the lesson. The novelty of it appealed to him for a while, but it soon got tiresome and he did not like it half so well as playing around the smiddy. He was seized with a desire to yell out and shuffle his feet, or tear his collar off; but he did not care to risk any of these modes of ventilation.

Just as the proceedings were falling flat, a little girl started up suddenly, screamed and rubbed her eyes.

"Please ma'am, I never did," shouted the boy who sat across the aisle from her, before he had been accused of anything in particular.

The girl was interrogated and, between sobs, Miss

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Kinney wormed the information that the boy in question had ungallantly flicked a dark-white handkerchief in her eyes, while the teacher's attention had been directed on the blackboard.

The culprit was called to the floor and soundly rated, then soundly spanked in the good old motherly way.

Familiarity with the application, made most of the boys feel quite at home during the operation, but it had a subduing effect on Sandy and gave him the airy sensation at the top of his stomach which he remembered having felt, once before, when he was on the high swing, at the never-to-be-forgotten Sunday School picnic.

In the playground, at noon time, he tried his best to be on friendly terms with his fellows, but in this he was only partially successful.

Barefeet was the order of the day. He was the only boy who had his pedal extremities covered, so he was treated as a sort of freak. Sides were being chosen for a game of football, and, after several of the tried and brilliant exponents of the art had been picked out, one of the Captains cried:

"I'll have Sandy Porter next."

"No you'll no'," yelled Andy Rogers, who was selecting the opposite side. "We don't want any half-biled gents playing with us. He might tell the teacher if we dirtied his collar. Forby, this is a barefeeties game and he's got his boots on."

Andy's argument was too sound and too strong

to be gainsaid and another was called in Sandy's place.

He was more mortified than he cared to show, but he had no intention of taking the decision as final. He ran into the schoolshed, peeled off his offending garments, stuffed them into his capacious schoolbag, well out of sight, and hurried back to the field, dressed, or rather undressed, like the others.

But a fresh difficulty presented itself: the sides were chosen and the game was in progress.

Sandy soon discovered that humility, with a little tenacity, were necessary in the circumstances.

He hung around Rogers with the persistence of a stray cat, praising his play, but hampering his movements and interfering with his game, until, in sheer desperation, the latter shouted,

"Get somebody to come in with—a cock or a hen."

Sandy soon ferreted out a boy who was not playing and, after a whispered argument, they appeared before Rogers, disguised under the names of the domestic fowls which the latter had suggested, and, in a few moments more, Sandy was in the thick of the game, making up for his lack of knowledge by his unbounded enthusiasm.

Life was now full of happiness for Sandy. He loved to romp and to mix up in all the fun and mischief that came within hailing distance. He looked upon his lessons,—as most healthy boys do, as a kind of unreasonable punishment adopted by grown-ups and forced on him for some offence which he had never committed, depriving him of unnumbered

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chances of scouring the woods and fields in the summer time and of sliding, snowballing and "gush-making" in the winter. And, as for homework; that was a torture worthy of the Star Chamber.

Sandy was never so contented as when hanging about the smiddy door, basking in the glowing heat of the roaring fires and watching big Ben, the foreman, beside the anvil, swinging his heavy hammers, welding the iron held steady by his apprentice and sending showers of red sparks and occasional large, white glittering stars into every corner of the shop. The smell of the sizzling hoofs, as it played around Sandy's nostrils, was sweeter to him than the aroma of the honeysuckle that grew over his mother's porch.

The whole of this fairylike place was indelibly photographed on his mind; the dust-begrimed windows with the cobwebs hanging from the corners; the broken panes here and there through which thin, slanting rays of light straggled until swallowed up in the darkneses: the roaring furnace and the old iron boiler with its dripping tap, where the red-hot shoes spluttered as they were plunged into the water in the process of tempering; the long rods of new steel carefully piled against the opposite wall; the great heap of rusty and discarded shoes in the left-hand corner near the fires; and, above all, the delightful, soft springy feeling underfoot of the brittle filings and hoof parings.

Sandy could tell, without having to count, that there were six rings in the near wall and four in the

far wail, to which the horses were tethered while the journeyman smiths hammered the shoes to the upturned hoofs held firmly between their thighs.

He knew, in theory, the process of making a horseshoe, from the blue-black steel rod to the last nail hole in the finished article.

His little face, with the gaping mouth and wide solemn, blue eyes, had been seen so often staring in at the open door, that it became a matter of comment among the blacksmiths if he missed a day.

Big Ben had many a kindly word for the little fellow and Sandy felt honoured when he was asked to run an odd errand for the big man. Sometimes he would be allowed inside the smiddy, then he would sit on the heap of shoes, for hours on end, drinking in his surroundings and plying Ben with innumerable unanswerable questions.

Now and again, Ben supplied a special treat. He would stuff a large, raw potato among the red embers and bring it out again, in a minute or two, hot and mealy and glorious to eat. But Sandy never dared touch it until he had repeated his golden text for the following Sunday or given the correct answer to a simple sum in mental arithmetic.

Many a time, had this big, open-hearted blacksmith shared his lunch with his young friend, for well he knew the struggle that was going on to keep together the little home across the lane.

Sandy dearly loved to hold the horses as they stood outside, in the rear of the building, waiting their turn to be shod; and he marvelled at the eager

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way they pulled toward the old trough and slugged the water through their teeth, with their necks stretched and their nostrils dilated.

A large, four-posted, cross-beamed, wooden rack occupied a corner of the yard and, to it, wild and sour-tempered animals were trussed. But a little to one side of this, was the most wonderful place of all; Doctor Telford's surgery. Sometimes the high-pitched neigh of a horse in pain or in fear had reached Sandy's ears, from the strange, lonely-looking building; and, on one or two occasions, when his curiosity had been greater than his timidity, he had climbed up on the window sill and peered in. Once he saw Doctor Telford on the top of a ladder, pouring the contents of a large, black bottle down a horse's gullet, its head having been pulled upward, toward the roof, and secured by a rope slung across one of the beams. At another time, he had watched the Doctor cutting a growth from a mare's leg. But the last time he had looked in had been the most exciting and remained most vivid in his memory. He saw an old black horse tied up firmly with ropes and bands. The Doctor's coat was off and his shirt sleeves were tightly rolled up. He struck the horse a great blow on the forehead with a sharp-pointed hammer and the animal fell back, without a struggle, limp and dead. Next day, Sandy saw it taken away in a cart; and Ben informed him of how the hoofs were made into glue, the hair was used for stuffing chairs, the teeth for making false ones for men and

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women, the skin made into leather, adding a rider of his own, the flesh was manufactured into sausages.

Then and there, Sandy made a mental vow that, even if he could afford such a luxury, he would never dine on sausages.

CHAPTER V

Sandy Takes on Responsibilities

ALL this time, Mrs. Porter was struggling desperately against the fast-flowing tide of poverty. Her work was hard and the hours of labour were long: and worst of all, her recompense was scant. There was little saving margin in her earnings to worry over. Every copper was needed to clothe and feed her family; and a great deal more than she had could have been used to advantage.

She did not mind the dreary toil, so long as her health kept good, but of late the strain seemed to be growing greater and her body did not seem to be able to bear the burden so well. Many a time, when she ought to have been in bed, she struggled out to her work; for she knew that, if she did not keep her appointments with those for whom she washed and sewed, she would find her place taken up by someone else the next time that particular day came round in the monthly calendar. Streaks of gray were showing through her glossy, black hair and a sad look was seldom absent from her brown eyes.

Her little son never gave a thought to all this. The struggle for life was waged over his head. When he had plenty to eat, he was satisfied and did

not trouble to inquire whence or how it came. It was only when he was hungry and the cupboard was empty that he began to wonder why his mother and his sister and he should have so little, while others had enough and to spare.

But the change came sharp and sudden.

One morning, his mother tried to get up, but could not. Her worn body refused to respond to her anxious will and, for thirty long days and weary nights she lay on the bed in her little kitchen, burning her heart out in a fever of anxiety. Doctor Walsh visited her every day and Sandy heard him tell her that she had simply been overworking and that, if she did not take things easier, she would kill herself.

When Sandy went to bed that night, he told his little sister what he had heard and it made her cry. Then he tried to comfort her by telling her it was not true; that he had just made it up out of his head, for fun: but his painful show of bravery broke down and tears ran over his cheeks in sheer helplessness at the thought that soon they might have no mother to love them and look after them. And they cried and sobbed together, in each other's arms, until sleep hovered over them and lighted softly and soothingly upon them.

Mrs. Porter was up and out at work again, when a thought came to Sandy whereby he might make it easier for her.

He waylaid Doctor Telford one day, as he was coming from the barn, and, standing in front of him

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and looking up into his face with his big, earnest eyes, he said timidly,

"Please, Dr. Telford, I'm Sandy and I want to work for money."

The old veterinarian looked down at him with a half-amused expression.

"You are Sandy, eh? And whose Sandy are you?"

"Sandy Porter," was his reply. "You know me, the boy that stays beside the smiddy and had the daddie that got buried. You said you would let me work for you when I got bigger, and I'm bigger now, for I wasna at school then and I've been a whole year at it."

The Doctor shook his head.

"No, Sandy, laddie. I haven't any work for a little fellow like you. Wait till you're a man."

Poor little Sandy was terribly downcast and his face showed it.

The Doctor spoke again.

"What does a little chap like you want to work for money for?"

Sandy looked up once more, with tears in his eyes.

"Doctor Walsh says my mammy will dee if she works too hard. Nelly and me need our mammy. I want to work for money for her."

For the second time, this little fellow touched a responsive chord in the Doctor's heart; and he made up his mind, right away, as to what he was going to do: but he did not show it all at once.

"Let me see," he mused, with his head on one side, stroking his chin and looking aslant at the boy

at his knees who was trembling with eagerness, waiting his further utterance.

"You're too young for me to use; but I'll tell you what. Call over at the dairy at half past four tomorrow and see Mrs. Telford. She'll maybe have a job for you."

"Now, don't tell anybody, for they might get the job first; but be sharp on time."

Sandy could hardly contain himself till the next afternoon, and he was noticed by the maids hanging around the dairy door a full hour before the appointed time. Prompt to the minute, Mrs. Telford made her appearance and she was espied by Sandy immediately. She knew him well enough as the little fellow who ran an occasional errand.

"Well, laddie," she said kindly, "I'm going to find you a job, but you'll have to keep yourself clean and tidy and you'll have to be here at six o'clock every morning and at half past four in the afternoon, regularly. I'm needing a right smart boy to go to my near-hand customers with the milk. Think you, you could manage that?"

"Ay, Mrs. Telford," he answered joyously, "I could manage fine."

"All right, Sandy; that's settled. Now we'll have to fix your wages. And I'll tell you how we'll do it. You'll work for me for three months and at the end of that time I'll give you enough to pay your mother's quarterly rent. Will that do?"

"Oh that'll be fine," cried the delighted Sandy. "And I'll no' tell her till I've got the rent paid."

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"Right you are, laddie," she replied. "Be here in the morning, sharp at six."

That night, Sandy's mother received very explicit instructions that he was to be wakened every morning when she got up, and she was further informed that she was to ask no question but simply "Bide and see."

She readily agreed and did not worry him for a reason, for well she knew how dearly he loved a secret. She could see excitement gleaming in his eyes, so she let him be until the secret should come out from sheer loneliness, as all secrets do. But after a time, when no visible results showed themselves from the regularity of her son's early rising, Jean Porter became troubled with occasional pangs of anxiety.

"I canna understand the bairn: he's that close," she would say to herself. "Weel I ken that if he's working, he's no' spending what he earns, for he's aye too ready to fly to me with every ha' penny he gets. But I winna ask him. I'll just have patience and wait and see."

Her fears were put to rest one evening, as her eyes caught sight of his little sturdy figure in the distance, carrying an armful of milkcans, with his faithful friend Stumpy whirling on in front of him.

Stumpy was not exactly a thoroughbred. Truth to say, he was a hopeless mongrel, and the evidence of his descent from some fox-terrier grandsire showed in his cheeky mannerisms. His tail had been overlooked in his infancy and no one had thought it

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worth while to dock it afterwards, the result being that it had a most tantalising habit of getting in Stumpy's way. He would start off, with a rush, on something fresh, only to be brought up suddenly in his endeavour to bite off the offending appendage as it came within range of his vision as it swung on one side and then on the other. This stoppage always ended in a summersault and in the escape of the aggravating and elusive tail. Stumpy's progress consisted largely of a run and a summersault every few yards.

Various kindly disposed persons had tried, from time to time, to put him out of misery, thinking it would be nothing more or less than a simple act of humanity, but Stumpy did not share in their desire for his sacrifice to the cause of humanity, or anything else, and he evaded all efforts to place him on the altar.

On one occasion, Sandy's timely intervention had pulled a poisoned bone from between his teeth and, on another, he had cut the string which kept Stumpy attached to a heavy brick under the water, in the burn at the back of Lawyer Saunders' house.

Small wonder then that Sandy and Stumpy were inseparables.

There was a strong suspicion in Sandy's mind, not to mention Stumpy's,—that Saunders had perpetrated this last cowardly attempt on Stumpy's innocent life and the lawyer became their avowed enemy thereafter.

Stumpy could tell Sandy's good customers, almost

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as well as Sandy could himself. A good customer was reckoned by her behavior on her baking day. If she remembered that they liked a warm scone with jelly on it, then she belonged to that much respected class; and many a burlesque entertainment did such a woman enjoy, watching the unsuspecting pair sitting on a mound or on the curb, taking bite about, with scrupulous fairness, until all of the eatable was safely under cover.

On the day before rent day, Mrs. Telford met Sandy in the dairy as he got back from his rounds. He was sitting on a stool, with his head buried in a pannikin of milk, with which Jean, the dairymaid, had been instructed to supply him every afternoon before he went home. Stumpy was at his feet, lapping up the drops that dribbled to the stone floor, almost before they got there.

"Sandy," asked the lady; "what day's to-morrow?"

"Rent day," he replied, immediately, with a bright smile; wiping his mouth.

"Well," she said, "come in with me to the kitchen and we shall see how much you have earned."

Sandy followed her and his heart beat fast as she counted into his hands, out of a fat purse, a golden sovereign and ten bright shillings.

"Now," she concluded, "Doctor Telford is in his room along the lobby there. Go right in and tell him you want to pay the rent."

Sandy knocked at the door and walked in. The

Doctor looked up from his desk in prearranged surprise.

"I've come to pay the rent," said Sandy manfully, laying his pile of money before the Doctor, who, after counting it out carefully, asked quietly,

"Whose rent is this to pay, my lad?"

"Our rent," he replied, as if surprised that anyone should think he would be desirous of paying that of someone else.

"What name?" asked the Doctor further, with serious visage.

"Porter. I'm Sandy Porter that works for you, going with the milk. That's my pay that I worked for and I want to pay our rent," he replied in elaborate detail, feeling that it was necessary, in case of error, to be very definite with one so dense.

The doctor smiled and said,

"All right, Mr. Porter. Just be seated while I write out a receipt."

Sandy made a valiant effort to obey, but he found it impossible to get up, without climbing, and he knew that that was hardly in accordance with strict etiquette, so he contented himself by standing alongside the article of furniture to which the Doctor had consigned him.

The Doctor tore off the receipt, put it in an envelope and handed it to his visitor, adding to it a bright new shilling, which, he said, was extra, seeing he had not spilled any of his customers' milk during the entire three months.

Suddenly, he leaned over and said kindly,

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"Here Sandy, shake hands. I'm proud of you."

Sandy responded timidly; then the constraint fled from his face and it brightened in a happy smile, as he replied,

"I thought at first you didna ken me, Doctor."

"I knew you fine, all the time, Sandy. I was just funning."

The little fellow's merry ripple and the old man's deep, bass laugh reached through the open door to the kitchen, where Mrs. Telford was standing at the window watching her pretty little daughter, Doreen, swinging in the garden. It aroused her from her dreamy contemplation, and she wondered at the strange affinity which seemed to be springing up between the Doctor and this little village bairn.

As Sandy made toward the door, the Doctor turned him round and laid his hand familiarly on his head.

"Sandy," he said, in a low, quiet voice, "you're just a little bit of a shaver yet, with all this great world before you. Don't be afraid of it, for it's just like the horse in the stable; it's waiting to be harnessed.

"Be a good boy. Help your mother all you can, for you'll never have another.

"Never tell a lie, even if it is going to save you from getting into trouble.

"When you're working, and when you're playing, go right into it and do the best you know how.

"If anybody hits you when you don't deserve it, Fight.

"School lessons are dull things, but learn them hard and you will grow to be a man, a real man. And real men are scarce as rowans in February.

"I was a little fellow once, just like you, only I had no mother. I have my dear little lassie, Doreen, but I have no wee laddie of my own whom I can help and who could help me; so I'm going to keep my eye on you.

"Goodbye, Sandy; and don't forget what I've been telling you."

* * * * *

Mrs. Porter was sitting by the kitchen fire, sewing diligently; Nelly, who was never very far from her mother when she could help it, was on the floor beside her, reading her school lessons for the next day, as Sandy came running in with a smile on his face bright as the coin in his pocket. He held his hands behind him and stood up before his mother.

"What would you like best in all the world mammy?" he asked.

Mrs. Porter looked at him for a moment, then, divining something in his eyes, she said,

"To know that my bairns would never have to go cold and hungry, and to feel that they would be able to fend for themsel's, if I wore away."

"Shut your eyes, mammy," demanded Sandy.

As she obeyed the old time-worn request, he thrust the envelope into her hands.

"Now. open when I count three."

The magic numbers were slowly and very solemnly counted. then she opened her eyes and extracted the

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paper from the envelope. She read it once; then again, to make sure.

"Where did you get this, laddie?" she asked in anxious surprise.

"I worked for it for my ain dear mammy," he answered, looking up at her.

His carefully concealed little scheme overwhelmed his mother like a mill stream. She threw her arms around him and hugged him until she almost crushed his little bones. When she released him again, Sandy saw tears in her eyes and he wondered why. In reply to his questioning look, she remarked tenderly,

"Sandy, my dear laddie, tears don't always mean sorrow. Sometimes they come when joy and happiness flood in on you unexpected like."

He clapped his hands in glee, for something inside of him made him feel happier than ever he had been before. He dipped his hands deep into the pocket that did not have the hole in it and produced his shilling.

"See, mammy, I got this into the bargain," he cried, holding up the coin.

"Well, dearie,—you have worked for three months so you can just spend that on what you think you would like the best."

On the Saturday following, Sandy arrived home with several parcels. He laid them carefully on the table and waited until his mother and Nelly had gathered round.

"See," he cried, "I have got what I thought I would like best. There's ham and eggs in this par-

cel for you and Nelly and me, the morn's morning, the same as Geordie Tyler said he had last Christmas: and there's a nice, big, penny bone, with beef on it, for Stumpy, for he went with the milk as well as me."

Nelly's eyes widened at the thought of the treat in store, and she and Sandy lived in blissful anticipation for the remainder of the day. Just before bedtime, Mrs. Porter noticed her bairns talking earnestly, with their heads together, and Sandy came up to her and said,

"Mammy, don't cook the ham and eggs till the afternoon, for we want to have all the morning to think aboot it."

Mrs. Porter laughed and agreed to the new arrangement.

On the Sunday afternoon, the children sat round, waiting for the eventful time; and it seemed to them as if the supreme height of earthly happiness had been reached as the tasty viands were sizzling merrily in the frying pan. Even Stumpy was overawed by the extraordinary preparations and sat quietly in the corner, with his head cocked, looking inquisitively up the chimney.

Sandy still looks back on that treat as one of the events of his life. To have his fill of eatables, other than of bread and porridge, and to leave the table satisfied, was something he had never experienced before: and it is always first impressions and new sensations that remain longest in the memory.

Stumpy lay and growled over his bone with mis-

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erly greed; and, weeks afterwards, when it was bare and polished like a billiard ball, he would resurrect it from the backyard, gloat over it and bury it again for future enjoyment.

CHAPTER VI

Saunders' Plans

GEORGE SAUNDERS lived by himself, in the small cottage back a little from the road, on the slope of the Knowe. In his early days, he had been the cleverest lawyer in the country and ever the wildest rake.

Stories still went the round, of how he would hold a court spellbound by his hypnotic speeches, hoodwink the juries and pull a criminal out of the very teeth of the law; and yet, on the same night, be carried home, drunk and helpless. As time wore on, his dissipation became more and more frequent, until, at last, he began to fail to keep his appointments with his clients, who gradually sought others less brilliant but more reliable.

Some distant relative left him an annuity, and any little usefulness he might have exercised as a citizen, ceased from that moment. He chummed with the most disreputable characters in the town and his whole time was divided between getting drunk and getting sobered up again. His quarterly remittances were generally mortgaged before their arrival and he was ever on the look out for a small loan to tide him over. On the sly, he ran a ledger account at

McHaffie's Inn, and it was ever his first care to pay his outstandings for liquor, up-to-date, as soon as his allowance came to hand; for he would rather, a thousand times, that his credit at the grocer's be cut off, than that McHaffie should close down on him. It bestowed a kind of dignity upon him, among those of his friends and followers who were aware of it, to have this running account and to be trusted by the close-fisted publican. But McHaffie knew his man, or rather, he knew his whiskey and the hold it had on his man, and he was taking fewer chances with Saunders than other folks imagined.

Occasionally, George Saunders would pull himself together for a few weeks, and then he would keep himself neat and clean and the old-time masterfulness and cleverness would display itself in his conversation and in all his dealings. But these periods of regeneration were coming with less and less frequency as the years slipped by.

On this particular morning, the mail had just arrived, bearing for him a letter from his brother in Western Canada. It was short and businesslike, and lost no time in fraternal greetings: nevertheless, it set George Saunders thinking harder than he had thought for some time, and it was the cause of a considerable falling away in McHaffie's sales for several weeks afterwards.

The letter read,

Dear George,

You will remember, ten years ago, when I was home, I gave Telford, the Vet, a deed of sale for

some acreage I held west of Winnipeg. The purchase price was one hundred and fifty pounds. Telford merely took over the land to help me out. Arrangements have just been concluded and the Railroad is going right through the property. A town springing up all around. It is worth all kinds of money now, and, in the near future, will be worth more.

Telford cannot know of this increase in value and the probability is that he has forgotten all about his having the deed. Buy this back from him if you can, for anything up to five hundred pounds, and, on the day you succeed, I will cable you the money, with an additional five hundred for your commission in the transaction. But remember the whole affair must be kept secret.

Yours,

WILLIAM SAUNDERS.

Saunders sat with his elbows on the table in front of him. He read and reread the letter, until every word was burnt in his mind. His thoughts vented themselves in soliloquy.

"If I go to Telford and offer him money for that deed, he will immediately make inquiry to ascertain its value, and that would spoil everything. The old fox does not need that land; he has plenty at home. And yet, there is no way of making him give it up. I could tell him some Canadian farmer wanted it and he might sell, but then, he might not. It would be chancey. I can't afford to take chances, with

five hundred pounds for myself dangling at my nose.

Yes, and if William can afford to let me have that amount, as my share, how much must he be getting out of it? No, no, Mr. William, not so fast. I am in this now and I am going to stay in it. That deed was made in my old office in Main Street. Telford certainly never went to the trouble of having it registered in the Land Office at Winnipeg. I don't suppose he ever knew of such a protection. If I could only get hold of that deed, without him knowing it, I could deny that there ever was such a document, if he raised the question, which would be unlikely seeing he thinks it valueless. I could cable to William that I had bought it from Telford and, after he remits to me, Telford's five hundred and my own five hundred, I can tell him that I have burned the paper and he can go right ahead and realise as if the property were his own, as it once was. I shall pocket both monies and nobody will be any the wiser.

"Then, if Mr. William doesn't do the right thing by me; I shall have him by the nose, and by the ears as well. The deed will be safe in my keeping and a fine lever it will make. Ha, ha," he chuckled, "You cannot beat George Saunders yet, not by a long chalk."

"Telford was always a careless kind of man with documents. He leaves them lying loose in the pigeon holes in his desk. I've noticed them there myself. All that needs to be done is to take this deed out when he isn't there. Still, it will hardly do for me

to be seen hanging round his place. They might get suspicious. I shall try and get someone else to do that part of the job."

Next afternoon, Sandy knocked at the door, left the milk on the step as usual, and walked off.

A sudden thought struck Saunders. Here was the very chance he was looking for. This boy was working in the dairy. He was often in the Doctor's house. He could easily slip into the study sometime, and get what was wanted. Opening the door, he called,

"Come here a minute, Sandy, I want you to run a message for me."

Sandy thought it might be another ruse to do away with Stumpy, and, as a protection, he instructed the little canine to "Stand there."

"Sandy," said the old lawyer, smoothly, his crafty face working into a patronising smile as best it could, "you're getting a big lad and you'll make your way in the world yet. I'm right glad to see it in you, for your father and I were good friends."

The tone of Saunders' voice did not fire his youthful listener with the ambition that the doctor had, only a short time previously.

"By the way," he continued, "I want you to run an errand. You know Doctor Telford's room with the papers in it. Well,—I was down there the other day, seeing the doctor, and I left a letter of mine there. It is in a yellow envelope and has a beaver stamped on the outside of it. You know what a beaver is?"

"Ay," answered Sandy, "it's a furry beast, with a stick in its mouth and a tail like the handle o' a spoon."

"Right you are Sandy. Well,—it is not so very important, but I need the envelope and I hate to worry the doctor about it. It will be laid by in one of the pigeon holes in his desk, and you can't miss it. The doctor should be having his tea when you get back to the dairy, so just run into the study and get the yellow envelope for me. I will give you a whole sixpence to yourself when you bring it back.

"Mind though, whatever you do, don't worry the doctor, or anybody else about it, because they might think it queer of me leaving it behind so careless-like."

Sandy took in all Saunders said and replied,

"I know where he keeps the big envelopes, Mr. Saunders, but I'm no' going in there to take this one away. It might look gey like stealing. But if you like I'll ask the Doctor for it for you."

Saunders face underwent a series of expressions varying from perplexity to anger. He saw at once that he had made a mistake and he cursed himself for it. He decided that he had better end the interview as speedily as possible, trusting that the offhand way he had put the whole affair before Sandy would make him think nothing more about it. And that is just how it turned out.

"All right, Sandy," he replied. "Never mind; I just thought you might like to earn a sixpence without much trouble. I can get it myself to-morrow

quiet easily. I'm thinking, though, that you are too frightened, and nervous like a lassie, to make very much headway in the world, after all."

Sandy was stung by the taunt of being likened to a girl, for he had always had an exultant kind of feeling, away down, that he wasn't one. But he turned and walked away, much to the delight of Stumpy, who doubled upon his summersaulting performances during the next five minutes.

As soon as it was dark, Saunders slipped out and along the lanes, till he came to the back of Doctor Telford's house. He looked around cautiously. Everything was quiet. He tried the study window and found it closed and tightly snibbed. There was nothing for it: he must try again, some other time.

Next night, he was more successful. It had been warm all day and the Doctor had opened the window and left it that way when he retired for the night.

No one was in sight, so Saunders climbed through and into the study. He felt his way carefully to the desk, struck a light and turned over the various documents hastily. The yellow envelope with the seal was there. He pounced on it and drew out the contents. Inside was the deed he was searching for. He put it into his pocket with a little laugh of deep satisfaction, left everything else as it had been, and made his departure as noiselessly as he had come.

Soon after, he cabled to his brother from the neighbouring town, advising him that the purchase had been effected and that all that was now required to complete the bargain was the money. Two

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days later, the money was cabled and Saunders deposited it to his own account, jocularly remarking to the Bank Teller that his brother had been pretty successful of late out in Canada, with the capital he had entrusted to his care.

CHAPTER VII

An Outburst and an Uproar

SANDY'S education had been going on as well as could be expected under the conditions which existed. He had been duly advanced from Miss Kinney's Department, and the thinking part of his being was now undergoing a process of refining directly at the hands of Mr. Todrick, a man who thoroughly believed that his hands, aided by a strap or cane, could do infinitely more toward bringing the youthful mind to a state of perfection, than any of the more up-to-date methods introduced lately by educational cranks.

He had, to him, several indisputable arguments to support his theory. A boy was a boy and only subjective to the laws which had the strength behind them to enforce their ruling; and a continuous demonstration of the ability of enforcement was necessary for the very existence of the laws themselves. He had adopted his present methods with the fathers and grandfathers of these same boys, and with unqualified success. Was not one of them now the Provost of the town; another a Bailie, who, let me whisper, sentenced several of his fellow beings, every Monday morning, to fourteen days imprisonment for being drunk and incapable, an offence of which he

had been guilty himself and to a worse degree, but in the precincts of the Country Club and therefore not to be classified with the vulgar dissipations indulged in a common public house; a third, McHaffie, the owner of the largest Inn in the county and who, in the ordinary course of his everyday duties furnished victims for the aforementioned bailie, besides imbuing the policemen of the town with the feeling that they were earning their wages and doing their duty? Then there was the wealthiest man in the parish, who kept the pawnshop and anything else that came his way; not to mention the President of the local Bowling Club and the Superintendent of the Cat and Dog Home. Tommy, the bellman; Captain Knight, the baker, and Lieutenant Wright, the Ham-curer, who, with their self-styled titles, comprised the entire local volunteer fire brigade,—had progressed through the same course of education.

In the face of the testimonial of such a roll of honour, who would dare to insinuate that there was a flaw in Mr. Todrick's methods?

Like the other boys, Sandy had a natural objection to homework, and, on many occasions, executed the written portion of it, under his desk, with a pen-point between his thumb and forefinger, with the result that it was generally hard to make out whether the ink bottle had fallen over the paper by an accident or a black beetle, from the soot box, had wandered on to the page and leisurely explored every part of it. One thing was certain, it never bore the least semblance to a well-written exercise.

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Then, his memory verses were rattled off in a conglomeration of sounds, as unintelligible to him as Hebrew; partly owing to the fact that they had been learned when slithering along, on the way to school: they had never been explained and were merely got up to pass a parrot-like exhibition before the master.

There were no exceptions: the boys were all alike: they were healthy and natural, and had no use for home lessons at any time. But they had no Court of Appeal and they simply had to do as they were told. Nevertheless, they felt the injustice of having to pore over their books in preparation for the school next day, which they were attending already from nine in the morning till four in the afternoon. In their own boyish ways, they felt that the school was merely a place for repeating and correcting what they had to learn and write at home: and the same resentment and rebellion simmered in their breasts as would in a grown man if he had the worries of his business thrust upon him after his regular hours; when he felt he should be enjoying, uninterrupted, the pleasures of his family circle or the joys of the golf course.

Mr. Todrick found that his thrashings did not always have the salutary effect he intended. Every now and again, some outraged little being, who had been punished when he was in no way guilty, would burst the bonds of fear that held him. Even with the guilty, this had happened more than once, when he thought the chastisement greater than the offence.

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The retaliation generally resolved itself into a fit of stubbornness, in refusing to answer any questions, declining to go out on the floor or to hold out his hand, and all such negative acts of insubordination.

These outbursts had been very frequent in the school of late: and not with the boys alone, for several of the gentle little girls had given vent to their anger by stamping their feet and opening the flood-gates of their eyes.

Whether Dominie Todrick's advancing years had anything to do with his increasing severity, or the generation he was teaching was a particularly rebellious one, is hard to say, but there was not a boy, and very few girls, in the school, good, bad or middling, who had not been more or less harshly punished during the past few weeks.

Things were reaching a climax and the Dominie underwent many strange and adverse criticisms in the playground. But, so far, this was all the length the trouble had got, as the scholars dared not tell of their grievances at home, knowing, beforehand, that their parents would uphold Mr. Todrick, if only for the sake of discipline.

One morning, the master had occasion to go out for a few minutes. He called Sandy to the floor, and asked him to bring his slate.

"Alexander," he said, "when I am out I want you to write down the names of all who talk or misbehave, and, whoever they happen to be, they will get something to remember it by, when I come back."

Sandy did not like the job, but there was no al-

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ternative. For a brief time after the Dominie left, the classes were models of good behaviour, but little whispers, here and there, gradually broke through the silence, growing louder and more boisterous every minute. The girls started to prune themselves, adjusting the ribbons on their hair and rummaging through their bags. Sandy was at his wits' end. He tried by grimaces and dumb expostulation to quell the increasing tumult, and finally he pointed to one or two of the worst offenders and pretended to write down their names on his slate. This had the effect of quieting some, but the others,—feeling they were already marked for punishment, determined to take full measure of the enjoyment while they could, and they became noisier than ever. The more belligerent, with towsy-headed Andy Rogers in the foreground, shook their fists at Sandy and threatened dire things in store for him at "leave time."

As the Dominie's hand touched the outside door knob, there was an immediate subsidence; harmony prevailed and nothing could be heard but the buzz and murmur of revolving mental machinery, as every head bent diligently over its lesson; yet there was a tense, electrical surcharge in the air, and furtive glances were flashed as the master held out his hand for Sandy's slate. Sandy gave it up, looking very uneasy.

Its surface was a blank, and he knew full well what his share would surely be. Mr. Todrick scowled as he looked at it, then he addressed the class severely.

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"I have here a list of all those who were misbehaving during my absence, just as Alexander Porter has made it out,—and, before reading off the names, I want every boy and girl who was talking to hold up their hands. If there are any on the slate who do not hold up their hands, they shall get twice as much as the others."

One hand after another crept slowly up, until fifteen boys and girls sat there, self-accused. They were filed out on the floor, and many spiteful looks were thrown at poor Sandy, as they passed him. Andy Rogers kicked him hard on the shins; someone dug into his ribs with his elbow; but, worst of all, little Jeanie MacGregor, who always reminded him of a helpless, fluffy, little chicken, newly out of an egg,—muttered "Sneak," and curled up her nose in utter contempt.

The master went down the line, applying himself vigorously to his task, leaving a stinging remembrance behind him. He then gave the order to the fidgety line to get back to their seats. Sandy made to go with them, feeling a momentary wave of relief at his apparent escape. But the wave went back, as all waves do, and the Dominie yelled out,

"Porter, stand where you are. I am not done with you yet. You see for yourself how many were misbehaving when I was out. You have deliberately tried to deceive me into believing that there was none, by showing me a slate without a name on it. For such conduct, I am going to give you just as

much as I have given to the entire fifteen who have gone to their seats. Hold out your hand."

There was a murmur among the scholars; then a freezing horror seemed to settle over them at the enormity of the punishment, but Sandy held out first one hand and then the other and bore the infliction with many twitches at the corners of his mouth, but with never a tear. He drew strength and courage from the fact that he was clear in the eyes of his fellows and that they now knew he had not been guilty of "sneaking in" with the master. His hands were red and swollen as he marched to his seat, and, and he bit his lips to keep back his anger. The whole proceeding, however, left a volatile and rebellious spirit with the scholars, who thought, if anyone had been guilty of deceit, that one was the Dominie himself.

In the afternoon of the same day, a revision of Multiplication Tables was in full progress and things were going along pretty much in their usual way, which meant that two pupils out of every three managed to struggle through their part by repeating a given "table", from one to twelve, without the aid of the Dominie's "hint to memory", and the third was ultimately disposed of at the end of the tawse.

Gavie Rorieson occupied his usual place at the foot of the front bench. He was a poor, orphan outcast, who never had had a shoe on his foot since the day he was born. He generally wore his little ragged jacket buttoned up tight, or tied with string where the buttons had been, to hide from the world

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the fact that he did not have a shirt on, underneath. He was sheltered by an aunt, who took credit for his upbringing and continually reminded him of his indebtedness to her, although she neither clad nor fed him, leaving him to pick up whatever might drop from the larder of her neighbours; for she took good care that nothing ever fell from hers, at least when Gavie was around. He had a habit of pouncing upon anything in the shape of food, with an avidity only equalled by Sandy's dog, Stumpy.

He was a good natured little fellow and a great favourite with the other boys. He was the best football player in the school. No one could take the ball from his feet, when he got going; and, to leave him out of the team, meant certain defeat, yet, on many occasions, he had to be done without and defeat had to be suffered, owing to his being kept in to write a hundred lines for misbehaviour or finish some previously incompleated or badly written exercise. Poor Gavie was dubbed a dunce, and he knew it. It had been drummed into his ears so often, that he could not help but know it. He tried hard, probably harder than any other boy in the school, but to little purpose. Often, he felt he had his lesson perfect, but, when the testing time arrived, his memory became a blank and everything he said or did was wrong.

Gavie's 'bogeyman' was 'Tables.' 'Two-times,' and 'five-times,' and 'ten-times,' were easy, but these seldom came his way during revision.

He sat that afternoon in changing hope and fear, with fear uppermost as it drew near his turn.

"Gavie Rorieson," called the Dominie from his desk, "repeat the eleven-times table."

Gavie's heart sank as his body rose in response to the summons. He got as far as eleven-times-ten, without a fault, but eleven-times-eleven stopped him. He was not sure of it: yet, rather than give in without a nibble at it, he ventured,

"Eleven-times-eleven, equals one hundred and thirty-one."

"Wrong," sharply rang the words from the master. "Come out on the floor."

Gavie obeyed.

"I will give you five minutes to repeat that 'Table' correctly," he continued. Gavie got his book, went into a corner and applied himself diligently, and, when Mr. Todrick came at him again, he was certain that he had it thoroughly memorised.

"Close your book, Rorieson," he demanded, "and go ahead."

Gavie began in good style, but stumbled as he got into the double figures, nervousness being more to blame than his faulty memory. At every failure, the master thrashed him and made him start again from the beginning. Gavie's hands were swollen and numb and tears stood in his eyes.

One with less experience than Dominie Todrick might have seen that the best thing to do with the boy was to leave him alone until his mind got settled.

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It is impossible to make an ass go by thrashing, and Gavie was by no means an ass.

The master was in one of his cantankerous moods and had evidently determined that the table would be repeated correctly before Gavie finished. Finally, he chalked the figures on the blackboard and, singling them out with his large pointer, got Gavie to go over them again. Then he rubbed them out and asked him to try once more. But Gavie looked at him beseechingly and, in a trembling voice, said,

"Please sir, I canna."

The next moment, he saw the pointer raised above his head. He dodged aside and it missed him. The master became furious.

"Stand still, will you," he cried.

The pointer came down again. Gavie ducked for the second time, but not sufficiently. The sharp point of the stick caught in his cheek and ripped it open, and the blood trickled down his face in a little red stream. Gavie was anything but a coward, and the devil that was in him, awoke. He ran back, up the passage to the top seats. The master made to follow, pale with passion. Every child in the room was excited and angry at the abuse which might, at any time, be his own experience; but all dreaded making a first move.

Suddenly, little Nelly Porter, the youngest and quietest girl in the room, jumped up. Her eyes were flashing and her little hands were clenched.

"Dominie Todrick," she cried shrilly, "you just

leave Gavie Rorieson alone. You are nothing but a coward: so are all the boys."

The dominie looked round, dumbfounded with astonishment. At the same moment, a slate without a frame went whizzing past his ear and stuck, an inch deep, in the partition behind him.

As soon as the deed had been committed, Gavie dashed down the aisle past him, out at the door and away.

Mr. Todrick was too thunderstruck to think aright; and almost too angry to speak. He walked to his desk, lifted up his strap which always lay conveniently to hand, looked at it, then, apparently as an afterthought, substituted it by his dreaded cane. He turned and called Nelly Porter to the floor. Sandy was there as soon as she and he stood up between her and the dominie.

"Don't you touch her, sir: no' with that. She's my sister and she's ower wee and no' strong enough for you to be licking. I'll take her share. You can make it twice as many and twice as hard, if you like." And he stood with his legs apart and his hands held out in front of him, palms upward.

The master looked at him for some time, swinging between two thoughts. Finally he said,

"Nelly, you can bring me 100 lines written out by the first thing to-morrow morning. Alexander, you can bring 200. Now, get to your seats and don't dare to chat back to me."

"Rogers, McPherson, McIntosh, Gray and Fergusson, stand up."

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The boys obeyed, wondering what was coming next.

"Bring your caps and come out here. Now, go after Rorieson. Have him back in this room inside of fifteen minutes. If he fights or struggles, carry him."

The master was shaking with indignation.

"Be off, do as I tell you. I'll show him. The very idea; the very idea."

The boys rushed out; glad to be away. Dominic Todrick mopped his brow and resumed the lesson.

When the five got outside, they did not have far to look for Gavie. They discovered him a few hundred yards down the road, bending over the horse-trough by the river bridge, washing off the congealed blood which covered his face. The boys were on him before he knew.

"Hullo, what's the matter with you lot?" he asked curiously.

"We're to take you back," replied Andy.

"And I would like to see any o' you try it," answered Gavie.

Squinty was blinking and gaping in horror at Gavie's torn cheek.

"My, that's a terrible gash on your face, Gavie. It's cut to the bone."

"Ay," said Gavie, "I believe I could put my tongue through the hole. But is it very bad?" he inquired, not a little anxiously.

The boys gathered round in sympathy.

"You should put a spider's web on it." (suggested

Bowly. "Mrs. Thompson did that when Jock was drunk and cut his throat. Jock didna get better because the razor jagged his windpipe and let all the air oot. But all the same, if it hadna been for the spider's web, he would have died o' the lockjaw."

"If that hole in your face was mine, I would take it to Dr. Walsh and get him to put some stitches in it. The schoolboard will have to pay for it, anyway," said Squinty.

Gavie swung in doubt between the spider's web and the doctor's stitches, but, as neither was very pleasant to brood over, he compromised by letting nature take its own way with the cut, which after all was the wisest thing he could have done.

"Weel, are you ready to go back?" asked Rogers, squaring his shoulders as if expecting something. "The master only gave us fifteen minutes, and we don't want to be late and get what you got."

"I'm no' going," said Gavie. "And, if I'm no, who's going to take me?"

"We're to take you," answered Andy. "We're to carry you if you don't come yoursel'."

Gavie looked at the boys and laughed.

"Och, I'm no' going to bother carrying you," put in Squinty.

"Neither am I," said Bowly.

"Nor me, nor me," chorused McIntosh and Gray.

"There," said Gavie, "if you want to take anybody, Andy, you'll have to take the lot o' us."

Andy scratched his head. The job was beginning to look too big for him, so he gave in.

They all sat round the edge of the water trough, trying to guess what was likely to happen next.

As the time went by and the boys failed to return, Dominic Todrick showed signs of impatience. His ears grew red and the furrows in his brow deepened. Not a scholar dared to move in case he would bring the master's rising wrath down on him. At last, Geordie Tyler was ordered to find the janitor and bring him into the classroom. That was a more difficult order to execute than it looked on the surface, for the janitor was a joiner to trade, who kept a paper shop and looked after the school and the truants in his spare time.

Geordie went out, but, like the others, failed to come back.

Matters were fast reaching breaking point. Mr. Todrick went out himself, found the janitor smoking in the lavatories, gave him a reprimand and sent him off to bring in the runaways.

When the janitor set out, he impressed the master with the idea that it would be the easiest thing in the world, assuring him that every boy would be in his usual place in ten minutes. After twenty minutes had gone, he staggered into the classroom, more like a scarecrow than a janitor. The scholars giggled and laughed. The master silenced them with a look.

"Janitor McGlashan, what does this mean?" he demanded, addressing the dishevelled figure before him.

"Mean," spluttered the janitor, "mud, sir, mud. That's what it means. Just look at me. My own

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wife wouldna ken me. If I get my hands on the young deevils——.”

“Tut tut,” broke in the master, “don’t talk like that, man, remember where you are, think of the children. Tell me in simple words, what has happened?”

“Weel, I discovered the young dee—, brats, at the trough near the brig. I got the hold o’ Gray and McIntosh in one hand and Rogers and McPherson in the other. I tripped up Fergusson and tramped on him to keep him doon. Mr. Todrick, if there had been only five o’ them, I could have managed. But there were six. That young deevil,—er, tinker, Rorieson jumped on my back and I lost my grip. They got me doon after a terrible struggle. They hit me with their fists, yes, sir, they hit the janitor o’ Piershaws school who has janited for twenty-five years. They threw mud on me, and, for sheer spite, wee Fergusson jumped on me. They filled their bonnets with water and threw it ower me to make the mud stick. Then they ran away, and that was all. But, if there had only been five o’ them instead o’ six, I could have managed. I could so, I’m telling you.”

“That will be all right. You can go,” said the Dominie, putting an end to the story. “A boy could have done better than you did.”

The janitor shuffled out and silence reigned in the schoolroom once more.

When the school got out, the truants were waiting at the foot of the road near the railway station.

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The boys gathered together to exchange complaints and views, and to talk matters over. All were roused to a higher pitch of excitement than ever before.

"I'm no' going back, that's all about it," said Gavie. "The master would kill me, and yet," he ruminated, "if I don't—my auntie'll kill me, so I'll be kilt anyway. But I don't care; I'm going to plunk and ha'e all the fun I can."

"It's all very weel for you to talk aboot plunking," replied Squinty McPherson, "that only gets a lick on the lug from a woman's hand, and hasna a faither that wears a belt."

"You needna be so smart, Squinty," retorted Gavie, "you havena felt my auntie's hand, or you wouldna say that, it's sorer and nipier than any leather belt you ever got lickit with."

"Shut up, you two, and stop arguing," cried Andy Rogers, with his hands in his trouser pockets and elbowing his way to the front. "What we're needing is a new maister;—and if somebody would get a knife and stab him, we might be better off."

"That's a good idea," agreed Gavie. "I'll get my auntie's bread knife, Andy, and you can do the stabbing. You could wait till it's dark and nobody would see you," he suggested further, viewing in cold blood all the harrowing possibilities of the case.

"Maybe no'," said Andy, "but some o' you clipe-clashers might tell, and I'm no' going to get hanged and let the rest o' you get all the benefit."

"Never mind," intercepted Sandy, "It was your-

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sel' that talked about it, Andy. But we're no' going to stab him; that's one thing settled."

"We could fling clods at him," suggested Geordie Tyler, proposing a good and less risky substitute for the stabbing.

"We might do that, if we werena going to the school the next day,—but it's gey and chancey," added the cautious Squinty.

"We don't need to go back the next day, unless we are frightened," cried Andy Rogers, becoming suddenly brave on remembering that his father was going away on business that night, on a two weeks' journey.

The weather was fine and the idea was taking root in all the boys.

"I'm no' going to do these two hundred lines, anyway," decided Sandy. "I didna deserve them; and forby, I would have to write all night to get them finished for the morning. If we're going to plunk, let us do it, a' thegether, every one in the school; and we'll call it 'going oot on strike,' the same as the colliers do."

"But, when you go oot on strike," said Squinty,—his eyes apparently staring at the top of the flag-pole in the corner of the Bowling Green in the distance, but, in reality, concentrated on Sandy, "you have to have something written doon that you want."

"Here's a bit paper and a pencil," replied Sandy, producing the articles in question from his fail-me-never schoolbag, and handing them to Geordie

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Tyler. "You write doon the list, Geordie. What do we want first?"

Half a dozen suggestions were immediately catapulted at Sandy, as each boy thought of his own particular, pet grievance.

"One at a time, now," cautioned Sandy, "and let us be gey and careful no' to ask ower much."

"We might as weel ask a lot, when we are asking at all," Gavie answered, "for all we'll get, anyway, will be a good licking, and maybe worse than I got this afternoon. For one, though, I would say, 'No more than fifteen palmies in a day to each boy.'"

"Fifteen doesna seem very much to you, Gavie," interrupted Geordie, sucking the end of Sandy's pencil in meditation, "and the Dominie will never gie us less palmies than we ask for, even if we win the strike, and he would be doing nothing all day if he gied each o' us, fifteen. Make it fifteen to you, Gavie, and three to all the rest o' us."

"No, no," replied Gavie, "if you mention me special in the paper, Todrick would ken I had something to do with the strike; make it three to each o' us, including me."

"All right, put that doon, Geordie," cried Sandy, "and hurry up or we'll be here all day. 'Not more than three palmies to each scholar, every day, includin' Gavie Rorieson.'"

"Bide a wee, Sandy," said Gavie, scratching his head, "that doesna sound right, yet. Is there no way that you could leave my name oot?"

"Oh, ay, I ken," cried Geordie, "'Not more than

three palmies to each scholar, every day, leaving oot Gavie Rorieson.' ”

“Ach, you're all daft,” exclaimed Gavie, in distraction and disgust, “stop at 'day', and that'll be enough.”

Gavie finally succeeded in hammering it into Geordie's head as he wanted it; but by that time the latter had eaten through the point of the pencil. After considerable delay in unearthing a pocket knife with sufficient blade and enough vitality to pare down the stump which remained, the first demand was written down.

“No multiplication tables,” broke in Gavie again, as Geordie looked up, with a sigh, from his task.

“Hold a wee,” said Squinty, sharply, “give some o' the rest o' us a chance. You can surely do with the 'tables', seeing you're only to get three palmies.”

In the new light of things, this seemed quite fair and Gavie immediately withdrew his motion.

“No psalms and catechisms,” piped a small voice from the back of the crowd.

“That'll do you, Bowly Fergusson; think because your faither's a socialist, you can get yelling as much as you like,” came the familiar tones of Squinty. “And haud back a bit, you fellows, and no' tramp on my toes. Can you no' look where you're going?”

“Shut up, Squinty,” yelled Andy Rogers, giving him a push, “if you would only go where you're lookin', folk would ken what to do.”

Things looked dangerous for a moment, but

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Squinty knew that somebody would be sure to win, if it came to a fight, and he felt just as certain that he would not be that somebody, so he swallowed his anger and business was resumed.

"No homework," came the piping voice, once more.

"That's a good one." "Put that doon." "Tear up your exercise books," followed voices from everywhere, and hundreds of torn leaves were thrown into the air, while Bowly, the popular hero of the moment, was patted on the back for his clever brain work, with a great deal more vigour than the occasion called for. And so, "No homework," was added.

"Now," cried Sandy, "for the next one, I would say, 'No kept-in punishment,' for we have lost more matches ower Gavie Rorieson being kept-in, that I have mind o'."

The football enthusiasts heartily agreed, and Gavie felt that, if things went on as they were going, life would soon be worth living.

"Add to that, 'New jerseys for the team,' " put in the centre-half of that organization. But, as this clause was only going to benefit a favoured few, it was defeated.

"What do you say to a half-holiday every Wednesday?" asked Andy Rogers.

"That's another good one, Andy, shouted Geordie, "but could we no' make it like Saturday, a whole holiday?"

"No, just make it a half," came the reply, "for

every whole holiday I have to clean the knives and forks at hame, and empty the rubbish."

"Ay,—and I have to clean the hen-hoose and creep in below to look for stragglers' eggs," said Squinty, who fancied he had been silent long enough during such a vital part of the discussion. "Make it a half holiday every Wednesday."

This also was added to Geordie's list.

Some of the boys, getting tired of argument, had meantime climbed up the station embankment and were enjoying themselves by sliding down the chute used for the milk butts, thereby adding greatly to the wear and tear depreciation of their nether garments. The station porter, hearing the row, bundled the entire crowd off the premises. A new circle was formed on the side of the road, opposite the school, and fresh proposals were put forward.

"What are you going to do about the lassies?" Sandy inquired. "We canna strike without them and they'll no' strike unless they have something to strike for."

"There are more o' them than o' us, and it would only be half a strike if they didna come oot with us."

"Lassies are no' supposed to strike, and we don't want them," dourly replied Andy Rogers. "You're aye siding along with them, Porter."

Sandy did not care for the allusion, for it was reckoned a sure sign of weakness to have anything to do with that much despised sex. However, he stood by his guns and Gavie backed him up.

"Right you are," agreed Andy at last. "But

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they'll be wanting so many silly things, that we'll end up in getting nothing at all. It's a good job we havena time to ask them what they want, so we'll just put doon one thing for them."

"And what's that?" asked someone, trying to catch Rogers off his guard.

"How do I ken?" he replied crossly. "Ask Porter: he kens more about lassies than all the rest o' us put thegether."

Sandy was in a quandary. He had not the slightest idea what the girls would strike for.

"Give them new pencil-cases," came the shrill voice, the owner of which had, by this time, succeeded in worming himself much nearer the central figures in the discussion.

"No! no!" cried Geordie Tyler, fancying it his duty to say something since his secretarial work had become a sinecure during the last few minutes. "That's as bad as asking for new jerseys for the team. This isna Christmas time and we canna expect the maister to be a kind o' a Santa Claus."

Tyler laughed. "Just imagine auld Todrick as a Santa Claus," he added.

Bowly felt squelched once more and had nothing further to say on the girl question.

There was a feeling in the air that the most puzzling stage of the proceedings had been reached, when someone suggested "Cushioned seats."

The boys unanimously fastened on to the proposal; not so much from a notion that cushioned seats were really required, or indeed wanted,—although

most of them seemed to understand that the feline love of comfort was also feminine,—but rather to get rid of a subject which was distasteful.

Geordie added the clause straightway.

That practically completed the list, but Bowly, who, so far, had only had one motion carried and who felt that he must prove himself to be a worthy son of his worthy father, asserted that the list should be closed with the request for "A ha' penny a week pocket-money."

Now pocket-money was almost as scarce as trousers without a hole in them, and Bowly's suggestion created a fierce longing in the stomachs of the crowd for this luxurious weekly feeling of wealth, and, with a shout of delight, the final clause was put in.

Two copies of the demands were made out from torn sheets of an exercise book. Gavie was commissioned to pin one up on the gate, in the morning, and to intercept the girls as they came to school; while Sandy was told off for the more hazardous task of placing one on the Dominie's desk when the latter was busy in some other part of the building.

The boys agreed to meet on the Green Knowe at ten o'clock the next morning.

They sauntered away, but, as they reached the top of the road, they espied the Dominie coming out of the school, with Miss Kinney. As the destinations of the teachers lay in opposite directions, they separated at the gate, the Dominie following the way the boys had taken.

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None of the latter displayed any deep anxiety to encounter him, yet they wanted to gloat over him for once. They scurried over a wall, to hide behind it until he passed. He came along slowly, apparently deep in thought, and with probably kindlier feelings in his heart than he had had all that day, and, who knows, he may have been forming a resolution to make amends on the morrow.

He had been a tyrant for forty long years, yet, had anyone told him so, he would have been shocked and grieved beyond measure, for his progress along that line had been so gradual as to be imperceptible to himself. He guarded the honour of his school and he loved his scholars in his own way. He would have fought for them, at all times, against outside interference; but, away back, he had started wrongly, and had continued wrongly ever since, until wrong seemed right; and now, his Scotch dourness would not allow him to change his old-fashioned methods of respect from fear, to the new-fangled one of respect through love.

He had no sooner passed the ambush, ere a tuft of roots and grass flew past him, followed by a second which knocked his hat into the roadway. He made no endeavour to discover the offenders; he merely stooped to pick up his headgear, dusted it carefully with his handkerchief and replaced it on his head. Had his face been visible to the boys, they might have seen a tear in the eye which they fancied was forever parched and dry; caused by

these, the first indignities that ever had been shown him in all his long career of teaching.

Tyrants and drunkards are like the little boy with the sling, who aimed at the sparrow just for the purpose of seeing how near he could go to it, without hitting, and was greatly astonished when it lay dead at his feet; and, even then, it was not remorse for the dead sparrow that worried him so much, as self-pity at the punishment and degradation the discovery of his misdeed was likely to bring him.

But, after all, there was something commanding of respect in the Dominie's manner. It held the boys, and no more clods were thrown. They crouched quietly behind the dyke until he was out of sight, then they slunk away, ashamed.

CHAPTER VIII

A Capture and a Rescue

NEXT morning, as the girls trooped to school, their attention was arrested by Geordie's notice pinned prominently on the gate-post.

PIERSHAW'S SCHOOL IS ON STRIKE.

No more than three palmies to each scholar every day.

No Homework.

No kept-in punishment.

A Half-holiday every Wednesday.

Cushioned Seats for the Lassies.

A Ha' penny a Week for Pocket-money.

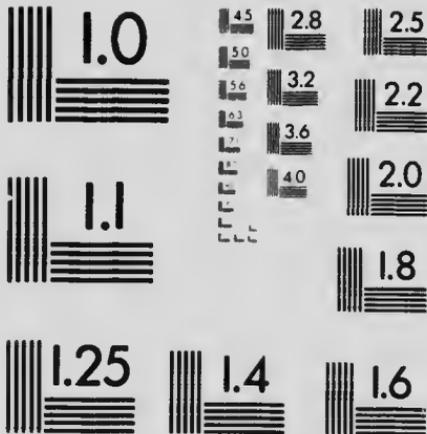
Gavie lurked nearby, explaining as well as he could the great benefits they all were going to reap if the strike proved successful. But, of course, he avoided the other side of the picture, the side upon which the girls were more inclined to dwell.

They were perplexed and just a little afraid. Some of the bolder spirits among them were haranguing the others with telling effect, when a subdued voice cried out,



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"Here comes Mr. Todrick."

Gavie slipped round the corner and disappeared like a shot. A moment later, the dominie was standing with his brows lowered, reading the notice. He tore it down and ordered the girls into the school. They had no choice, but obey; and they went inside, leaving poor Gavie hanging about dejectedly, feeling that his mission had been an absolute failure.

He was soon joined by Sandy, who had succeeded in placing his copy of the strike notice upon the dominie's desk. Sandy was already aware that the girls had been caught and that it meant that the other side had drawn first blood.

"But," he said to Gavie, "if the lassies don't intend to strike, they canna expect their cushioned seats, and I'm going to mark it off the list on the maister's desk.

The boldness of the project staggered and then rallied Gavie.

Sandy peered into the hallway and listened. The coast was clear. He could hear the dominie's voice in one of the classrooms. Sandy tip-toed cautiously into the study. It took him some time to find the paper, which had already got covered up with some others; but, finally, he located it.

He sat down in the dominie's chair and, with his tongue between his teeth and his brows puckered, he busied himself putting out the now unnecessary clause. He had just finished, when his heart stopped beating, then started off again, pumping furiously. The door handle rattled. He pushed back the chair,

made a dart for the window and scrambled over; but, with an agility which seemed almost supernatural to Sandy, the dominie was on him, clutching at the bundle of legs, and arms, and clothes as it rolled over the sill.

For a moment or so, Sandy was suspended in mid-air. He kicked frantically. The dominie held on. There was a straining, an ominous silence, then the sounds of bursting and ripping, and Sandy was emptied on to the grass below; his nether garment in the hands of the enemy.

On the other side of the railing, he caught sight of Gavie, waving wildly; but he paid no heed. It was Sandy's first public appearance in the 'garb of old Gaul', and he crouched against the wall, a picture of indecision and gloom.

Gavie again disappeared like a flash, and the cause of his hasty retreat swung round the corner in the form of the dominie, who caught Sandy by the ear and marched him into the school, as the wind flapped the little fellow's short shirt against his bare legs. Mr. Todrick closed the door of his study with great deliberation, then pulled his strap from out the recesses of his coat-tails. Sandy looked round the room hopelessly. He knew the game was up and his heart dropped to the soles of his little, dust-be-grimed, bare feet. He made up his mind, however, that, do as he liked, the master would not make him cry out.

A very brisk five minutes followed in which Sandy would willingly have parted with his 'iron plunker' in

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exchange for his trousers. The dominie laid on vigorously. Sandy bit his lip, but did not utter a groan.

It developed into a battle of stubbornness; Sandy did not want to yell and the dominie was determined he would. After a time, Sandy could see that the odds were decidedly not in his favour, so he pulled down his flag and surrendered. A series of the most blood-curdling shrieks burst forth, filling the school-girls with consternation and striking terror into the heart of the anxious and waiting Gavie outside, sending him tearing away like the wind in the direction of the Knowe.

When the painful interview was over, the dominie pushed Sandy into the large press behind his desk and turned the key in the door. He rolled up his tawse and replaced them with fond care in anticipation of future use; then he lifted up what Sandy dignified by calling a pair of trousers. To commence with, they had not been oversound, but, in their present tattered condition, they consisted chiefly of open-work, and it would have been hard for even Sandy, who was familiarly acquainted with their peculiarities, to have got his legs into the holes originally made for them.

The dominie grunted to himself, in a satisfied manner, as he locked them away securely in a little cupboard.

Meanwhile, Gavie arrived on the grassy Knowe overlooking the town, breathless and excited. The boys were playing leap-frog, unthinking and all

ignorant of the straits of their delegates. They quickly gathered round Gavie.

"Come on, you ones," he gasped. "Auld Todrick's got Sandy in his room and he's leathering him to death. The screaming was something awful. Sandy was deeing when I left, and he'll be deid noo. Come on," he cried wildly, "get sticks and we'll go to the school and get him away."

He suited action to his words. The others followed his lead in haste. Soon, a motley crowd, armed with heavy cudgels, was ready for the fray.

"Look here," said Rogers, when the plan of attack was being arranged, "what's the good o' trying to get Sandy away, if he's deid? We've no place to put his body. Forby, we stand the chance o' getting kilt oursel's."

"We don't ken, for sure, whether he's deid or no'," replied Gavie, "but stay where you are; we're no' wanting any fearties with us."

"I'm no frightened," protested Rogers, "and you ken I'm no'; and I could knock the nose off anybody that says it. I'm going with the rest o' you, so you needna get red-heided, Rorieson."

Considerable discussion followed and it was finally decided that only five should take part in the raid. Gavie, Andy, Squinty, Bowly and Geordie were chosen, or rather, chose themselves, and they set out boldly and belligerently, their blood fired with thoughts of the many doughty deeds, of great similarity, performed by their ancestors in the days of Sir William Wallace and the Black Douglas.

On nearing the school, however, their hopefulness faded a little and their feet lost their martial sprightliness. They slipped through the gate, one by one, and crouched against the wall under the window of the Dominic's room. It was too high up, however, for any of them to reach, even when mounted on Rogers' back.

All was quiet and not so much as an encouraging groan issued from Sardy's erstwhile prison,—or tomb,—whichever it might be.

Bowly and Squinty ran off and returned shortly, tottering under the weight of an old ladder, which they had found spending its old age and last days against a neighbouring wall. With fast beating hearts, it was planted up toward the window.

"Up you go, Rogers," whispered Bowly.

"Up you go, yoursel'," replied Andy promptly. "You're the wee-est and you'll no' be seen. I'm going to hold the steps with Squinty; it needs somebody gey and strong for that."

"Ay, up you go, Bowly," put in Geordie.

"Hurry," added Gavie, "and I'll go next."

And, more through stress of circumstances than over-anxiety, Bowly led the way, cautiously mounting up. Gavie and Geordie followed.

"Hold up your stick," muttered Gavie, irritably, from Bowly's rear, "and no' be poking it in a fellow's eye."

Bowly obliged, with a grunt over his shoulder, "You would think it was a tea-party, instead o' a rescue party."

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All went well until Bowly got his head above the window sill, then without the slightest warning, he ducked and slid down a few rungs, right on Gavie's fingers. The latter yelled and let go. Bowly tried hard to relieve the pressure, his foot slipped and he lost his balance, falling, almost simultaneously with Gavie, full on Rogers' neck, half-smothering Geordie, who was in between, and sending Squinty sprawling on his back several yards away. It took some time to separate the struggling heap and the noise was sufficient to rouse all the previous Dominies of Piershaws from their moss-grown graves.

Geordie's face was scratched where Bowly's bare foot had been planted with more familiarity than brotherly love. Rogers was bruised, and dusty from head to foot; his blood was up and he wanted to fight someone, and nothing but the mortal fear of the Dominic kept him in check.

"What was wrong with you anyway?" he blustered, in an aggravated but muffled tone, addressing Bowly.

"Wheesht," exclaimed Bowly softly, edging out of the way and holding up his hand. "It was the maister."

"Where was he?" inquired Gavie.

"On the other side o' the door."

"Did you see him?"

"No, how could I see him on the other side o' the door? But I thought I saw the handle o' the door turning," added Bowly.

"Ach," ejaculated Gavie, in disgust, "You're as

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frightened as a lassie. We should have left you behind. Don't make a noise, now, I'll go up first and the rest o' you can follow."

He clamboured up again and peeped over the sill. There was no one in the room, so he scrambled in and the others came closely on his heels.

The gallant band, armed with sticks, was together in the room, and the outside door was closed. For none of them knew just exactly what he was there for or what he was going to do next. They stood looking at one another helplessly, all greatly disappointed at not finding Sandy tied to something, or his dead body lying on the floor, thrashed to pieces.

A hurried and whispered consultation was held.

"Tap the walls," suggested Squinty, who was never without a penny dreadful in his pocket, "there might be a secret passage o' some kind."

At that moment, they heard a noise in the direction of the press and they all made a mad rush for the window. Rogers succeeded in getting over, head first, but Gavie rallied the others and crept toward the press to investigate. He tapped gently on the door. Several sharp knocks came back, in answer.

"Maybe it's a ghost," said Squinty, kind of scared.

"It's just the echo going through the shelves," said Bowly, the materialist.

But this idea was exploded when the would-be echo came back, of its own accord, louder and more insistent. Gavie put his mouth to a seam.

"Is that you, Sandy?" he asked, in a strained voice.

"Of coorse it's me," came the muffled reply.

"And you're no' deid?" he inquired further.

"No, I'm no'. Turn the key and let me oot, and you'll soon see."

None of the boys had thought of the key in the lock. It was there, sure enough. Gavie opened the door and Sandy appeared before the astonished band, blinking like an owl, half-dressed and looking considerably woe-begone.

"What are you doing with all the sticks?" he asked, surveying the band.

"They're to kill Todrick with," answered Gavie. "Come on, hurry up, and let us get oot o' here before he comes."

"But I thought you were going to kill him?" continued Sandy.

"We meant to," said Gavie, "but, seeing you're no' deid, we can do it some other time. We'd better hurry away; the lassies have just stopped singing."

"Have you g... troosers?" asked Sandy, "because I'm no' g... judge a foot oot o' here till I get them."

A thorough search was made for the missing garment, but without success.

"Come on, Sandy," coaxed Gavie, anxiously, "Todrick'll be here the noo. We can get something outside to cover you up with."

"I could have gotten away like this before, if I had wanted, and I'm no' going, so there," he replied doggedly.

"There are some auld bags in Dan McAulay's

yard," cried Squinty. "If I get you one, will that do?"

"Anything'll do," said Sandy, "so long as it's something, but hurry back, for Todrick might come in, any minute."

It was not long before Squinty returned, but it seemed like hours to the impatient band, who clustered around the open window, with their eyes glued on the closed door. Although Squinty was greeted with an abundance of abuse, his appearance was none the less welcome. He carried an old sack under his arm. This was immediately ripped up, fitted around Sandy's middle and tied in position with string.

Bowly giggled at the strange sight and was promptly advised to "Shut up."

"It's no' as good as breeks, but it's good enough for plunking in," said Sandy.

The press was relocked and all other signs of the invasion were covered up. They slipped out, over the window, one by one, in safety and in good order.

Wild yells greeted the arrival on the Knowe of the rescuers and the rescued, and the story of the adventure was passed from mouth to mouth, losing none of its colour on the journey.

True, the exuberance was slightly damped when the news of the rounding up of the girls came out, but the strike was on, on for good, and it was going to take more than a wheer lassies to make them give in.

CHAPTER IX

Almost a Catastrophe

THE boys scattered in little groups over the fields and woods, keeping well out of sight of the town, in order to save over-inquisitive parents and guardians from asking awkward questions; but they might as well have tried to hold water in a sieve as to prevent the news of the strike from spreading; and already a warm and interesting reception awaited the home-coming of not a few.

Gavie happened to know where there was a nest of young pheasants. It was on the other side of the wood, near the Big House, and he and Sandy went off together to have a look at it.

They dearly loved the wood, with its whistling birds and scurrying animals; its haunting noises and more haunting silences; its great, spreading trees in whose forks they could fall asleep with ease and whose branches seemed to touch the clouds; and its thick underbrush where it was so easy to hide from big Jim Sutherland, the game-keeper, as he strolled along, on his rounds.

But, to-day, misfortune seemed to be dogging the footsteps of the boys. Sandy was hidden in the dense foliage of the branches of an old chestnut tree,

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Gavie was seated below, whittling away at a stick, when both of them heard the dry wood crackle and the swish of brushed leaves, and big Jim strode into view with his gun under his arm. Gavie jumped to his feet and was off like a weasel. The keeper gave chase.

Jim Sutherland was a good-natured big fellow, but he was pestered continually by the boys and their depredations. He had the game to look after and he had to see to the immediate ejection of all trespassers, although, further than this, he seldom troubled himself.

Once Gavie was through the hedge and on to the road, Jim considered his duty done and he turned back lazily and continued his tour of inspection.

When he was well out of sight and hearing, Sandy slipped to the ground. He looked around in all directions, then gave a low, familiar whistle. Gavie did not respond. He whistled again, but still no answer. So he wandered about aimlessly, among the ferns and shrubs, expecting and hoping that something would turn up to give him amusement. The sun was too hot for anything violent; he thought of the river. It would be nice and cool to lie under some of the bushes at the water side. He climbed the dyke and ran down toward the embankment. The sound of young voices caught his ear, and, like a wild rabbit, he scurried for cover. He peered through the bushes. A boy and girl were on the other side, seated at the edge of the running water, near where it was spanned by the old fallen oak.

The girl was Doreen Telford, he knew at first glance, for her hat was thrown back, held only by a broad ribbon around her neck; her hair was shimmering gold in the sunshine. No other girl in Pier-shaws had hair like that.

Sandy lay, secure in his hiding, and watched her with deep interest. One moment, she was talking merrily to her companion, and the next, she was intent and earnest with her fishing rod.

She was so neat and clean that he doubted if she could really be happy, and he thought of the amount of good soap it would require to keep him in such a state of angelic sweetness; but yet, he thought, she was bound to be happy, for her eyes and mouth were always laughing.

He did not take much stock of the boy who was by her side, for no real boy would go about washed and dressed up like this one. That he was the son of the Laird of Caldermains, Sandy felt certain, although he had never set eyes on him before. And he pitied, more than he envied him, as he mused upon the awfulness of his having to go about all summer in shoes and stockings, to wear kiker-bocker trousers with tight bands at the knees which made his legs choke for breath, to keep his collar white and his tie straight and never to lose the little glittering pin that sparkled in the latter; to have his hair brushed and glossy like the men in the barbers' shops; to have to say "Yes, please," and "No, thank you," and to require a bell to let him know when it was dinner-time.

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Sandy was sure he could fight him, with one hand tied behind his back even. So, after all, a boy like that was hardly worth a second thought.

He could not see that they had caught any fish and he longed to go over and show them how he had caught them often, for he knew that under the very stones, near where they sat, there was bait that the trout would come almost on to the bank and quarrel over. But he had sense enough to know they wouldn't want him. He was just Sandy Porter, with bare legs and a bag tied round his waist; and he wasn't supposed to be there either, for the place was private. Doreen would speak to him: oh yes, he knew that, but, although he could fight her chum, the same boy looked like the kind who would shout for big Jim, the keeper; and Sandy experienced a feeling very much like the most of us have toward a policeman: it was not the boy he feared so much as the authority he wielded.

Sandy watched for ever so long. At last, Philip pulled a fish out of the water. It was such a tiny, little, baby fish, hardly bigger than a baggy-minnow, that Sandy had to bite his tongue to keep from shouting, "Put it back till it's bigger."

But the angler was far too proud of his catch to do anything of the kind anyway, and he showed it lovingly to Doreen. She took it in her lap and stroked it as she would a cat, but, when she saw its gills open and shut convulsively and its mouth gaping and torn, tears started to her eyes and she threw

it back into the water. It floated on its back for an instant, then flashed away under a stone.

Philip was angry, but the deed was done ere he could prevent it. Doreen rose, threw down her rod and stamped her foot.

"You're cruel, Philip," she cried, "and I'm never going to fish with you again. Why couldn't you fish nicely, without catching anything? I'm going home."

"All right," said Philip easily, "pick up your rod and we'll both go home. I'm tired of this anyway."

Here was something else that Sandy failed to understand; the very idea of any boy being tired of fishing in a river which was alive with fish. It was almost too much for him and he gave a little exclamation of disgust and spat on the grass.

Doreen climbed on to the old log.

Let's go over this way," she cried, "the bridge is too far down."

Philip clutched her hand and followed closely behind. It was as easy as could be; the tree was as wide as a bridge, but, as Sandy had always remarked, girls are so foolish on logs. And Doreen Telford was no exception. Her fishing rod got tangled between her legs and she stumbled. Philip tried hard to hold her, lost his balance, and the two toppled over together into the fast-running water.

Doreen's clothes kept her afloat as they swept down on the current and Philip was trying, all his little body knew how, to keep her head above the water.

Sandy's blood chilled and, for a moment, he was

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rooted to the ground where he lay. But Doreen screamed in her fear and her voice set him in quick action. He could not swim, but he knew how to run, and he sprang up and away to the wooden bridge, one hundred yards further down; his young mind taking in all the possible chances there were of lending help, his bare legs flying and his loose sack flapping. He reached the bridge, ran to the centre of it and scrambled over the wooden railing, letting himself down by the beams and posts, with all the agility of a monkey.

The children, borne on the flow, were rapidly nearing and they saw him as they whirled with the current. Sandy knew he could not reach down and hold them as they swept past. There was only one way; he lowered himself until he was hanging by his hands at full stretch, his feet just touching the water. He shouted loudly,

“Grip hold o’ my legs : grip hold o’ my legs.”

Philip grabbed at Sandy’s ankle as he swirled past, then he placed Doreen’s hand securely over it.

“Hold tight,” he spluttered, clutching at Sandy’s other leg.

It was impossible for them to reach safety in this way, but it gave them time. Sandy was spread out as if he were crucified and the strain soon began to tell on his little sinews, supple and all as they were.

“I canna hold long,” he wailed, almost despairingly. “Yell out for help, as loud as you can, along with me.”

They cried together, but the wait seemed like an eternity.

Sandy bit his lip till the blood came; his head began to buzz and the sense was running out of his hands. The noise of hurried footsteps was heard on the wooden platform overhead.

"Hold hard, bairn;—for God's sake hold hard," came a voice and big Jim swung himself over the side, as far as he could. He caught Doreen and hoisted her dripping form safely on to the bridge. Sandy grew pale as death.

"My hands are slipping," he cried in agony.

Jim grabbed Philip next and, in a moment, had him beside Doreen. He bent over once more, but Sandy's little, benumbed fingers could hold on no longer and he slipped into the water, without a splash and without so much as a sigh.

Quick as a hawk, Jim dashed to the other side of the bridge and dived over at the place where he saw a little piece of jute sacking disappear.

To the trembling children, it seemed as if he would never rise to the surface again; but he did, and with Sandy held tightly to his manly breast. With a few vigorous kicks, he reached the side and placed the limp and almost bare little body on the grass.

"Philip: Doreen: run home at once and tell them to send warm blankets," commanded Jim.

Doreen bent down and patted Sandy's cold cheek. The clammy feel made her shrink back.

"Oh! what shall we do? What shall we do?"

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Oh! Jim, Jim," she cried in terror, "he isn't drowned, poor Sandy isn't drowned?" She sobbed as if her little heart would break.

As best he could, Jim reassured her.

"No, no, lassie! He has just swallowed ower much water. Run home as fast as you can. And mind about the blankets, for he'll need them.

"Sandy'll be all right in a minute or two."

They hurried away, without another word, wet and bedraggled but none the worse for their immersion. Meanwhile, Jim worked on Sandy, who soon sighed heavily and opened his eyes. In a few moments, he was on his feet, as well and bright as ever.

"My; I nearly got droont," was his first remark.

"Ay, that ye did," said Jim serious', "but come on with me, up to the Big Hoose. I'm thinking Sir Jeems and Doctor Telford will be wanting to see you."

Sandy trudged along helplessly, by Jim's side; although he was not at all in an easy frame of mind. He knew he had been trespassing on Sir James Calder's grounds and, although Jim the Keeper seemed friendly enough, it was his work to catch trespassers and poachers. Who could say, but that he would tell Sir James and then, maybe, hand him over to the policeman. Besides, it was getting near Sandy's time for being at the dairy. He had to go home first for a pair of trousers and, if he got cornered by his mother, it might take a long time to explain to her how unlucky he had been all day.

He waited his chance, and, without being seen, slipped quickly and quietly behind a tree. Jim walked on, his head in the air, talking away to his imaginary companion. When he got no answer to one of his questions, he looked down then round about, in bewilderment. Ultimately, his eye lit on a small figure, with a flapping sack round his middle and sturdy bare limbs, climbing over a fence, a quarter of a mile away.

"Weel, if that doesna beat all," he exclaimed, scratching his head. "And what the mischief am I to say to Sir Jeems and the Doctor? A right soft-sanny I'm going to look. Deil tak' the bairn, ony-way."

Jim knew he would have to make the best of a bad job.

He met Sir James Calder and Dr. Telford in the avenue, hurrying along in his direction. Behind them, two servants were tagging, loaded up with the blankets Jim had asked for. They all stopped in consternation before the keeper.

"Where's the boy?" excitedly asked Sir James. "You don't mean to say you left him?"

"No! sir, no' exactly," replied Jim. "It is the ither way about; he left me."

"My God! He isn't drowned, Jim?" put in the doctor.

Jim fidgeted.

"No, doctor! His kind are no' so easily droont. I was bringing him along with me, as I thought. I was talking to him quite friendly, but, when I looked

doon, he was awa' like Tam O' Shanter with Cutty Sark at his tail. He's a wee warmer, I'm telling you:—but he's a plucky wee lad all the same."

When he reached home, Sandy did not mention his escapades. His mother was out when he arrived, so he got into his other pair of trousers and reached the dairy in good time to go on his rounds, accompanied by Stumpy, who had not been with him all day and, consequently was now in a particularly happy and lively mood.

Up the hill, on the road which led to the Knowe, they called on old Saunders, as usual, but that worthy was on a visit to his friend, McHaffie, so the milk-can was left on the doorstep.

Sandy gave Stumpy a whistle, but the latter was too much engrossed, teeth and claws, front and rear, making the loose earth fly at the foot of the lawyer's favourite apple tree, to pay any attention to such a rude mode of beckoning.

Sandy fancied he was after some old bone, which, probably, he had buried after a previous debauch, but the nervous eagerness of the little animal induced him to go over the fence in order to discover the cause of all the excitement. Stumpy gave a sharp bark and pawed with increased energy, ultimately uncovering a long, enamelled, tin box. Sandy pulled it out of the hole. It was locked and bore the name of "George Saunders", on a brass plate, on the lid. He thought at first of taking it to the lawyer, but, then, he never liked interviewing that individual on any pretext, so he changed his mind.

He knew it certainly must belong to Saunders, seeing it had his name on top and was buried in his garden at the foot of his own apple tree. In fact, it was quite likely Saunders had put it there himself, for some unknown reason. Sandy was afraid that he might be discovered with the box in his hands and perhaps accused of stealing it, so he hastily put it back in the hole, laid some stones on top of it and strewed a few handfuls of earth over that, stamping it down hard, in the way it had been before the dog interfered.

Poor Stumpy was terribly disappointed that his clever detective work should be considered of so little account, and, with a hanging head and a tail tucked tightly under him as if expecting a sudden attack in the rear, he followed behind Sandy, with funereal-like solemnity, for the space of about sixty seconds; then widow Croall's dog barked at him, and, in the canine altercation which followed, the box became buried in thought as well as in deed.

* * * * *

Late that night, when all the town was silent and slumbering, Dominie Todrick woke up, in his bachelor quarters, with a sudden start, perspiring and trembling violently. He sat up in bed, wondering if what he had gone through were really true or if it had been only a horrible nightmare.

Gradually it all came back to him, clear as truth itself.

He had beaten the little boy Porter, unmercifully,

and then had locked him away in the press. He had come home, when school was over, forgetting all about him. What followed after that was not quite so clear. It seemed to be enveloped in a mist, but, still, he had a recollection, vague and disjointed, of going back to his private room for his newspaper, and, as he opened the door of the press, he was stifled almost by the close, carbonised air which met him. He looked down, and there, in the corner, lay a little body, white and stiff. He touched it; it was icy cold. He raised it up gently and placed it on a chair, it did not move. He lifted back the eyelids, they were fixed and glassy. He shook the body, he cajoled it, he threatened it, but all to no purpose.

He looked around him, afraid. He tore his hair, distraught.

"God, the boy was dead; and he was to blame. Fool that he was; he might have known that there was no air in such a cupboard. Yes, yes; it was all clear, it was all plain. He shook in an ague of fear. His teeth chattered and his eyes sought the dark corners of the room.

But the deed was done. No matter what course he pursued, it meant ruin, imprisonment, yes, and maybe—death. That, after all these long years of honour and respect. It was too much. He could never bear such a disgrace. But no one had seen his act. Surely, surely he could hide up the evil work.

He threw his coat over the body, lifted it up in his arms and staggered out with it, toward the river.

The water was there, dark and deep and flowing swiftly. There was no one about.

He tied a large stone with the dead thing, inside his coat. He laid it down, and, with his foot, pushed it. It rolled over into the darkness. He listened attentively. There was a plump as it struck the water and sank, and, that was all.

Now he was back once more in his own home, in his own bed. He scrambled to the floor, tired and worn and nerve racked. His face was white and drawn, his lips were dry and puckered, his hands shook and his legs trembled under him.

"Yes" he argued; "it was true after all: only too true."

Distinctly, he remembered locking up the boy and he forgot to let him out again, until, until it was too late.

After that his reason must have given way for a time, for only now was he beginning to see clearly.

He dressed himself quickly, for he felt he must go out once more. He had heard of the morbid curiosity of murderers in visiting the scenes of their crimes, but now he understood it. He wanted to go back and make surety more sure. He hurried into the night. The tread of a policeman on his beat and the flash of his lantern struck terror into the Dominie's heart; a heart that had never known fear before. He shrank into a corner until the officer passed, then on again he went, keeping close to the wall, on to the old schoolhouse and into his private room.

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There was the press, and the door was locked as he had left it. He turned the key, almost palsied with fear. He looked down: the press was empty.

"God;" he cried in despair, "it is true, it is true, and I am that poor, innocent bairn's murderer. I knew it, oh, I knew it."

He dropped limply into a chair, covering his face with his hands. Gradually, he grew more calm. He had done this thing and he could not run away from it. The news would be all over the town in a few hours. But what of that; he still could be a man about it and give himself up to Sergeant McKenzie. But, first of all, it would be better to go to Mrs. Porter and tell her all. She ought to be the first to know.

He locked up the school and retraced his steps. It was very late, but the chances were she would be sitting up, waiting for her boy who would never, never return.

When the Dominie got to the house, he found the place in darkness. He knocked at the door, again and again, ere it was answered.

"Maister Todrick," exclaimed Mrs. Porter in surprise.

The old man hardly knew what to say. He was greatly upset.

"Eh, eh, it's about your son, Alexander, I'm thinking something has happened to him."

"Something wrong with Sandy?" she queried. "There's nothing wrong with him, that I ken o'. He's sleeping soond in his bed; as soond as a top."

"What? In his bed, woman! Do you tell me he's in his bed?" gasped the Dominie. "Are you sure? Tell me quickly, are you sure?"

"Am I sure my own bairn's in his own bed? Of-course I'm sure, Mr. Todrick."

The schoolmaster leaned against the doorpost, breathing heavily in relief. "Could I see him?" he asked, "just for a minute."

Jean Porter stared at the schoolmaster in bewilderment.

"Ay, come in," she said, "but don't make a noise."

She led him to the bedside, where Sandy lay curled up among the blankets; a healthy flush on his cheeks and lost in slumberland.

"Can I feel him?" asked the Dominie again, putting his hand on the warm, little face. "Thank God for that," he cried. "What a relief, oh, God in Heaven, what a relief!"

And he mopped the perspiration from his brow. Suddenly, he straightened himself up.

"I won't trouble you any more, Mrs. Porter. Please don't mention this visit of mine to anyone. Good night, er—er, good night!"

And he was gone.

"Guid sakes! the man must be dottled," remarked Mrs. Porter. "But, when all's said and done, it's gey and queer; first comes a flunkey from the Big Hoose, asking if Sandy had been hame, and at what time, and if he was all right; now comes Dominie Todrick. And both o' them mighty pleased-like to ken the bairn was fine. I wonder what the wee

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mischief's been up to, this day? One thing I ken for certain, he's lost a pair o' brecks."

And, with this remark, she went back to bed to think it over.

CHAPTER X

The Strikers Return

THE stragglers met again on the Knowe as the bell was tolling out the hour for school. A number of them, however, failed to put in an appearance and some anxiety was expressed for their well-being.

"How many are here?" asked Sandy.

"Here, here, you fellows," bawled Andy Rogers all over the place, "come here and get counted."

The boys clustered around.

"I make it twenty-five," said Sandy.

"I made it twenty-seven," responded Rogers, "but Fergusson there was jumpin' about like a puddock. I must have counted him three times. How many should be here?"

"Fifty-two," answered one of the truants.

"Jings,—that's terrible."

"Here's Squinty coming," cried a voice.

McPherson rushed up over the brow of the lower hill, blowing like a whale. He wiped the sweat down from his face with the lining of his bonnet.

"Gavie's nabbed," he exclaimed. "I saw him. His aunty was dragging him along by the lug, hitting him all the time with her other hand. He was struggling and greeting like anything."

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One or two more of the boys came in, all with the same kind of news. Quite a number had been taken to the school by their parents. Others had gone of their own accord, after having been helped along in their decision at bedtime the night before, by the application of the strap.

The little group was downcast.

"What'll we do?" asked Geordie Tyler.

"What do you think?" exclaimed Fergusson, throwing out his chest. "Fight it oot. It'll be all the same licking at the finish."

All were so engrossed over their troubles that none saw an eager face peering through a hole in the hedge.

It was the face of McGlashan, the janitor. He was listening intently. He knew he was powerless among so many young rascals, but he was hoping he might learn something that would be useful later. In this he was not disappointed.

"Weel, is it agreed that we'll no' go back?" asked Sandy.

"Ay, ay, ay!" replied the boys, anxious to appear brave and defiant even if they did not feel exactly that way.

"We can play about and go where we like for a while," said Rogers, "and meet here when the mill horn blows at twelve o'clock, then we'll find out how things are getting on."

The boys scattered and McGlashan's face disappeared from the opening in the hedge.

At the sound of the horn at noon, the Knowe be-

gan to take on a lively look once more. There was a fresh roll-call among the boys, of whom six more were found to be missing. It was beginning to look pretty much of a lost cause. Some of them were in favour of going back to school in a body. Others held out strongly against such a proposal. They were in the midst of their discussion, when three men appeared over the brow of the lower hill.

"Jings, it's my father," shouted Bowly, turning and dashing off in the opposite direction. Two other boys followed, and, from their action, it was not hard to guess their relationship to the men accompanying Mr. Fergusson.

A general stampede took place, all the truants darting off after Bowly. But they were brought to a stop quickly, for four men, including McGlashan the janitor, sprang up from the other side of the hill.

Four of the boys were caught.

"Make for the railway embankment," shouted Sandy in desperation. They cut across to the left in response to Sandy's instruction.

Half a dozen stern faces rose up from behind the dyke, just as the boys were scrambling over, completely blocking that road of escape. Only one way now seemed clear; that was to the right and through the hedges at the point where McGlashan had watched them earlier in the day.

The men on the three sides were closing in.

Sandy led in the rush for the hedges. He and Squinty got through, but were promptly seized as they emerged on the other side.

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The janitor had laid his plans well.

On every side the remaining boys were hemmed in and the circle of men gathered tighter and tighter around them. Bowly took command of the miserable remnant, standing in the centre directing operations, but hidden from view on account of his smallness in size.

But his father knew where he was and shouted to him.

"Here you, I want you."

Bowly, defiant to the last, tried to make terms.

"Will you no' leather us if we give in, faither?" he shouted.

"We'll leather you whether or no'," answered Fergusson senior, moving forward.

The little fellow knew that further resistance would be foolish.

"Bide where you are, faither," he cried. "You're ower many for us; we give in."

The crestfallen band was bunched together, under an escort of five men front and rear and on each side, with the triumphant janitor a few paces ahead. They were marched down the hill, past McHaffie's Inn and past the Round Toll, till they came to a standstill at the little church at the corner.

The first intention had been to take them by the Back Road, direct to the school, but McGlashan insisted on their going off to the right and down the Main Street, as an example to the town at large. So delighted was he with his capture that he would have gladly marched them up and down for the

remainder of the afternoon. But as the men had to be back to work, McGlashan had to content himself with his short parade along the only busy thoroughfare of the little town.

The boys were taken solemnly into the classrooms and delivered over to Mr. Todrick. The master thanked those who had so successfully aided him, then showed them out.

He ran back the various partitions which separated the rooms and, after ordering the new arrivals to their seats, he thundered out a command for silence. The roll was called. Not a scholar was found absent.

For five long minutes following, not so much as a pin-fall was heard in the school. Every scholar looked anxious and fearful. At last the dominie closed the roll book with a snap, blew his nose with his large, red, snuffy handkerchief which he fished out from the tails of his black coat, tapped sharply on the desk with a ruler and addressed the scholars.

"There has been an act of gross insubordination in the school, the like of which has never been in Piershaws. I can see, from the fact that every scholar is present this afternoon, that you all recognise the enormity of the offence. It is my duty as master to see to proper discipline; and I mean to see to it.

"It is only right and just that everyone who was absent yesterday and this forenoon should be punished. Not one will be allowed to escape. But,—there must be one or two who started this trouble,

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and they are to blame more than the others: for every flock of sheep has a leader. One of your leaders, I know already. I am now going to dismiss the school for ten minutes, to give you boys time to get the other, or others, to confess. And, if you do not succeed, I shall thrash every one of you, every day until the school closes for the summer holidays; yes! if I do nothing else all the time."

The boys filed out of the school and gathered together in the playground. They knew they were all equally to blame for the strike and they knew, also, that someone would have to bear the brunt, otherwise the whole lot would suffer. None felt martyr enough to take on the hero's part. A cart-load of straw, which was passing down the road, solved the difficulty.

"Let us take a handful o' straw," shouted the all-wise Bowly, "and each pick oot one. The boy that picks the shortest straw takes the blame."

"Make it the one that gets the longest straw," suggested Andy, in sheer contrariness, "it'll be all the same."

"No! it'll no'," replied Bowly. "We're ower fly for you. If you get the biggest straw, you can bite it shorter, but if you get the wee-est one, you canna bite it longer. The wee one makes it fair for us all."

And so it was arranged. Fergusson ran out and got the straws, which were at once handed round. When the different lengths had been carefully measured, it looked like a 'paw-raw' between Sandy and

the Provost's son, Jimmy Wyllie, for the unenviable position.

Andy Rogers hung back with his until the pressure became too strong for him. He produced a little piece of stubble; and everybody laughed derisively, for it was only too evident that anything worthy of the name of a piece of straw could not possibly be smaller. Andy raised objections as to the fairness of the distribution and tried hard to get away from the bargain; but, although he was the biggest boy and the greatest bully in the school, he knew what was expected of him and what would likely happen if he failed.

Andy was not by any means popular. He was too quarrelsome for that; and, while the other boys showed undisguised joy at their good fortune in not choosing the fatal straw and felt just a little sympathy for the one who was going to be sacrificed for the good of the cause in general, they would rather that this one be Andy than anyone else.

In a few minutes more, the classes were together again and all was quiet. The master called out,

"Gavin Rorieson, come here. We all know that you are one of the boys who started this strike, so I won't waste any time."

Gavie went to the floor, for he knew, as did all the others, that the trouble had all started with him.

"Now," continued the dominie, "I want the boy who suggested this organised truant-playing. Will that boy stand up?"

There was a dead silence. All eyes were riveted

on Andy Rogers. Andy turned pale and looked down on the desk before him, but he did not move.

When he came into the room, he had meant to bear his burden manfully, but, like all bullies, he was a coward. His heart failed him at the critical moment, and he sat still. Every second of that dread quietness made him feel more mean, until self-thought excuses came to his rescue. 'He was no more the leader than any of the others. He should not be called on to take their punishment: they all ought to be treated alike.'

He then raised his eyes and looked round, unabashed and unashamed, basking and bathing in the pardon his miserable, little conscience had given to his meanness.

Still the master glared over the boys, still the silence remained unbroken. All at once there was a shuffling of feet in the back benches and someone stood up.

"Alexander Porter, come out here," cried the Dominie.

"Please sir," shrilled Bowly, "it wasna Porter, it was Andy Rogers."

"Silence, Fergusson; who asked you to speak?" he thundered. "Hasn't Porter admitted his guilt? I knew all along that he was the other ring-leader. I am glad he has had the honesty to admit it, although it took him quite a long time to screw up sufficient manliness. Now, listen to me, all of you. The school breaks up for summer holidays at the end of next week; every boy must remain behind

one hour each night till then, to make up for the day which has been stolen; furthermore, I demand fifty lines every morning from each, till the holidays."

He then turned to the two boys on the floor, at his side.

"Gavie Rorieson and Alexander Porter; you have proved yourselves unworthy of the name of school-boys and neither of you can fail to come to a bad end. I cannot have this insubordination in the school and, as you are a source of danger to the other pupils, I cannot have you here.

Take your books and never show your faces inside Piershaws school again. I shall have this dismissal endorsed at the first meeting of the Board."

Gavie took his sentence with evident relish, but it fell on Sandy like a thunder-clap. He had thought of a severe thrashing, with possible extra homework, but never of such a disgrace as being expelled.

And this was to be the end of it all. He had been trying so hard at his lessons, because Doctor Telford had asked him to. What would the kind old gentleman think of him now? He would soon know, for he was a member of the Board and he had said himself that he would keep an eye on him. His mother; this would break her heart.

Poor Sandy was in despair. He looked up at the stern, pitiless face of the Dominie and pleaded,

"Sir, won't you please give me another chance? Thrash me and give me extra lessons. I'll do anything you ask me, but don't send me away, never to

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come back. I want to be a good scholar: I want to get on."

"Too late, Porter! You should have thought of that sooner. I have nothing more to say to you," he replied coldly, and he bundled the boys outside.

CHAPTER XI

A Smiddy Confab

IT was dinner time at the smiddy, the fires glowed cosily, but the hammers were silent; the men sat around, untying the knots in their handkerchiefs which held their mid-day meal. The cans containing their liquid refreshments simmered on the embers.

Conversation was at low ebb; rather an unusual state of matters, seeing a village smiddy serves the same purpose as a Women's Guild, both being the sounding boxes for all the gossip and scandal of the neighbourhood. But a black face peeped in at the door and was followed by the short, fat, soot-be-grimed body of Dan McAulay, the sweep. He dumped his bag and brush on the floor, raising a cloud of black dust which set everyone in the place sneezing violently. Somebody yelled,

"Hey, Dan; why do you no' put your soot in a bag, instead o' carrying it about loose, that way?"

Dan gave vent to a good-natured laugh, which came from deep down in his stomach, squatted himself in the corner near the furnace, fumbled in his vest pocket for the bowl of a smutty clay pipe, to which was attached about half an inch of jagged stem; and he was soon enveloped in a dense cloud

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of smoke, sucking with a noise which could only be warranted by a determination to pull the entire smiddy through the bowl.

"Ach now, Benny," said he, betraying a very decided Irish brogue, "don't be angry wid me and I'll promise you not to dirty the clane schmiddy. Faith, this ould place is the only spot, outside av the Green Sod, and maybe Heaven, that I could feel at home in. Many's the swell house opens its doors to Danny, but the owners av thim establishments open their swate faces too, and it's not much av a welcome that's given to the Schmoke Doctor. It's "Dan McAulay, swape the chimney and clear out. Why can't yez take off yer boots before yez come into a respectable parlour?" I tell ye, bhoys, the woman that said that, never saw me naked feet, or she would never have axed the question.

"The Provost's wife puts paces av paper on the floor and says, "Walk on that wid yer dirty carcass and keep off the carpet. Don't be sittin' on any av the chairs by accident, keep yer dirty paws off the edge of the clane table-cloth, and don't lean gain' the wall, ye human tar-biler. And, whatever ye do, don't shake yerself."

"It's shure the tiresomest job on earth, this swapein' business. I can neither sit, nor lean, nor lie, widout hearin' a yell, like a red Indian. I have just to kape on me two poor feet from mornin' till night, and stand in one place, like the monumint to me namesake, Dan O'Connell, rest his bones in peace.

"So, you see, it's the ould sc^t iddy that's Dan McAulay's haven av refuge, and ye wouldn't be going for to spoil his pleasure, would ye now, Ben?"

"Do you know, there's some av them would expect me to clane their chimneys wid me dress suit, white gloves and patent slippers on."

Ben did not venture a reply, for the door was darkened again; this time by the form of Jimmy Currie, the bill-poster, and Ben knew there was every chance of a few minutes amusement, if he and Danny got exchanging ideas. Jimmy was as hot-headed, as Danny was good-natured. He had most decided views on everything and these he delivered with an air of finality, which, together with a wave of his hand and a nod of his head, were meant to dispose of any other opinions, for all time. He spoke with a snivel and a lisp and these two impediments were continually at loggerheads for first place, so that his speech was only equal to that of a Chinaman with a hare-lip, venturing for the first time into the intricacies of pigeon English.

He laid his paste pot beside the soot bag and Danny immediately broke out upon him.

"Keep your sticky paste pot away from that bag av mine, Jimmy Currie. Do you want to be after contaminating the soot?"

Jimmy paid no attention to the remark. He seated himself on the soft floor, with his back against the anvil.

"Cheer up, Jimmy," cried Danny, "maybe it isn't true."

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"Shut up, can't ye?" grunted Jimmy, "and smoke your pipe, if that's what you call that thing you have in your mouth. What way do ye no' smoke a pipe with a stem on it, like a decent Christian?"

"Och now, Jimmy, the one I have lets me get nearer to the 'baccy. Anybody but a billsticker wid know that widout askin'."

"That'll do now, ye black-faced deevil; leave the trades oot o' the discoorse."

"Now bhoys," cried Danny, looking around appealingly, "did yez ever hear the like av that; who started about trades anyway? Who mintoned smokin' like a dacent Christian?"

"Aw weel," I'm no' going to argue with the like o' you, Danny, but I would rather empty middens than be a smelly, sooty, dirty Irish sweep."

"Maybe ye wid, Jimmy, and I wouldn't be the bhoys for to stop ye followin' your natural bent. One can be a man and a swape, at the same toime,—but nobody ever heard av a billsticker that was a man. Did ye now, bhoys?"

Ben saw that Jimmy was getting warm and excited, so he cried out, from his seat on the old horse-shoe pile, "Now, now, you two, don't get mad and fight. Leave personalities oot and let's have a nice, quiet talk on sensible things. This is no' a boxing saloon, it's just a respectable smiddy."

"That's speaking, Ben," said Jimmy, nodding his head reflectively, while everyone wore a strained and pained expression, intended to portray a special endeavour to catch every jewel of wisdom which he

might drop, "and I just came in to see if you kent anything about the strike at the school. There was nothing like that when we were bairns. If there had been, oor hides would have been weel tanned."

"And some hides were this time," replied Ben. "I'm thinking that's what stopped the strike."

"Maybe, maybe," continued Jimmy, "but I warrant they didna get half enough. Cushioned seats, if anybody ever heard the like o' it. They would need cushioned seats, I'm telling you, if I had my will o' it; but it would be in their breeks."

"Ach now, Jimmy, you're too hard on the cratur. They just did it for devilment," interjected Danny.

"Devil the devilment," replied Jimmy. "I don't ken what the world's coming to. We'll be hearin' next o' weans, two weeks old, strikin' for silk hippens; and a wee while later, for sweet milk to their brose, instead o' good black treacle."

"Ye can't blame them, though," said Ben. "See the kind o' example they get: one day it's the bakers; then it's the weavers or the billstickers; next the candymen or the colliers. If striking is good for the auld ones, it must be good for the bairns."

"I wouldn't wonder but you're right, Benny," mused Danny, striking a match on the side of his leg and relighting his pipe. "But you never heard o' billstickers striking, did ye now, unless maybe it was a match or a nail?"

"More's the pity," snivelled Jimmy. "And, if they had a Union, I would go oot on strike with them the morn; seventeen shillin's a week to a jour-

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neyman billsticker, with a wife and fourteen o' a family, it's a standing disgrace to ceevilisation."

"Shure," said Danny, "that's just a shillin' a week to each av yez, wid a shillin' flung in, in case there might be another comin'."

"What do you do with the odd shilling in the meantime?" asked Ben.

"Weel, I ay keep that for a glass and tobacco on Saturday. A man's none the worse o' that much to set off the responsibility o' so many weans, to say nothing o' the wife, and hoose."

"I'm thinking," said Ben, "if you make all yours billstickers, there'll no' be much chance o' the pay going up, for they'll swamp the market. And, as for your weekly dram, I do believe, Jimmy, you would walk across a tightrope as high as the Toon's Hoose, if there was a glass o' whisky at the other end o' it."

"Maybe I would," answered Jimmy, "blindfolded and withoot falling off either, if I kent beforehand that the whisky wasna watered. But you're away from the subject. They tell me that Sandy Porter's mither wanted to make a meenister o' him, if she only had the cash; but auld Todrick has stuck a pin in that balloon."

"You're wrong there, Jimmy," said Ben, tying on his leather apron before starting work again. "Mrs. Porter is no' so daft as to spoil a good blacksmith by making him a meenister. He's coming into this smiddy as soon as he is able to swing a hammer."

But what were you saying Todrick had done to him?"

"Man, Ben, I thought everybody kent," he replied. "He and Gavie Rorieson were flung oot neck and crop, and are no' to get back once the Board endorses it at the meeting the day."

"What's that?" shouted Ben, rolling up his sleeves. "Let the bad-tempered auld rascal try it. I tell you, if the Board says Sandy canna go back, I'll go down to the school mysel' and thraw auld Todrick's neck, before the whole class, or my name's no' Ben McQuirter."

"Here ye are, then, Ben; you'll be knowin' in a minute whether Todrick's neck is as easy to twist as a pullet's, for here's Tom Fergusson, the working man's candidate, straight from the Board Meeting," cried the sweep.

The little, bow-legged socialist, of whom his son was an exact copy in miniature, came in with a knowing smile on his big, solemn face, and straddled one of his legs over an anvil.

"Spit it out, Tom," exclaimed Dan. "What's the news?"

"Ay, tell us! That's what we elected ye for," said the billsticker. "You're fond o' the soond o' your ain whistle onyv ."

Everyone was on the tip-toe of expectancy, and Fergusson took full advantage of his advantage. He smiled in an inwardly-satisfied way, until the sweep threatened to throw his sooty hat at him, when he condescended.

"Will I start at the end or at the beginning?" asked the School Board representative.

"Oh! better start at the start," replied Jimmy Currie, "for you'll go back to the beginning anyway, before you end."

"Well, there was a full muster o' the Board, with Dr. Telford in the chair. After the usual business, Mr. Todrick had a request to lay before the Board. It was for the endorsement o' his dismissal o' Sandy Porter and Gavie Rorieson.

"He had his say, and the question was thrown open for discussion.

"'To my way o' thinking,' said I, sitting back, 'this endorsement is a mere form, and the Board is a figurehead, with as much to do with the sailing o' a boat as the figurehead has.'

"'What do you mean?' asked the dominie.

"'The boys are dismissed already,' said I.

"'But,' remarked Dr. Telford, for the benefit o' us all, 'the Board can send the boys back.'

"'And what would dominie Todrick say to that?' says I. 'I repeat again, we're mere figureheads, and, I object.'

"'Half a dozen upheld me, for, you ken, if there's one thing a man hates more than another, it is to feel that other folks think he's anything short o' the helm that steers the boat,'" went on Fergusson, continuing his nautical metaphor with evident relish.

Dan McAulay sighed wearily and lighted his pipe for the sixteenth time.

"Well, to make a long story short—"

"Here, here!" interrupted Jimmy Currie.

Tom Fergusson glared and went on.

"The dominie was sent outside; we went into the *pros* and *cons*. And, just to show the dominie that we could do it, we refused to endorse the dismissal."

"Good man," exclaimed Ben, joyously. "Shake hands on that."

Not to be behind, the sweep and the billsticker pump-handled Fergusson, although neither of them knew just exactly what he was doing it for.

"Wan wid almost think ye had won a pig in a prize drawin'," remarked the sweep. "But, go on wid the story."

"Yes! it doesn't end there," continued Fergusson. "When the doctor told Todrick, the auld fellow was furious."

"'I've thrashed your grandfather into shape,' he cried, shaking his fist at me. 'I thrashed you,' he said.

"'I know, I haven't forgotten it either,' said I.

"'I've tried to train your boy,' said he, 'and this is all the thanks. I was seventy-one yesterday. I've been at school since I was five. I've never had 'No' said to me, and I won't have it now.

"'I resign.'

"'He was ready for us, for he laid his resignation on the table and marched out.

"'Now, we're looking for a new dominie.'"

CHAPTER XII

Andra Campbell's Tea Party

AT the top of the Back Road, opposite the Round Toll, within a stone's throw of the smiddy, stood the quaint little church which Sandy viewed outside and in with a familiarity which, if it did not breed contempt, killed the awe and solemnity generally supposed to characterise such an erection in a Scots town.

Many inducements were held out by the hard-working and earnest helpers to bring all the youthful spirits of the district into the fold, and to prevent escapes therefrom, which occurred with great frequency.

It needed no wizard's art to foretell when a lime-light entertainment was near at hand. One only required to walk around the town on a Friday evening, and, if he found the main street dull and quiet, with an inexplicable something awanting, to pursue his journey past the church, view the flood of light pouring from every window and listen to the unbridled co-mingling of young voices, to form the surmise. If his courage were good and he cautiously peeped through the door, battling against the rush of hot air which met him, and found the place packed to

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overflowing, the surmise would become a certainty; for, to obtain an admission ticket to the lantern entertainment, required an attendance at the Band of Hope meeting on the Friday previous; and the pleasure of the former was considered well worth the penance of the latter.

The fact that the lantern was usually worked by a novice, who repeatedly inserted the slides upside down or wrong way round—and would have done so, inside out, if it were possible—did not, in any way, take from the greatness of the show, but rather helped toward the hilarity and enjoyment of the evening.

On such occasions, Sandy and Gavie were ever to be found in the forefront, struggling for admission; and, once a front seat had been secured, they bore, with contrite submissiveness, the gentle admonitions of their Sunday-school teacher, Andrew Campbell, who loved the boys with all the simplicity of his great heart and never wearied in his endeavours to bring them to a true knowledge of things as he found them.

There were four scholars in this particular Sunday-school class; and, despite many contrary opinions on the subject, Andrew Campbell was emphatic in his declaration that he had the best-behaved class in the school.

Bowly and Squinty were Andrew's oldest scholars. Accident threw Sandy among them; and, later, design brought Gavie along to complete the quartette.

By a strange bond of comradeship, the boys always

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referred to their teacher as "Andra." without any idea of disrespect; and Andra would have been insulted almost had he been addressed as "mister," providing always that he recognized himself under the title.

Andra got married, as Sunday-school teachers often do, and, while he would have liked to have had his scholars at the ceremony, his intended's relatives rose in open revolt at the first faint suggestion of such a preposterous thing, and he had, perforce, to satisfy himself, and the boys, with the promise of a party all to themselves at an early date. Needless to say, this prospect was the cause of keen delight; and, when Andra intimated one Sunday after the usual lesson that he wanted the boys to present themselves at his new home on the Wednesday of the week following, a muffled cheer broke out from his corner of the school, distinctly audible all over the building, bringing the superintendent down the aisle at a run and causing unrest in all the other classes, the various members of which were inquisitive to learn the cause of the outburst and wished, if possible, to share in the harmony.

With a good-natured smile and a word, Andra curbed the exuberance.

"You see, lads," he said softly, "I want you to meet me in my new hame, and the goodwife has promised to have lots to eat. It'll no' be anything fancy; just a nice wee time, all to oorsel's.

"I would like you to come at half past six, so

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that you can get hame again in good time, for it's a mile and a half to my place, as you ken.

"And, listen: you've all to do something, a song, or a bit poetry, anything you like. And you needna be nervous, for there will just be the goodwife, mysel' and you four."

Andra's last request acted like a cold-water shower, as none of the boys relished the idea of performing before the others. But, as soon as they got outside the Sunday-school, Bowly came to the rescue.

"I have a book in the hoose, with poetry and things in it. My father bought it off a barrow for tu'pence. We can pick oot something that the four o' us can do together."

The book was produced and a careful choice made; and, later, just as soon as it became dusk, night after night, a stream of candle light could be seen issuing from every seam and crack of Mrs. Porter's coal-shed, where rehearsals were in violent progress.

It did not take long for Andy Rogers and his followers to get wind that some secret meeting was in nightly session and their inquisitiveness proved troublesome to the budding actors. No sooner would they get started, than the pattering of feet would be heard in the lane, voices would rise from a whisper to a shout in argument, as one boy pushed another from the keyhole. Rude remarks were bawled through the cracks in the door, until those inside found it impossible to keep their thoughts on what

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they were reciting. After this had gone on for three nights running, Sandy got angry.

"I'll settle them. Just wait and see if I don't."

Next night, the unwelcome visitors made their usual appearance. They gathered round the keyhole, struggling with one another for a peep at what was going on inside. Suddenly, one of them raised a shriek and darted aside, holding his eye and screaming like a hare in a trap.

"I'm blinded. Oh, I'm blinded," he cried. "I'll never be able to see again."

Andy and the others surrounded the poor unfortunate, but they found it hard to get any information from him.

"I'm blinded, I'm blinded," he continued.

"What did it, Sammy?" asked Rogers. "Did they stick a pin in it?"

"Oh, I don't know, I don't know. It looked far bigger than a pin, a darnin' needle or something. But my eye's runnin' oot; I can feel it. Oh, dear, it's burnin' awful. Run for the doctor and the polis, somebody."

Rogers was inclined to ridicule his yelling chum.

"Och, you're just a big baby. It's only a handful o' dirt they threw at you. I'm no' frightened for them. I'll take a peep and let you see I'm no'."

Cautiously, big, blustering Rogers approached the door, and more cautiously still, he worked his eye to the keyhole. For a moment, he could see nothing of what was going on inside. A large circular object was blocking the opening. A ray of candle-

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light straggled through and Rogers found that he was staring into the eye of one of the boys on the inside.

Both boys made the discovery at the same time and both eyes were quickly withdrawn from the danger point.

Again, more cautiously than ever, Rogers peeped through. Again the large eye was obstructing his view, but it was withdrawn at once. This time Rogers held his ground and kept staring through.

There was the sound of whispering on the inside, then, all of a sudden, Rogers also darted from the door with a whoop and a shriek, and joined the other moaning individual, holding his eye and dancing like a performing bear.

"I'm blinded too, oh, I'm blinded too," he howled.

The boys ran down the narrow lane, past the smiddy to the corner, yelling and shouting in pain and terror.

Sergeant McKenzie, who was standing at the Round Toll, hurried over.

"What's a' the noise?" he asked.

"Oh, Sergeant," blubbered Rogers, "Sandy Porter and Rorieson put a stick, or a needle, or something in our eyes and we're blinded. We canna see. What'll we do, what'll we do?"

The Sergeant scouted the idea at first, but, when the bawling kept up, he began to think there might be something seriously wrong.

"Come on with me," he said. "I'll lock into this."

The boys gladly led the way to the coal shed,

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where wild declamations were still going on. The Sergeant drew his truncheon and hammered on the door with it. The reciting inside stopped short.

"Open this door, will you," he cried, in his deep voice.

A little whispering was heard, then all went quiet.

"Open the door, you young scamps. Would you defy the very law?"

The candle-light went out, and darkness was added to the silence.

The Sergeant threatened to break in the panels, and that brought Sandy and his fellow actors to their senses. The door was flung open, but no one came out. Sergeant McKenzie poked in the dark corners and finally dragged out Sandy and Gavie, Bowly and Squinty, to the light under the gas lamp which hung from a bracket on the smiddy wall.

"Who stuck the sticks or needles in these boys' eyes?" he demanded.

"We never did," cried Bawly, "it's a big lee."

"Eh, what's that?" shouted the Sergeant, as he grabbed at a queer looking, white-metal instrument in Sandy's hand.

"Please, sir," he replied, trembling with dread, "it's only a scooter."

"A what?"

"A squirt for scooting water."

Gradually the policeman was beginning to see the light of things.

"That was it, was it?" he went on. "And what kind o' water did you use?"

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"Please, sir, just plain clean water out o' the puddle, and, and—"

"And what?"

"And a wee dribble o' white pepper mixed wi' it," said Sandy.

"Here," replied McKenzie in disgust, "here's your scooter. Light your candle and go back to your ghost show."

"And, as for you, you young rascals," he continued, turning on Rogers and his disappointed chums, "I would like to ken whose back-court this is?"

"It's Porter's."

"Then, what right have you here? Outside, the whole jing-bang o' you and don't let me catch you here again. Botherin' me with your nonsense. The idea! There might be a murder or a robbery going on and me here wasting my time with a wheen bairns."

The rehearsals suffered no further interruption after that, and the boys succeeded in getting up the piece to their own satisfaction.

When the Wednesday evening came round, Sandy and Gavie and Bowly presented themselves at Andra Campbell's abode, sharp on time; burdened with arrows, a bow and a coil of rope, the stage properties of their play.

The door opened suddenly, too suddenly for Bowly, and Andra's genial voice cried out in hearty welcome:

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"Come away ben, lads, we're right glad to see you."

"Wipe your feet on the mat," instructed Bowly, in an audible undertone.

Mrs. Campbell's door-mat suffered in consequence.

"Hang your bonnets on the pegs there and come right into the kitchen," went on Andra.

The boys sat on chairs, in various corners of the room, feeling just a little bit strange in their new surroundings.

"Nice lad, that wee Fergusson," commented Mrs. Campbell quietly to Andra, as she busied herself at the table. "Did you hear him telling the others to wipe their feet?"

"They're a' nice, Jess," replied Andra softly.

In a few minutes more, Mrs. Campbell signalled that the tea was ready.

"Now, boys, there's no use of wasting time; sit in to the table. I'll say 'Grace,' then we'll all begin."

The boys needed no second bidding. Their strange feeling fled.

The table was stacked with plates and plates of buttered toast, supported in the centre by more plates of home-baked scones.

"Where's McPherson?" asked Andra suddenly, noticing a vacant chair and, for the first time, missing Squinty's beaming countenance.

"We went in for him on the way up," said Sandy, "but he wasna ready."

"He was greetin'," giggled Bowly. "His father

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was trying a new pill on him and said he wouldna be for a while."

"A new pill! What kind o' a pill?" inquired Mrs. Campbell with anxiety.

"Oh! just a pill," repeated Fergusson, as soon as he had swallowed one half of what was in his mouth. "Auld McPherson makes medicine oot o' plants, and dirt, and roots, and worms, and things; and he tries them all on Squinty first."

Mrs. Campbell looked at Andra in helpless consternation; Sandy kicked Bowly on the shins and Gavie dug him in the ribs.

"What's wrong with you two?" he grumbled. Then he addressed Andra as if nothing had happened, "His faither's a—a—you ker, a herb-beerist, or something."

Andra laughed.

"You mean an herbalist," put in Mrs. Campbell.

Fergusson was too polite to contradict the lady who was so ably attending to his needs—or rather, his wants.

"Ay, that'll be it," he agreed, "but, all the same, he makes herb-beer and sells it at a penny the bottle."

"Andra, I'm thinking it's your duty, as that poor bairn's Sunday School teacher, to see his faither and try and put a stop to it. It might interfere with his growth, and maybe kill him besides," suggested Mrs. Campbell, with considerable concern for the absent McPherson.

"Ay, goodwife," replied Andra, in a tone which

did not betray any superlative anxiety for the job, "it, it might be as weel."

An imperative knock was heard at the door, which displayed its chronic weakness; the lock squeaked an apology and sprang, and Squinty tumbled in, shame-faced and perspiring. He lost no time in unnecessary greetings, and the avidity with which he set himself to the task of making up on the others, who had had such an unfair start, proved to Andra that, so far, the experiments of the boy's botanically inclined parent had not made any serious inroads on his constitution, and that there was apparently no immediate necessity for any interference on his behalf.

A dead silence fell on the proceedings, broken only by the rattle of delf. The introduction of Squinty spurred on the others, and, despite Mrs. Campbell's brave efforts, the solid square of toast around the table was broken through time and again and the scones in the centre were attacked with great ferocity. The face of the hostess became red and hot with bending over the fire, keeping up the supply of ammunition. She went outside once or twice, returning always a little more solemn and a little more flurried and excited. She whispered to Andra and he at once endeavored to draw the boys into conversation.

It was unavailing.

As a last resort, Mrs. Campbell opened the oven door and brought forth a large, steaming dish. There was an armistice for a moment.

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"Tu'penny hot pies!" gloated Sandy. Bowly giggled again, Gavie grunted and Squinty flashed a look at both ends of the table at once.

The contest was renewed.

It was not until the table had been entirely stripped, that the boys leaned back, one after another; Squinty wiping away the surplus with his sleeves.

"Are you sure you have all had enough?" anxiously inquired Mrs. Campbell.

There was a chorus of "Ays."

She sighed in relief; although it was evident to a keen observer that, somehow or other, her pleasure was marred for the evening.

The table was set to one side and the party gathered around the kitchen fire.

"I hope you are all prepared to do something, lads, to keep up the fun," said Andra. "Jess says she'll sing to us, and I'll take my turn as weel. Who's first now?"

"We're going to do a reading," volunteered Sandy.

"Come on then, let's hear it," encouraged Andra.

"But we're all going to do it," interjected Bowly.

"It's a dialogue for four. But we had better wait a while. We havena much rope and it might no' go round Sandy, after what he ate."

Sandy glared. "That'll do, Bowly, for you ate as much as any o' us, and maybe more."

"Boys," interposed Mrs. Campbell, "it's no' nice to hear you calling each other nicknames. You shouldna do it. Why no' call wee Fergusson by his

right name, Victor? I'm sure it's far nicer than Bowly."

"Huh!" sniffed Gavie, "I'd rather be called Jeanie. Victor's a lassie's name or a dog's name."

"You should let Fergusson decide that, Gavie. Which do you like best, Victor?"

"Oh! Bowly's good enough for me," said the imperturbable Fergusson with decision. "I'm used to it."

That settled the matter.

"I hope you don't hurt each other in this piece you are going to do," said Mrs. Campbell, changing the subject.

"No," replied Sandy. "We've done it a hundred times and nobody has been hurt yet, except just once, when Squinty nearly got his eye knocked straight with an arrow."

"Guid preserve us all! surely there's no' shootin' in it?" Mrs. Campbell could not disguise her fear for her ornaments and pictures.

"Oh, no' so very much! But don't be frightened, we'll no' break anything," replied Sandy in an attempt to soothe.

But Mrs. Campbell's mind was by no means at rest.

"Sing to us, Jess," asked Andra. She immediately rose and lilted "Annie Laurie" in a nice, full, sweet voice.

"You're a gey nice singer," complimented Bowly.

"Thank you, Victor! It's real nice o' you to say it," replied the singer, highly pleased.

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"You next, Andra," cried Sandy.

"No, no, I'm no' going to sing, lads."

"Tell us how you got your leg broken at the football match," coaxed Gavie.

"Och! I've told you that half a dozen times already."

"Tell it again, tell it again," came the not-to-be-refused chorus. So Andra settled himself in his chair, bending forward and facing the boys.

Mrs. Campbell knew her husband's weakness. "Now, Andra," she said quietly, "be modest in the tellin'. It doesna do to teach the boys to be boastful."

"Ay, ay! Jess, ay ay!

"It was six years ago; the last game I played, and a week before I got converted. Andra Campbell was a wild lad then, and a good player forby. I was outside left for the Piershaws first eleven; fast as a hare, wriggly as an eel, and cunnin' as a whitrick.

"We had just got through the first round o' the Qualifying Cup. Thanks to me, for I scored the winning goal o' the match. We were drawn against the Airthurie in the second round, and every man o' us was sure he could beat them. When we started, there were hundreds and hundreds o' the Airthurie's supporters inside the field, at threepence a heid, and thousands o' oor own along the Railway embankment where they could see for nothing.

"It was a hard game, from the start to finish. We all worked like demons. The Airthurie boys kent

me by reputation and had been warned to keep their eyes on me. Every time I moved, there was a man on top o' me; ay, and often when I didna move. But, for all that I broke away, time and again, passing to wee McCairtney, who was ducking, and dodging; hitting the cross-bar and the uprights with his shots, but never getting the net.

"When time was nearly up, I went fair mad, and, getting the ball near oor own goal, I dribbled round half a dozen and made for the Airthurlic's end. The crowd was cheering something awful. I tried to pass the right half on the inside and didna notice one o' the backs was so near me. He stuck in his foot for the ball, I went banging against him, a pistol shot rang oot, loud and clear,—and everything went dark."

Gavie was gradually being worked up.

"That's a new part," he cried innocently, clapping his hands in his delight.

"Ay," apologised Andra, "I had forgotten about it when I told the story to you before."

Mrs. Campbell looked at her husband in disappointment.

"Did somebody shcot you?" asked Squinty.

"No! no! Jimmy. That was just a figure o' speech; my leg broke and I lost my senses."

"Who won?" asked Sandy, without the slightest show of sympathy.

"Oh! did I no' tell you? The Airthurlic won, by ten goals to one. It was a big defeat, I'm no' denying that."

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"Who scored the goal for Piershaws?" came another query.

"I'm no' right sure, for it was after I was carried off; but I think it was McCairtney, although I had a lot to do with it, for, vou ken, lads, what really scored that goal was anger, sheer anger.

"In fact, I heard some o' the boys saying, when they came up to see me in the infirmary, that if my leg had been bro'len in the first five minutes o' the game, we would have won."

And, with this very doubtful compliment to his own ability, Andra concluded.

Gavie sighed with pent-up excitement, and pushed back his chair right on the tip of the cat's tail. This created a bit of an uproar for a while and somewhat spoiled the end of Andra's story. It was fortunate for him, however, for it saved him the necessity of answering any more of the boys' well-nigh unanswerable questions.

Gavie was quite upset over the accident and Sandy kindly offered to tie his new picture-handkerchief round the cat's affected part, but Mrs. Campbell did not consider any "first aid" necessary.

By way of variety, the good lady next passed round some apples and sweets; a change entirely to the boys' liking. She then put what remained of them on a small side table in the adjoining room, the only other room in the house.

The time was going swiftly, too swiftly for the Sunday-school scholars.

"Let us have the play now," said Andra. "I've

been on edge all night to see it. So has the goodwife here."

This was particularly true in regard to Mrs. Campbell.

The play was the old, familiar story of William Tell demonstrating his skill as a marksman, with the bow and arrow, for his own life and that of his son.

As Andy Rogers was not on hand, Bowly was set in the armchair as Gessler, the Tyrant. On account of his good memory, Sandy was intrusted with the title role, he having most of the talking to do. For exactly the opposite reason, Gavie Rorieson insisted on taking the part of the son from whose head the apple had to be shot. Squinty impersonated Sarnem; not that he was in any way suited to the part, but it was the only other one in the piece that did not call for a display of any great histrionic ability.

After some skirmishing in the lobby, Squinty brought out Sandy, trussed like a Christmas fowl but doing his best to look defiant in spite of it.

All went merrily until the arrows were produced, when Mrs. Campbell's fit of nervousness reasserted itself. After a time, Andra succeeded in quieting her.

"Sarnem, measure hence the distance, three hundred paces," came the cold, remorseless voice from the armchair.

Squinty caught Gavie by the arm and proceeded with long steps into the parlour, out of sight of the audience.

"Look out!" came the irritable exclamation from

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Gavie from the next room, "you're nippin' my arm."

Squinty loosened his hold a bit and placed the apple on Gavie's head. Thereupon, William Tell raised his bow to his shoulder. From this point, everything seemed to go wrong. With a twang, accompanied by a twin twang in Mrs. Campbell's inside, "the arrow sped toward the mark"; but, by that time, the mark and its attendants had sped toward the table upon which the apples and sweets lay.

It was Squinty's duty to rush in and proclaim that the arrow had struck true, but he failed to put in an appearance. The delay made Sandy and Bowly uneasy. Mrs. Campbell and Andra sat in sympathetic anticipation.

The cat tore out from the parlour in what looked like uncalled-for haste. Bowly had some misgivings and, after a few moments, he jumped from his chair.

"Bide a minute and I'll go in and see what's wrong," he said.

His disappearance into the parlour added greatly to the noise and scuffling that was going on there; and it was only by an act of great self-control that Sandy restrained himself from assisting Bowly with his investigations.

At last, the latter returned. His pockets were bulging strangely; but, with kingly dignity, he seated himself once more in the armchair.

Squinty next rushed in, his garments distended in the same manner as Bowly's, only more so. His

eyes watered and he seemed to be labouring under some strong emotion. He swallowed hard, coughed once or twice, then spluttered; and a tell-tale piece of candy dislodged itself from his windpipe and fell upon the floor.

The zest seemed to have gone out of the play. Squinty hurried through his part.

"The boy is safe; no hair of him is singed," he cried.

"That's wrong," corrected Sandy, ill-humoured at having missed a share in the spoil. "Touched is the right word."

"Touched," repeated Squinty submissively; and the performance concluded.

Andra laughed loud and long.

"It's great," he cried, clapping his hands and looking at the clock on the mantel-piece, "just great. Could you no' do it over again at the Sunday-school soiree in the winter time?"

"It would be real nice," nodded Mrs. Campbell in relief.

The idea did not catch on, for visions of sarcastic shouts and tea-soaked cookies came up before the boys.

"I don't think it would do for the kirk," replied Sandy. "The minister might no' like it."

Mrs. Campbell yawned. The cat curled itself up on the rug. Time did not seem to enter into the calculations of the boys, who were quite ready to stay all night if asked. At last Andra had to come

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out with his thoughts flat-footed. He pulled out his watch.

"Weel, it's gettin' late, boys, and you have a long walk before you. We meant to gie you a bite or two more, before you went home; but, the fact is, you ate up everything in the hoose the first time. The woman next door has just enough to put her by the morn's breakfast, and the shops are a' shut."

The boys got their bonnets, and Mrs. Campbell and Andra went with them as far as the door.

"You'll all be at the Sunday-school on Sunday? Good night, lads! Good night! You'll no be frightened passing the graveyard?"

A series of emphatic "Nos" greeted the foolish suggestion; but, when the door closed, everything was dark and dismal and not the least like the bright, merry evening which had just ended. An occasional lamp flickered, but only an occasional one.

"I think we'll go hame by the highroad," ventured Bowly. "It's longer, but the walk will do us good, after being in all night."

The others fell in with the proposal with wonderful unanimity; but not so wonderful after all when one knows that it was the low road that led past the graveyard.

CHAPTER XIII

The New Dominic

THE first day at school, after the holidays, is always one of considerable excitement for the scholars, and, on this particular occasion, Piershaws School was literally toppling over with it; for Mr. Todrick was no longer its Master and the members of the School Board were introducing his successor to the pupils, a young man with a keen face, and clear eyes telling of a healthy body. His name was John Galt and he was a Master of Arts from Aberdeen.

He had little to say before the members of the Board, or even after they had gone, but, in a few words, he let the scholars understand that from the beginning they were going to have fair play, that home lessons would be reduced to a minimum, providing what was given them was done well, that it was his desire they should excel in the playground as well as in the school and that nothing underhand or mean would be tolerated in either place.

His method of teaching was different from that of his predecessor. Everything he taught the scholars, he explained. They must master arithmetic for the reason that they would be useless in the business world without it and could not possibly hope to be

anything worth while, if they neglected it. Latin and French must be learned, as the language they spoke and read was almost entirely made up from other languages, and, if they knew Latin and French well, they would hardly ever require to look between the covers of a dictionary for the meaning of a word. All they would have to do would be to take the syllables apart and the meaning would be plain. Euclid, which troubled them so and was considered by the scholars such an utter waste of time, was given them for the specific purpose of training their reasoning powers, to enable them, in after life, to make their own deductions and to get at the why and wherefore of every problem that might crop up. The dry and stale Geography, that one-time cause of terror and conflict between pupil and master, now became a source of pleasure and enjoyment. Every country, every town, every river and mountain had a history; and John Galt had the gift of slipping in a little story full of mighty deeds of ancient times, here and there, against any place which he wished particularly to emphasize, with the result that it remained forever stored in the memories of the scholars.

The study of botany and natural history was conducted out of doors, a thing unheard of in the town of Piershaws, and an action which brought down condemnation from many of the old worthies, not a few of whom were members of the Board, who thought the school was being converted into a kind of variety entertainment. But John Galt did not

change his methods on that score. He invited these same grumblers to accompany the scholars and himself and participate in the lesson. Some accepted the offer, just to prove the truth of their assertions, but never again were they known to say one word against the teacher and his methods, and not a few took advantage of the excursions every possible time and they found that, even at fifty and sixty years of age, they did not know everything nor were they too old to learn.

They found the boys and girls, who were generally so uproarious in the streets, to be quiet and decorous, drinking in all the precious knowledge that was being imparted to them, first hand; and gradually, unknown to themselves, getting to love and honour their young master.

He was not the kind to be taken advantage of. It had been tried by one or two, with dire results; but, when the punishment was over, he treated the wrongdoers as if it had never been. He had other means than the tawse for bringing his scholars to attention and the worst punishment he could inflict was to deny them the privilege of going with the others on these out-door rambles.

A great change was noticeable in Gavie Rorieson. Mr. Galt had perceived from the start that the boy only required careful handling to make a man of him, while it would be the easiest thing in the world to spoil him from ever becoming a good citizen; and he immediately set about to try and win his confidence.

During the first week of his teaching, he had asked a question. Gavie gave a bright answer.

"Well done, Gavie," said Mr. Galt with a smile. "That is the best answer I ever had to that question."

Poor Gavie had never been praised for anything before and he blushed with embarrassment and delight. And, then and there, he made up his mind that he would do his best to have the teacher think well of him always.

Gavie made a discovery one day, when he left John Galt in his mind for all time.

They were all in the playground and the teacher was watching a football game which was in progress. It was one of those games with no limit to the number of players; a game to which new and fresh ones were being drafted in continually. The forwards, halves and backs could be found, struggling together in a steaming mass, whatever the ball happened to be; and the goal-keepers were stationed in the forefront of the attack as they were defending the uprights, or, when the caps and coats and bags which acted as substitutes for uprights. Its proper description was needed. There was a superabundance of a uniform, many stoppages and no referee.

Several times offered by the boys did not appeal to the master and he insisted on being allowed to take the game in control. But, when commencing, he gathered the players together and said:

"Boys, never undertake to umpire a game; never offer to teach anyone anything; never endeavor to manage a business, until you have first mastered all

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the points yourself. If I did not know all about football, I would not dare to ask to be allowed to referee.

"See that, boys." He displayed a little gold badge, with an inscription on it, hanging to his watch chain. After the boys read it, they stood back in awe and Gavie simply devoured his master with admiration, for the little medallion told how, five years previously, John Galt had been chosen on the team which represented Scotland in the International game with England.

Thus did Mr. Galt's word become law in the playground, as it was in the classroom. His ruling was accepted as final, without demur or ill-feeling. Yet, whenever possible, he endeavoured that the boys should arrive at the correct decisions themselves, so as to enable them to use their own judgment and become self-reliant. He merely sought to guide them back to the reasonable way, when they went astray.

Alas! how few teachers adopt the principle of comradeship with their pupils; and what great and grand results would be achieved if they did.

That John Galt's ideas of youthful training appealed to the scholars and that they benefited largely by them, is to put it mildly. Sandy, in particular, made rapid progress. In Mr. Todrick's regime, he was ahead of the others in many subjects, but this became more and more pronounced under his new teacher, who gave him every encouragement in his

studies and did what he could to help him over his difficulties.

Sandy's greatest trial was that he could not participate in the games which the master taught and indulged the boys in, after school hours, for he had to hurry home every afternoon, in order to be in time at the dairy, where he had been in constant attendance, summer and winter, for a number of years; and it was a duty which he could not afford to neglect, knowing, as he did, how every shilling was needed in his home and how hard his mother was striving to give her children a decent schooling. At the same time, he was as strong and agile as any of the boys and could run all the way home from his farthest call, two miles out, without a single stoppage on the way. He was getting big and carrying his breadth with him.

Now and again, he met and talked with Doctor Telford and the kindly old gentleman's interest in him increased as years went on, for he saw before him a boy without vicious habits, clever and anxious to get on, and, above all things, helpful to and considerate for those who were near and dear to him.

An injured bird or animal found in Sandy a sure protector, and his home was oftentimes converted into a temporary animal hospital. He could set and splint a broken leg, mend a torn wing and clean and tend a wound with all the care and tenderness of Doctor Telford himself. When his accident ward was vacant and he had noticed the Doctor binding and slinging some awkward part, in some peculiar man-

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ner, Sandy's dog, little Stumpy, had to undergo a process of first aid, for the sake of science. The dog did not seem to mind this a bit, for Sandy was always careful not to hurt him.

At first, the neighbours used to stop and inquire of Sandy what was wrong with Stumpy, when they saw him bound and bandaged in various parts of his canine person; but, later on, they got accustomed to the sight and merely passed by with a look and an indulgent smile.

When Stumpy did not have a bandage on somewhere, he felt very much like the man who made the discovery, after he got seated in church, that he had forgotten to put on his necktie.

Occasionally, the Doctor took Sandy with him on a professional visit and he spared no pains to explain to his youthful friend what was troubling the animal under treatment, what had caused the trouble and why certain remedies were applied to cure the trouble. Thus Sandy learned many things denied the average boy, and he never forgot what was imparted to him in this way.

Saturday forenoons he always spent in and around the smiddy, watching his friend Ben and, at odd times, lending a helping hand. As Ben often remarked, "All the laddie needs is brawn, and that's coming as fast as I ever saw it come on a living soul."

One morning, Mr. Galt came into the schoolroom with a letter in his hand. It was an invitation from Sir James Calder, who owned the large estates upon

which the town stood, as well as many miles of the surrounding country, to Piershaws School and to Cairnglen High School to a treat which he desired to give them on his estate before the holidays. He wished further, if possible, to arrange for an athletic contest between chosen representatives of each school; the winners to hold a Championship Cup for one year and each individual winner to be the recipient of a gold medal. Needless to say, the invitation was accepted by acclamation; and every afternoon, from that day on, immediately school was over, the master trained and coached the boys, weeding out the useless ones with a tact which kept them still interested in those who remained, and gradually getting an idea of the material he had to work on and what would be necessary to get each in a condition to give of his best when the time came.

Sandy would have liked, more than he dared think of, to have been able to take part in these contests and training courses, but it would have meant neglecting his work which he could not afford to do; so, with a heavy heart, he let it pass, contenting himself with the thought that he would, at least, have an opportunity of yelling himself hoarse when the actual contest took place.

CHAPTER XIV

The Championship Struggle

THE great day of days at length arrived, and every pupil was mustered in the class-room, prompt on the strike of nine. The girls were neatly dressed in prints, muslins and other light fabrics. They had their hair plaited, curled and bedecked with ribbons of rainbow hues. The boys wore light shirts, and, for a wonder, boots and stockings; and a greater wonder still, their faces and hands were scrupulously clean.

Even Mr. Galt was gaily decked out in a Norfolk suit, with knickers which displayed a handsome pair of limbs guaranteed to rouse the envy in the heart of any highlander. He wore a holiday cap and had a rose-bud pinned in the lapel of his jacket.

The school was filled with the buzz of many voices; the very air was tingled with the excitement.

The master brought the scholars to order, gave a few brief instructions on what was expected of them for the honour of the school, then he marched them out, two by two, for the recreation grounds on Caldermains Estate, the entrance to which was only a few hundred yards distant.

The children paraded the avenue, between the

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long file of trees and past the Big House. Sir James and his Lady, with their little son, Philip, were standing on the steps of the house to give them a welcome. On the signal from Mr. Galt, the scholars stopped, raised a mighty cheer, then continued along the path to the playgrounds.

The panorama which opened up before them was one to charm the heart of any schoolboy or girl. Large marquee tents, with flags aflutter, were set up everywhere. Each tent contained long tables, upon which were piled, in the most lavish abundance, cakes, candies, fruits and syphons of aerated waters; all set off with decorations of palms and ferns, silver tea-urns and coffee pots; while, on one side where all could see them, sat several gigantic ice-cream freezers, opening up marvellous visions of the glorious time in store.

Behind the tables, were standing the clean-shaven, solemn-visaged, lordly-looking butlers and waiters, with their noses in the air at the indignity that had been thrust upon them. They had been drafted from the Big House and they appeared to be disgusted as well as over-awed by the thought of the task which lay before them.

The playing fields were enclosed by newly-erected, wooden fences of clean, freshly-sawn timber, which gave off an odour reminiscent of a hastily-constructed horse fair or flower show. This impression was further enhanced by the martial strains of the local regimental band, whose members were standing in a circle round the drummer, in very close proximity

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to the refreshment booths. The band was already whacking, clanging and blowing music, with a recklessness which Orpheus himself would have been powerless to keep up for an hour on end. Of course, there was method in the musicians' madness, for such superhuman efforts could not fail to create an early and artificial, yet welcome, thirst.

A great, flat field was set aside specially for the sports. Goal-posts were standing like sentinels at each end, and the racing track was marked off with poles and strings.

Big, woolly clouds were floating slowly in the sky. The sun was shining high above, bright and strong. Everywhere the turf was short and springy. Right from the beginning, the elements and the older people seemed to be combining to make it a day of perfect enjoyment for the scholars who were already roaming all over the policies.

A shout from a distant part heralded the arrival of the High School contingent; and soon the whole of Caldemains was ringing with merry shouts and high-pitched, happy laughter.

At ten-thirty o'clock, Mr. Galt gathered his scholars together and lined them up in the markees in as orderly a fashion as was possible. They were served with just what they wanted to eat and drink, and there was no stinting. But the master kept an eagle eye on all who were chosen to represent the school in the sports. He only permitted them to partake sparingly of what was spread before them, promising that immediately after the games he would

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see, personally, they got as much as they could safely pack away. It was a sore trial to Gavie, for he had been looking forward to this particular part of the entertainment for many a long day; and, to make matters worse, Sandy, who did not have to curb his appetite, not being among the chosen few, stood in front of him with his mouth and both hands full and a tantalising grin on his face.

The members of the Board, accompanied by their wives and friends, were now beginning to arrive in buggies and carriages. A special tent was set aside for them and for the teachers; but no amount of coaxing could persuade Mr. Galt to go there. He declined all invitations, laughingly maintaining that what was good enough for his scholars was good enough for him; and that they required him to keep them in order. Still, he had a greater and a more personal reason. He had spent a lot of time and energy in his efforts to prepare the boys for making a good showing in the contests against their bigger and altogether better nurtured opponents. He knew the great temptations his representatives were facing in the markees and that, without his presence, they were liable to succumb at any moment and overload themselves with the dainties which lay so temptingly in front of them.

He did not really think it possible that his boys would win, but he intended that they should make a great fight for it, and he was not going to allow anything to hamper them at this late stage. So he stayed close by them; and it was with a great sigh of relief

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that he fled them out into the open air at last, not one of his little athletes having overindulged.

Sharp at twelve, Dr. Telford drove up in his gig, along with Doreen, who had just returned from school for her summer vacation. She had grown much of late and was becoming quite a young lady. She was dressed in a dainty, pale-green liberty frock, and a panama hat round which was girdled a silken rope of green which fell over the side in a bushy tassel. Her golden curls danced merrily underneath and her large, blue eyes twinkled with happiness as she chatted gaily to her father.

All was in readiness for the sports to begin. The ropes were lined with eager faces. Sir James, whose landau was drawn up close to the enclosure, beckoned to the Doctor to pull alongside. Sandy had noticed them the moment they arrived and Doreen now gave him a friendly wave of recognition as she climbed into Sir James' carriage, beside young Philip, with whom she was soon on the best of terms.

The programme was started quietly with the high jump; and the representatives from Cairnglen and Piershaws were immediately fighting for supremacy. The spirit of rivalry among spectators and competitors on each side was keen and many biting comments were bandied across the field.

The jump proved an unequal contest. Piershaws' man was a good little leaper, but he had neither the length of leg nor the ability of the High School boy, and, amid shouts and caustic remarks from the

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Cairnglen contingent, the first point was conceded to them.

Shot putting came next. Andy Rogers was upholding the honour of Piershaws, and right nobly he did it, too. No matter how little he was liked by the boys, it had to be admitted that there was not his equal in the school for strength and muscularity. Andy and his opponent were very equally matched, but Andy was dour and tough. With a supreme effort in his last throw, he won out by six inches.

Squinty McPherson, with his trousers patched until they almost looked like new, was standing on tip-toe, trying to see over the heads of a dozen larger boys. His temper was ruffled, for he had the idea that he had been squeezed out of a front position and was physically unable to remonstrate very strongly. He had just seen Andy's winning throw and was voicing his approval and delight in no uncertain fashion.

"Oh, he was six inches over the mark," piped a polite, but excited little voice at his elbow.

Squinty looked around, eager to fling out a point-blank denial. He saw that the remark had come from a fragile-looking Cairnglen supporter, no bigger than himself, who was peering through a pair of grandfatherly silver-rimmed spectacles.

"He was not," retorted Squinty at once, glaring at him ferociously with one eye. He really tried to glare at him with both his eyes, but for Squinty that was dual concentration of physical impossibility.

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"He was, he was," perked the little chap, bravely.

This was one of the few times in Squinty's life that he was opposed by someone he felt quite certain he could beat in a stand-up fight and he was so desperately afraid the chance might slip past without a further opportunity being given him to show his ability that he forgot his surroundings and the festive occasion that had drawn them all together. He closed his fists, threw his arms in the air and swung on his diminutive opponent from all directions at once, by way of answer. The little fellow ducked smartly, and Squinty whirled like a tee-totem. However, on his second time round and by the strangest of accidents, his fist stopped violently up against something soft. It proved to be the under lip of his foe, who staggered and fell in a heap, too bewildered even to attempt to rise.

In a moment, a crowd surrounded the two, Cairnglen and Piershaws pushing and shouldering for positions. But it was all over. The little fellow kept to the ground, where he was safe, nursing his puffed lip, while Squinty strutted about in the greatest glee, feeling strong enough to tackle the entire Cairnglen school, or the gamekeeper. He even had a sneaking idea that he might be able to account for McKenzie, the police sergeant, at a pinch.

To his chums, he was the passing hero of a passing moment and he hated to pass from their showering praises.

Only a very small portion of the crowd really knew what was going on, but it was not long before

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Mr. Galt came striding over to investigate. The boys made instant way for him and he was soon in the centre, taking in the situation at a glance. He raised the Cairnglen boy from the ground, then turned on Squinty, whose attitude had suddenly become quite normal and gentle.

"McPherson, McPherson, I'm ashamed of you, heartily ashamed of you. Just to think that a boy of Piershaws School should be fighting in this way, on this day of all days."

Squinty's eyes kept to the ground and he shuffled uneasily.

"Please, sir," he mumbled, "he said that Rogers went past the mark, and he didna."

Before Mr. Galt could reply, the angry voices of the Cairnglen boys caused him to look around.

"Mr. Galt," one of them cried, "it isn't fair, he's a sneak; he has a stone in his hand. Look!"

Squinty's fists remained tightly clenched; his ears tingled. The poor little fellow had never thought when he struck the blow.

The master's face flushed and his eyes narrowed. Never had he looked so angry as he did now. Everyone felt as if something very dreadful were about to happen.

"Open your hand, you mean, little coward," he called to McPherson.

Squinty did not obey, although he seemed to make an effort. Mr. Galt caught him by the scruff of the neck.

"Open your hand at once. Do you hear me?"

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Slowly Squinty's fingers relaxed and his open palm displayed a huge toffy ball, sticky and dirty.

Bowly Fergusson tittered in a high key, then quailed in his boots in dread of what he had done; and slunk behind some of the other boys.

The master looked up, his frown lifted and he burst into a peal of merry laughter. It relieved the strain, and, in the passing of a moment, good-humor reigned once more.

"Now," admonished Mr. Galt, as he left the boys to themselves, "any more of this and I shall send you home. There must be no more quarrelling. Do you promise me?"

Squinty promised, glad at heart to get off so lightly.

The quarter-mile hurdles which followed, helped the boys to forget their enmity. It was a poor race, for Provost Wyllie's son, Jamie, was hopelessly out-classed by the Cairnglen boy.

Then came the tug-of-war which Piershaws notched in the third and deciding pull. It was evident that Cairnglen was unequalled in the flat events, while Piershaws could more than hold its own in the heavy ones. And this was further demonstrated when Cairnglen captured the mile. This proved a pretty race and was undoubtedly won by the better man, who used his judgment, allowing his opponent to make the pace and sprinting away strongly in the last two hundred yards.

The Schools now stood, Cairnglen three points, Piershaws two; and the High School boys had only

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to win one more and the Championship was theirs.

"What do you think of it now, Mr. Galt?" cheerily inquired the master of Cairnglen, as he slapped him on the back. "We have you beaten. Come now, admit it."

Mr. Galt's face was solemn, but he turned to his colleague and smiled. And the boys hung about in breathless anxiety for the answer, as if the entire outcome rested on what he said, which, to some extent, it did.

"That remains to be seen," he continued. "One point behind and two events to go: to me, it looks quite cheery for Piershaws."

"Cheerful optimist," remarked the Cairnglen master.

Some of the teachers tried to ridicule John Galt's idea, but he remained pat and hopeful, and the game went on.

The next event was the football match; and it had to be do or die with Gavie and his men. Mr. Galt had coached them well, but they lacked the height and weight of Cairnglen.

The game was set for fifteen minutes each way, and, from start to finish, it went in ding-dong fashion; yet, try as they liked, Piershaws could make no headway. They used every artifice, long passing, short passing, individual dribbling, without avail. The Cairnglen defence was solid and impregnable. Soon, the latter's forwards commenced to move rapidly and Piershaws' goal was in constant danger.

Bowly Fergusson, squat and dogged, who was de-

fending the goal, played like one possessed; but he was not infallible and all felt that, sooner or later, a shot must beat him.

Suddenly, in the inexplicable way that often decides great issues, Gavie and his forwards seemed to lose heart. They fell back on their own goal, hampering the defence rather than helping it, and sending a depressing feeling over their anxious supporters. As half-time sounded, there was no scoring, but it was only by a miracle that Piershaws was not far behind.

Mr. Galt was in desperation. Getting the team together, he soundly rated them.

"Boys, boys, this will never do at all," he said. "You can beat these fellows if you only play the game. Surely, surely you know that it isn't sportsmanlike to pack your own goal. You are depriving your backs and Fergusson there of the freedom and clear front they ought to have. You cannot win unless you get goals. You haven't got any yet. Go right at them now, hang on to them, rush through them, worry them at every turn, keep them in their own territory. The best way to play defence, is to attack. Now, don't forget. Keep at them, teeth and nails, hammer and tongs."

The master's advice was followed in this, as in all things, and the effect of the newly-adopted harrying tactics considerably upset Cairnglen. The play shifted. Still Cairnglen defence stood the test, still their goal remained intact.

The game was full of flashes and dashes, from

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one end of the field to the other. The spectators encouraged with a will. Even the teachers and the visitors got worked up to a high pitch. Neither side seemed to be able to get on the lead. Five minutes from time found them equal, three minutes, two minutes, one minute, still the same. Everything pointed to a draw.

Piershaws' goal was being fiercely bombarded again, and Fergusson appeared to be everywhere at once; when one of the Cairnglen halves spooned his kick, the ball glanced across to Squinty. He immediately drove it aslant to Gavie, who was lying unguarded. Gavie stopped it, dodged the centre-half who tackled him, and galloped down the middle of the field like a fresh colt, with the ball bounding at his toes. Both Cairnglen backs sprang out to meet him as he flew along. When they neared him, he kicked the ball well ahead, equally distant from himself and the opposing keeper, and dashed between the backs. They crashed together behind him as he got through. The goal-keeper, expecting the backs to stop Gavie, was running out for the ball; but, when he saw that they had not been successful, he stopped for a moment, irresolute, and that settled it. Gavie reached the ball. With a terrific shot, he sent it past the keeper, high into the corner of the net. A moment later, the whistle blew, and the game was won, and lost.

In the tumult which arose, none noticed for a moment that Gavie had fallen as he shot and was rolling on the ground in pain. The tremendous

force he had put into his kick had badly sprained his ankle and he was unable to rise.

Help was soon to hand. It is true, one of the Cairnglen players was heard to remark,

"Never mind, boys; the Cup is ours yet. That Gavie fellow was to run in the hundred and they haven't anyone who can come near our Campbell."

And what he said was very apparent, although the others were too good sportsmen to pay any attention, and they busied themselves assisting Gavie, who was quickly taken in charge by Doctor Telford. His foot was bathed and bandaged tightly and he was ordered to keep still on the grass and view the remainder of the proceedings.

He was terribly disappointed, for he knew that his accident had completely spoiled their chances; and, what made it more maddening was, that it should have happened at the last moment of the game. But there was no help for it now and something else had to be done, and done quickly.

Half an hour was granted to Piershaws in which to choose a substitute, and failing this the Cup would require to be presented to Cairnglen. Mr. Galt hastily called the boys together around Gavie and a disheartening consultation was held. They did not know who was best to put in Gavie's place and disappointment was being felt keener and keener every moment.

"Please, Mr. Galt," said Gavie, "why no' let Sandy run? He's a good one."

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"Sandy can run, Gavie," but he has not been tried and trained for this," replied Mr. Galt.

"Yes sir, but neither has anybody else!" persisted Gavie, "and Sandy has licked me on the Glen Road, before now. Ay, it's true, sir! Ask him yourself!"

Sandy was called over.

"Sandy," said the master, "you see the pickle we are in. Gavie claims the right to choose his substitute and he says you must run against Cairnglen."

"Me, sir, me?" he replied; astonishment, excitement and timidity all showing in his face in rapid succession. "No, no, I canna. I'm no' good enough."

"Why not, Sandy? It's short notice, but Gavie says you have beaten him before this."

"Yes sir, but just when he was funning, when he wasna going his hardest and when I was trying my best. None o' us can beat him."

"Sandy," cried Gavie, with tears in his eyes, "you ken you can, and you'll do it too. We've just got to get the Cup and the medals, if it's only for the sake o' Mr. Galt. Tell the maister you'll do it, Sandy."

The advice of Doctor Telford, given Sandy long ago, came back to him now. 'When you are working and when you are playing, go right into it and do the best you know how,' and he looked up at the master and said,

"Yes, sir; I'll try, but, but," with a gulp, "I'm thinking I shouldna have eaten half as much as I did when I was in the tent."

"True, Sandy," smiled the master, "and that is where I failed. I ought to have had one or two substitutes under diet as well as the others."

The boys gave vent to a loud cheer, which rather surprised the pupils of Cairnglen who were standing near by to catch a drift of what was going on, and it made them wonder what new scheme was afoot.

Mr. Galt took Sandy aside.

"I want to give you a few hints, laddie," he said. "It is late in the day for them, but they might help."

"But, sir; you'll no' be angry if I get beaten?" asked Sandy.

"That is the very first thing I was going to tell you about; you are not going to be beaten. You are going to win, win, win. Get it into your brain, into your arms and legs and toes, steep yourself in it from now till you reach the tape, and the Cup is as good as on the shelf in Piershaws School.

"Now, something else; when you get to your mark, fix your eyes on the tape and keep it in view all the time. Next, put all your attention on the words of the starter and get away with the pistol shot.

"And here is something most boys do not know; every breath you draw in a one hundred yards race, more than is absolutely necessary,—lessens your speed by something like a yard and a half. Two breaths is all you require. When you get the second signal from the starter, fill up your lungs with air, ready for the pistol shot. That will be the first one; and let that do you until you get to within thirty yards of home, then fill up again and go through

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the tape, fresh and strong, never slackening a hair-breadth until you are five or ten yards past the winning post.

"Come now and get into your running gear, for the warning whistle will soon be going off."

The news spread quickly that Sandy had been chosen for the last race, but the hopes of Piershaws did not rise very high, for they knew what a fine sprinter Campbell was, and, also, that Sandy had not been prepared for the ordeal.

When Nelly Porter heard of it, she ran away and hid herself, for she was timid and afraid. She loved her brother and it had been a great disappointment to her that he had not been chosen for one or other of the events, the reason why, she knew so well, and now that he was getting a chance, she was afraid.

Mr. Galt, whose eyes seemed to be everywhere that day, missed her, and immediately ferreted her out.

"Come here, Nelly," he cried, encouragingly, laying his hand on her black hair and looking into her brown eyes. "You must not hide in that way. Sandy is not going to get beaten. But, even if he were, it would not be his fault. And, if he wins, wouldn't you be sorry that you had not seen his victory?"

Thus he prevailed, and she came back again to watch, but with a misgiving and a fluttering heart

"Hurrah, we canna be beat," cried the unshakeable Bowly Fergusson unguardedly, in a wave of enthusiasm. He was in the midst of a crowd of

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Cairnglen boys when he made the remark, and, in a moment, he had a hornets' nest of them about his ears.

"How can't you?" asked one of the autocrats. "We're all square now; if we win the hundred yards race, we win the cup, don't we?" he asked aggressively. "And we're going to win too," he added.

"You're forgettin' about the fight," remarked Bowly easily.

"What fight?"

"The fight between Squinty McPerson and that wee hooked-nosed fellow o' yours."

The Cairnglen boys laughed derisively.

"Why, you silly, that doesn't count," came the answer.

"Weel, maybe it doesna," conceded Bowly, pushing his hands deep into his trouser pockets and sniffing the air noisily through his nostrils, "but Squinty knocked the stuffing oot o' him all the same."

The crowd closed in.

"Yes, with a stone in his hand!" argued another Cairnglen scholar who evidently had received the story second-hand and, consequently, somewhat garbled.

"That shows what you ken," replied Bowly. "It wasna a stone. It was a common toffy ball. Forby, Squinty could have done the same thing without it."

"No he couldn't, no he couldn't," contended half a dozen at once.

Bowly held his ground, quite unconcerned.

"Aw weel, have it your ain way," he said, "blame

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it on the sweetie. But nobody could knock down a Piershaws boy by hitting him on the mouth with a bit o' candy."

There were fresh indications of another rough and tumble, but the sound of the warning whistle put an end to it, as they all clustered around the ropes to see the next event.

The two contestants slipped inside the ropes.

Campbell of Cairnglen was tall and rangy and looked confident, as well as capable, as he nodded and chatted to his friends who were shouting words of encouragement and advice to him.

Sandy was pale and ill at ease, but his eyes were narrowed with determination. The importance of the event had caught him seriously and he did not look up from the ground as he heard the cries,

"Good old Sandy." "Hurrah for Piershaws."
"Don't let him beat you."

The master stood, silent and anxious, near the tape.

A dead hush fell over the spectators as the runners got to the starting place. The gentry in their carriages stood up for a better view. The tension was at straining point and nothing disturbed it save the clear sweet lilt of a lark, soaring high in the bright sunlit sky, straight as an arrow, overhead, oblivious of all but the glory of living.

"Get on your marks." The voice of the starter rang out, loud and clear.

The boys dropped, each on one knee, as if worked by a single lever.

"Get set."

Sandy commenced to fill his lungs with fresh, wholesome air, then he rivetted his eyes on the little white tape in the distance.

Bang!!!

The boys rose together, and the race had started.

Campbell got away just a little better than his opponent and was quickly at full speed. Twenty-five yards out, he was a yard ahead. Cairnglen was shouting frantically. Keeping at it, he gradually increased his lead, until, at fifty, he was two yards in front. The yelling began to develop into derision. The hopes of Cairnglen grew to confidence and joy; the fears of Piershaws, to despondency, gloom and silence.

Suddenly, a fresh buzz arose, ringing into a shriek. Sandy was holding his own: the gap was lessening. Yes!—No!—Yes! yes!—it was lessening. Sandy was slowly, slowly but surely creeping up, inch by inch.

"Go it Campbell." "Cairnglen." "Go on Sandy, go on." "Keep it up,—oh! Sandy, keep it up."

At seventy, a yard divided them.

Sandy filled his lungs again and tore on. Eighty-five, and they were almost abreast. Campbell was holding his breath at the expense of his speed. Ninety yards, daylight could not separate them.

Those last long ten yards seemed like a mile.

"Could Sandy last the terrific pace he was making?" "Was Campbell holding himself in reserve?"

These were the thoughts that darted through the

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minds of the breathless onlookers, like flashes of lightning.

Both boys were straining; straining for the mastery, for the school, for the Cup. Campbell gasped for more oxygen: Sandy shot out as from a catapult and struck the tape. He broke it: he had won. He knew. He knew.

The yelling became deafening. "Piershaws! Piershaws! Hurrah! Hurrah!"

Caps were in the air. Boys were knocking one another down in the madness of delight. Gavie was hopping around on his good leg; his eyes were ablaze and he was ripping his throat with his shouts. Wild hysteria was in the atmosphere as everybody rushed toward Sandy.

He felt stupified for a moment, then wonderful electric thrills raced up and down his spine, raising the hair at the nape of his neck. He panted for breath and tried to smile.

The master was first to reach him and he hugged him in sheer ecstasy. He swung him on his shoulders and ran with him in the direction of the tent, laughing and dancing and shouting like the schoolboys around him.

When he laid Sandy down, he clapped him on the back and said, "Bravo, laddie, bravo. We have done it this day. I am more proud than if I had won the race myself."

Sandy looked up at him and remarked,

"It was gey close, and it was you that won it, for what you said about the breathing did it. But I'm

sure I would have done better if I hadna eaten so much before-hand."

"Never mind, Sandy," cried Gavie, from his seat on the grass where he had been forced once more, "you won, and I kent you could do it. Gold medals and a Cup, oh my!"

And they all laughed and ate and drank and played, and ate and drank again. Surely this was the greatest day that ever dawned.

John Galt could now be seen in the visitors' tent, laughing and chatting with his equals, and receiving congratulations, but only,—as he modestly put it,—on behalf of the plucky little fellows who had so well deserved it.

Late in the afternoon, Lady Calder presented the Cup to Gavie, as the Captain of the winning team. She insisted on Doreen Telford giving out the medals and, when Sandy got his, Doreen looked proudly at him and said,

"Oh, Sandy; I'm so glad you won. It was the greatest ever."

And young Philip Calder, standing beside her, remembered the boy who had once risked his life for him, and, with a smile on his bright, open face, he shook Sandy by the hand.

"My, it was a great race. Don't I wish I were you!" he said enthusiastically.

Sandy looked at him, then at Doreen; and he wondered why Philip could ever wish that. He gave a happy laugh, turned nervously and ran off among his comrades.

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* * * * *

Next morning, with due ceremony, the Cup was placed on the mantel shelf in the senior class room of Piershaws School.

"Do you know, boys," said the master, with a rather serious expression on his face, "I have been thinking all night about this Cup. You are all glad to see it there, aren't you?"

"Yes, sir," came the reply, simultaneously from every tongue.

"Well, some people will be saying that this is no place for it. You see, primarily, the school is for mental training; and, although we never once allowed our games to interfere with our studies, lots of folks will say we did. I would like to prove to them that we did not and that Piershaws is making progress with its lessons as well as with its play. Wouldn't you, boys?"

"Yes, sir," came the reply again with the same quickness and decision.

"Well, I know a way, but it is a hard way. Listen very carefully while I tell you.

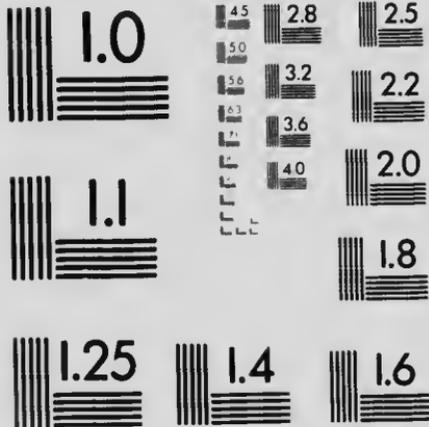
The scholars sat upright and quiet, looking intently at their young master.

"Many years ago, Sir James Calder,—not the present Sir James, but his grandfather, left a bequest to the schools in his parish. It was in the form of a scholarship to be competed for every two years. It provides for one-half of the University expenses of the three scholars gaining the highest percentage of marks in an examination on English,



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Arithmetic, Mathematics, Latin and French. Sir James thought, and rightly too, that if half the expenses was provided, any lad, if he made up his mind, could earn the other half during the summer months. Now, somehow or other, Piershaws School has never competed for these great prizes, and the Cairnglen High School boys have been reaping the benefit by themselves all along, despite the fact that their parents are better able to pay for their education than are the parents of the boys of Piershaws School. We belong to the Parish as they do, and we have every right to take part in this examination; but the question is,—Can we do it successfully? Can we?"

"Yes, sir—yes" came the answer. The master smiled.

"It means work, and hard work,—but it also means the chance for some of you to become great men. And to those who do the studying, even if they do not win a scholarship, it will be time well spent.

"This is the last year at school for many of you and I shall be sorry to lose you. The best recompense you can make to me is that you go out into the world and become clean and wholesome men, leaving it just a little better for your being in it. Still, he continued thoughtfully, I should like if at least one boy went to the University and took his Degree. You can do it, boys, if you only try.

"It will be impossible to do any special studying during the day, but I wonder how many are willing.

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as soon as the holidays are over, to come back here from seven o'clock till nine, every night, and grind hard with me all through the Autumn and Winter, until this examination?

"It means much, boys, but it would please me better than anything else in all the world, and it might show Cairnglen that we are mentally their Champions as well as physically. Stand up all who are willing."

About ten answered the call. Gavie looked around and, seeing Sandy on his feet, he jumped up also.

"Thanks, boys," said Mr. Galt, with a break in his voice, "I knew you would not fail me."

That same afternoon, when Sandy was on his rounds, Mrs. Porter had a visitor. As she opened the door in response to the knock, she gave vent to a little gasp. Everybody knew Mr. Galt, but this was the first time she had met him face to face. He raised his hat.

"I believe you are Mrs. Porter."

"That I am, Mr. Galt," she replied. "Come away in."

She ushered him into her humble but spotless, little kitchen and, from force of habit, dusted an absolutely clean chair with her apron, beckoning him to sit down.

"I have heard o' you often, sir," she remarked, "but I hope Sandy hasna been up to any more mischief at the school?"

"No, no!" he assured her quickly, "It is nothing

like that, although 't is about Sandy that I called. He is a clever bo . Have you ever thought what you are going to make of him?" he asked bluntly.

"In another year, he will be able to leave school, if you so desire; but his tuition is only beginning and it would be a pity to force him to leave just where it is getting most interesting for him."

"Ay," replied Mrs. Porter, "Sandy's a good lad and dearer to me than anything or anybody; and right glad I would be if he could get more schooling, but, after next year, it would have to be paid for, and he hasna a faither to fend for him. Poor lad; I think he was just created to be a Horse Doctor. He kens all about horses, and dogs, and cows, and cats and birds. Many a time he has this place like a menagerie, for he is never happier than when working among animals. But I'm frightened he'll just have to be doing with being a blacksmith; and right kind it was o' Doctor Telford to promise to take him on when he was ready for it."

"But, Mrs. Porter," continued the young master, "there is another way, if we can only manage it; and I am willing to do all I can for him."

He then unfolded the scheme which he had explained to the boys in the morning. The good woman's brown eyes lit up with enthusiasm and she fell in with his plan at once.

"It's just a chance," she said, "and Sandy will do his best. He always does; he takes everything so serious-like once he starts."

"Well, Mrs. Porter, that is just what I like in

him. It is necessary to be serious sometimes, and so few of us are."

Mrs. Porter sat pensively for a moment, ere she replied.

"Mr. Galt," she confided, "I'm goin' to tell you what I havena told to anybody before. Since Sandy was a wee laddie, I have stinted and scraped to save something that would help him on. His faither died in drink, and that mightna have happened if he had been educated. I wanted my boy to be trained to ken for himsel' what was good for him and what wasna; and, year by year, I have added just a wee bit to what was laid by before. I didna mention it to ootsiders, for fear they would think I was trying to set my bairn above his playmates.

"I have a hundred pounds all but three shillings in my trunk. Would that be much good, Mr. Galt?"

"Much good!" replied the master excitedly, "much good! Why, my good woman, that money, and the Scholarship, with what he can earn in the summer, will see him far on the road to being a Doctor like Mr. Telford."

Tears rose to the eyes of Sandy's mother. For a time she wept quietly. The master rose; his lips were a-tremble with the emotion he felt.

"Mrs. Porter," he said, "I am proud to know you. Oh! what would I not give to have a mother like you? Mine died when I was a tiny little shaver and I cannot remember her. May I come and see you now and again?"

"Ay, that you may, and right welcome," replied

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the motherly body, "and many, many thanks to you for your goodness to a widow's son."

Mrs. Porter's parting words aroused slumbering memories in John Galt, and he walked away with sadness in his mind but a dancing joy in his heart.

CHAPTER XV

The Girl and the Boy

SANDY was sitting on a stool, in a corner of the stone-floored dairy, with his head resting on his upturned hands, waiting the completion of his milk orders and wiling away the intervening time in the perusal of a little book which lay on his knees. So engrossed was he, that he did not notice a shadow which flitted across the page. A small figure slipped round behind him and gazed intently over his shoulder. A faint, perfumed freshness played over his cheek, but still it did not rouse him, it only seemed to add to the pleasure of his reading. A long-drawn "Oh," startled him back into consciousness. He closed the book hurriedly and looked around.

Doreen Telford stepped back a little and, with a tone of mock severity, she pointed at the book and said again,

"Oh,—Sandy,— Why, I didn't think you would read that."

He covered the page with his hands and a blush overspread his face; not entirely on account of the discovery she had made, for there was something in this soft, clear-skinned, blue-eyed, dainty lass, with the flying curls, the suggestion of freckles and the

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happy laugh, that made him feel tongue-tie^d and strangely unnatural.

She clapped her hands and danced around at his evident discomfort.

"That, oh—that's nothing," he replied doggedly, dropping his dialect and talking in the manner in which he was addressed, as does the educated Scot, reserving the Doric for his most intimate friends and falling back upon it for safety when labouring under a strong excitement. "It is only a book of Burns' poems."

"Yes, yes, Sandy, but it was the particular poem you were reading that I meant."

"Well, I don't care," he continued stoutly, "it was nice. And, anyway, you must have read it as well, or you wouldn't know."

"Of course I have read it, you goose," was the emphatic answer, "but that isn't any excuse for you; I'm a girl. I never thought that boys who could win races like you would ever read love poems."

Sandy was slightly abashed and tried to excuse himself.

"Oh, it was just the one I happened to open at," he said offhandedly.

"Maybe it was, Sandy, but the book wouldn't have opened there if the top of the page had not been turned down. Oh; I saw," she cried, raising her eyes and nodding her head, "You weren't quite quick enough, Mr. Sandy."

And she laughed louder than ever.

He felt crestfallen and he knew that she was not to be fooled, so he sat silent, staring at the floor.

But she had no intention of tormenting him too much. She came nearer and bent over him.

"Sandy, do you like reading?" she asked.

"Yes, Miss Doreen, I love it. But I don't see very many books. This is the only one I ever had of my real own and I just have to read it over and over again."

"Do you know," she continued, "we have piles and piles of books in the library that no one ever looks at, and I am sure father would let you read them if you took good care of them; for he likes you, you know. I'll go and get one for you now, and, when you finish it, you can bring it back, and I'll give you another, just like a lending library. Would you like that?"

"Ay, better than anything, Miss Doreen," he replied, with glowing eyes.

He was starving for books and he had never seen until now that he ever was going to satisfy his mind hunger.

"What kind would you like?" she asked.

"Oh, any kind will do," he answered, in an off-hand way, "but, but I would like one with poetry in it, if you have any."

"Oh,—Sandy!—" cried Doreen again, in the old mock-severe voice, "I knew it."

And off she ran.

She was back in a trice, hugging to her bosom, a copy of Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet,'

"Here you are," she said, holding it out to him. "You are sure to like it. I have read it and it's fine: full of love poetry.

"Father says you can read every book in the library if you want to, and that he was a big silly not to think of it before.

"Oh, my; but that reminds me. He wants to see you, so you had better hurry."

Sandy thanked her, in his awkward, boyish way, and sped off to find the Doctor. He came upon the vet, standing at the front gate with his hands buried deep in his trouser pockets and his legs spread wide apart.

"Hello, Sandy," cried the Doctor, "I thought that little mischief, Doreen, had forgotten to tell you, and I was just going off.

"I see you have been robbing the library," he went on. "Well, that's a robbery that won't hurt anyone and I will gladly let you read all the books in mine. But there's something else, laddie.

"Mrs. Telford has given you the sack. She does not want you to go with the milk anymore."

Sandy's heart began to thump and he looked at the Doctor inquiringly.

"Oh, she's quite well pleased with you," he added hastily, reading the boy's thoughts, "and that's just the trouble. She thinks that you have been long enough under petticoat government and that it is time you were getting among the men.

"How would you like to work in the forge?"

"Doctor, do you mean that I can go and work

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with Ben?" cried Sandy, in excitement. "It would be grand; but," and he stopped suddenly as a thought flashed across his mind.

"Why; what's wrong?" asked the Doctor.

"Well, you see, sir, I would have to leave the school and I don't want to do that yet, if I can help it."

"Fiddlesticks! Who wants you to leave school? No, sir! You have to keep right at it, or no smiddy for you. That young rascal, Andy Rogers, has left school and is starting his apprenticeship with Ben next week. He has lots of brawn and sinew, but there isn't very much in his head. Ben thought it would be a good plan for you to start as well and work half-time, maybe between six and eight in the mornings and four and six in the evenings, and all forenoon on Saturdays. It would do you good and give you a chance at something practical. I will start you at the same wage as Andy, for you need the money; but don't tell Andy, for it's none of his business anyway."

"Doctor," said Sandy "I'll try my hardest to be a good blacksmith. I'll do the best I can."

"That's all right laddie; I know you will, I know. You don't need to tell me. Now, drop in and see Ben and he will give you an idea of what he wants you to do."

The good-hearted old gentleman walked rapidly down the incline, leaving Sandy with his thoughts.

Sandy lost no time in reporting to the smiddy, but,

on his way, he encountered Gavie, to whom he imparted the good news.

"Do you know, Sandy," said Gavie, after listening patiently to his tale, "I have gotten a job mysel', I don't want to leave the school yet, seeing I promised Mr. Galt to stay on for the examination, although I have no more chance in it than a snowball has in a pail o' boiling water. But, still, a promise is a promise.

"Aunty Kirsty wouldna hear tell o' it, unless I got a half-decent job, so I went and saw auld Peter Black, him that keeps the Coal-ree. Peter was needin' somebody to fill the coal buggies, check off the empty ones when they are brought back and watch the weans didna run up and down the Kirk Hill in them. You see, when some o' them get a hundred-weight o' coal, they think the price includes the hire o' the buggies for the weans to play with for the rest o' the day. Peter wanted a reference: as if I would run off with his dirty auld Coal-ree, but I went to Mrs. Purdy, the Grocer, and she's his best customer. She buys two bags a week off him, so I kent her word would carry as much weight as his coal bags. She said it was chancey, but, if I went to auld Tammy Nesbit and collected her last month's account. she would think about it. So off I ran to Tammy's. But he couldna give me any money unless I took his silver watch to the pawn shop. When I got to the pawn, auld Reubens wanted to ken who I stole it off and threatened to hold me till Sergeant McKenzie came. But I kept oot o' his reach and

told him that his wasna the only pawnshop in the town, and that brought him to his senses. He gave me seven and sixpence for the watch, without another word. Then I went back to Tammy's, gave him two and sixpence and kept the other five shillings to pay his account, took the five shillings to Mrs. Purdy, but I didna give it up till I got my reference. and I took care that she gave me a good one. At that time I was frightened somebody else would have the job, but Peter Black took me on at six shillings a week. I have to work from seven till a quarter to nine in the mornings, and from four till six at night and all day on Saturdays, so I'll no' have much time to mysel'. But it's maybe just as weel. Aunt Kirsty says it'll keep me oot o' mischief, and I wouldna wonder but she's right."

As Sandy was halfway across the road, Gavie shouted to him. "Oh, Sandy, I forgot to tell you: I've to get threepence for every new customer I bring."

Sandy lifted up a pebble and threw it at him. He never could tell just when Gavie was serious; but his own happiness was not so great as not to have room for the additional pleasure of knowing that his chum would be studying with him for a little while longer.

And study they did, right through the Autumn and Winter, hard and earnestly. Not one of the ten who had passed their word to the master failed in his promise. And John Galt worked with them as he never worked before.

When it leaked out that they were preparing for

the coming examination, the parents of the Cairnglen students were at first indignant, and, later, quite insulted at what they considered an encroachment on their sons' preserves and heritage, and all caused by that young teacher with his new fangled notions, encouraging the young upstarts to set themselves alongside their betters. Some went so far as to raise a storm of protest, but, when they heard the original terms of the grant, they were reluctantly compelled to accept things as they stood.

Sandy made use of every minute of his time. Each morning and evening saw him with his bare arms and his leather apron, working amid the roar of the forge and the flying sparks. It did not take long to prove Ben's foresight, for as Sandy's arms grew strong, his ability as a blacksmith showed itself, until Ben would rather have him work on the same anvil with him, than any journeyman in the shop.

Andy Rogers was there all the time and, at the rougher work, where strength alone counted, he was unequalled. He was surly as ever and soon became jealous of the little privileges granted to Sandy. He noticed Ben always chose him to work with him. He could not understand why a half-timer should get the finer work to do, while the regular apprentice was kept on the raw material, and he declined to recognize the ability that warranted the preference.

In many little mean actions, he gave vent to his spite, placing obstacles in the way, using Sandy's

aprons and tools, throwing his half-completed work in odd corners and tormenting him all the time with his remarks regarding blacksmiths who thought they were too big for their jobs and who sat in corners at slack times, reading books, as if they wanted to be ministers.

Sometimes Ben interfered, but Sandy would say, "Let him be, Ben, he gives himsel' lots o' extra work and his tongue runs away with him. The bad blood has to come out or he would dee o' blood-poisoning. It pleases him, and it's no' hurting anybody."

Sandy did not have much time for light reading these days, but, now and again, he availed himself of the opportunity which Doctor Telford's library afforded and his invariable choice was poetry. He developed a strong passion for it, which sometimes found expression in a few crude verses penned by himself. It was his only recreation and it became a wonderful safety valve to his pent-up feelings. But he kept his attempts to himself, carefully hidden away.

With the early spring, came the news of the examination and, as the time drew near, the entire town took part in the excitement, for, on this occasion, it was to be a battle of brains between the boys of the hard-working class and those of the well-to-do. Many arguments took place regarding the relative merits and demerits of the competitors, and not a few side wagers were made as to the final result.

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Twenty-two scholars were entered from Cairnglen and ten from Piershaws.

A week previous to the test, Mr. Galt suspended all special study and insisted on the boys relaxing their minds as much as possible. He felt that he had done all that was in his power and that it now rested with them to prove the value of the tuition they had received.

CHAPTER XVI

The Best Laid Schemes

MRS. PORTER was sitting before the fire, her deft fingers busy on a dress which she was making down for Nelly from a garment given her by the Provost's wife, when old George Saunders turned the handle of the outside door and walked into the kitchen. This was the lawyer's invariable custom in the town. He did not think it necessary for such a distinguished person as himself to knock before entering, nor did Mrs. Porter consider him of such importance as to warrant her rising and dusting a chair for him to sit on.

Saunders' beady eyes shone out from his deeply lined face. His grey-streaked black hair bore evidence of having been lately oiled and brushed: his black coat was dustless, although polished in places and beginning to take on a greenish tint where most exposed to the weather. The ravages of time and whisky were leaving their marks on Saunders. Altogether, he might have been described as "shabby-genteel"; but, notwithstanding, he was still the alert, keen Saunders of other days.

He had a habit of calling now and again; just, as he put it, out of respect for his dear, departed

friend, Duncan. He seldom had anything of interest to say to Mrs. Porter, and, but for the fact that he did not give notice beforehand of his visits, he probably would have found the door locked.

"How are you to-day, Mrs. Porter?" he asked, in humble politeness, placing his hat under the chair on which he had designs. "You always seem to be so busy."

"Ay, Saunders," she replied, laying her work upon the table, "we canna all live on our sillar like you, you ken. Women folk, and especially widows, have to work all the time if they want to keep the roof above their heids. You have a lot to be thankful for, man, that you never had the responsibility o' bringing up a lot o' young ones."

"That's 'rue, Jean," he answered. "But, you see, I wasn't altogether to blame. When I was young, I was too busy to think of matrimony; when I got older, I didn't have the inclination; and, now that I am slipping down the hill, nobody will have me. Still, you have little to complain of with your bairns, Jean. In Sandy and Nelly, you have two fine youngsters. I am glad to see them always so clean and tidy, if it is only for my old friend, Duncan's sake."

Saunders fished for his handkerchief and foghorned on his nose.

"Good forbid that I should complain o' my bairns," replied Mrs. Porter earnestly, "for I wouldna do without them for a fortune."

"I see Sandy's working half-time at the smiddy,"

he continued. "Surely you don't mean to make him a blacksmith, with the ability he has?"

"What for no'?" asked Mrs. Porter. "It is an honest trade and he likes it; forby, there's nothing else for it, when folks havena got the money to see farther ahead."

"But I hear he's going to try for the Calder Scholarship the day after to-morrow," remarked the inquiring Saunders.

"Oh! he's going to try, Saunders. There's a lot o' them doing that. But he's no' expecting to win, though. Forby, it would take as much again as the Calder Bursary to see him through the College. No' that I wouldna like it, all the same," she added reflectively.

"Well, Mrs. Porter, it's a pity, a great pity, that a clever lad like him should miss the schooling he needs to make him a great influence in the country. I would like fine to be able to do something for him myself, if it were only for Duncan's sake, for Duncan and I were always the best of friends," he added, blowing his nose once more, as was his wont after all such reflections; a mark of reverence on his part at the mention of the dear departed.

"You have heard tell, Jean, that I have lots of money. Well, I have and I haven't. It is all in Canada, making more. My brother William, you remember him, is out there in Winnipeg, and he is a big man in the district. He's making money like slate stones. Every farthing I can scrape, I send out to him and he invests it in land for me. What he

buys to-day, he can sell to-morrow for twice the amount; and he keeps turning it over and over again.

"He's long headed, is William, and I never want.

"It's a pity, Jean, you have not a hundred or two by you, for then Sandy's education would be assured, and lots more beside. I believe I have William's last letter in my pocket," he said, fumbling inside his coat. "Ay, here it is; read it for yourself."

Mrs. Porter read the extract, telling of the great land boom away out there in Canada and of how fortunes were being made daily from small beginnings, and with no long time to wait.

It set her thinking and pondering.

"What if this were the way out of all her trouble? And why, after all, should not George Saunders want to do her a good turn? They had been acquainted for long enough, and, goodness knows, Duncan and he had been together continually."

She was in a whirl of emotion, as she handed the letter back to him.

"It is wonderful how money makes money," she sighed, "but—it's no' for the likes o' me."

"You can't get the loan of some money, Jean?" asked Saunders, slowly. "William could turn it over for you and you could pay it back in three or four months' time; and have a big sum at your own credit as well. I tell you, it's the greatest chance that ever happened," he continued, getting inflamed over his own picture drawing, "and I wouldn't like you to miss it; for you need it, if anybody does."

"No, Saunders, no," said Mrs. Porter, "I canna

borrow money to use in that way, much as I would like my bairns to get on. I have struggled and scraped for years, tryin' to save a little now and a little again, but I seem to be far short o' what I would have liked."

Saunders cleared his nasal organ again and, bending forward, asked anxiously:

"How much will you have saved? It's hard to say what William might be able to do with a little, especially when I tell him that it is for my old friend, Duncan Porter's, bairns. Will you have a hundred and fifty pounds?"

"I havena that much, Saunders," she answered in a wavering voice, "I have just a hundred and thirteen pounds and it has taken me years to gather it."

She looked wistfully at the old lawyer as she spoke.

"Well," said Saunders, as he stroked his chin, in an assumption of thoughtfulness, 'if you are willing to entrust it to me, and William, for a few months, I don't think you will ever rue it, and, maybe at the end of that time, you will have a thousand pounds, instead of a hundred and thirteen. And besides, it is not a wild cat scheme, for you always have the land to fall back on; it's yours entirely until the party who buys it from you has paid up every cent for it."

Poor Mrs. Porter trembled with anxiety. It seemed so safe, however, that it was almost an impossibility to lose, and then, there was the great chance of making so much out of it. By some strange impulse, she made her decision.

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"Wait a minute, Saunders," she cried, as she rose and went into the next room. She came back with a little box from which she counted out its entire contents, one hundred and thirteen pounds in notes, and gold, and silver.

"But, Saunders," she inquired, with tears in her eyes, "if I could only just be sure?"

"Sure," replied Saunders, with his eyes rivetted on the money that lay upon the table, "sure, it's as sure as the Bank of Scotland. I can give you a receipt for it, telling just exactly what has to be done with the money. And I shall wire it out to William, to be invested at once. And, every week or two, I shall be able to let you know how it is getting on. You know me, Jean, to be a shrewd man. George Saunders never had to beg his bread, simply because he had the foresight to grasp chances like this as they came along."

"Weel, George," she said, her face pale, her mouth drawn and her sad eyes searching him, "make out a receipt and take the money. I'll no' grumble if it's lost fairly; though it would mean sore hearts to me and mine if that ever should happen. But, if there's anything wrong," she added severely, "then may the Lord punish you as his judgment sees fit."

Saunders shuffled uneasily in his seat as she spoke, then he rose hastily and made to leave, wearing a look of one who had been deeply insulted.

"No need to call down judgment on me, Mrs. Porter, I merely wished to do you a good turn, but

it is evidently badly taken." He picked up his hat and placed it on his head. "I'll wish you good day."

His action produced the exact effect he had intended, and he would have been sadly disappointed had it turned out otherwise.

Mrs. Porter stooped forward a little.

"Sit down, George, sit down. I am just a bit nervous-like. I ken it's all right. Take the money and make out a receipt."

Saunders obeyed, with what was intended as a show of reluctance. The first part of the request he went through rather hurriedly, it is true, but he eased up considerably when writing out the receipt, so that, with a stop-watch on his combined action, it might have been pronounced as slow and deliberate. He handed her the paper, reading it as he did so:

"Received from Mrs. Jean Porter the sum of one hundred and thirteen pounds sterling to be invested in Canadian Lands; the entire proceeds to be paid to her account.

"GEORGE SAUNDERS, Piershaws."

"You have done a good stroke of business this day, Jean," he said, as he rose once more to depart, "and you'll live to thank George Saunders for putting you in the way of it."

Had Jean Porter seen the look of glee on his cunning old face as he turned the corner of the smiddy, she would have had very grave reasons for doubt. As it was, misgivings tortured her the moment the door was closed on him. She sat down and tried

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to go on with her work, but instead she brooded wondering whether she had done right or wrong. Saunders would be honest with her and send money to Canada; and if it would be lost, no matter what he did.

Those who know something of the ways of finance, will remember the timidity with which they watched their initial deal. This was Jean Porter's first essay and she knew nothing of financing or speculating, outside of trying to make ten shillings a week keep her little home together; and terror and fear grew stronger and stronger within her every minute. She felt she wanted to go to Saunders and get back her money from him, but then, again, he might not be at home, and, already, he might have wired it on to his brother. She did not know what to do. She swayed and swung from one thought to another, and the more she reasoned with herself the more she saw how foolish she had been. Better a thousand times, with her small savings beside her, without fear, than the chances of making them more at the sacrifice of her peace of mind. She was strained on a mental rack such as she had never before experienced.

When Nelly came home from school, it did not take her long to notice how distraught her mother was; but, always quiet and gentle, she did not ask for a reason. She knew that, if it were good for her to know, her mother would tell her without her having to ask.

Later, Sandy came in from the smiddy. As so

as he entered, he felt as if a bursting cloud were hanging over the usually cheery kitchen. His mother was sitting, staring into the fire with a look of utter misery on her face. Nelly was at her mother's feet on the rug, looking sad in sympathy.

"Mother," said Sandy softly, throwing his arms round her neck, "what's wrong? You're troubled about something. Maybe I can help," he added coaxingly. He raised her head gently, caught her in his strong arms and looked into her eyes.

"Tell me, mother," he asked again, more firmly. "Tell me and I'll help you."

Her eyes swam and she kissed him passionately.

"Oh! my laddie, my laddie," she sobbed, "it is you I've robbed. It is you I've robbed. Oh! why didna I see it before? Why was I greedy, when Mr. Galt said what I had would do? Sandy, Sandy!"

He let her sob for a time, on his shoulder; and, as she grew more calm, she told him, in a faltering way, of the money she had saved for his schooling, of the wonderful story of easy-gotten wealth pictured by Saunders and the fears she now entertained regarding it.

Sandy at once shared her dread. He knew what Saunders was, far better than his mother knew.

"It looks pretty bad, mother. Saunders is gambling now, as well as drinking, and he needs money for that, I can tell you. If he had lots o' his own, as he says he has, he wouldna be borrowing from the men the way he is doing.

"It would be all right, maybe, if he invested the

money as he promised, but he's no' likely to do that when he can spend it at home. A receipt o' any kind from a man like him is no' worth much. Ben was just saying the day, in his own way, that Saunders is as crooked as a dog's hind leg and that he would steal the pennies oot o' Blind Wullie's tinny, if he thought Wullie was as blind as he tries to make fr' believe he is.

"You say he ruined my faither. Weel, he's no' going to ruin you and me, forby. I'll get that money from him," he cried passionately, "if I have to kill him for it."

A fierce passion was surging in the boy's heart.

"Sandy, Sandy!" admonished his mother. "You mustn't think o' violence. You're just a laddie yet, and he's a grown man. You're no' his equal for strength, although you will be before long."

Sandy thought for a second, then a little door in his memory opened, as little doors have a habit of doing, although not always at the right time, and he remembered an incident which happened long ago. His face brightened.

"Mother, I think I ken a way to get the money back, if he has it in his possession. And if he hasna, then he'll have to get it pretty quick.

"Now it's getting dark, mother dearie; you and Nelly go to your bed and I'll have my supper by mysel'."

"No, no, Sandy! No' until you tell me what you are going to do."

"I canna tell you, mother, for the plan might no'

work, and it would just be a disappointment. But there's little danger in it to Saunders, or me, so don't worry yourself'."

Mrs. Porter meekly obeyed her young son's order, for she had a faith in him and in his decisions that nothing could shatter.

After his supper, Sandy went to the outhouse, shouldered a spade and walked away in the direction of Saunders' home.

His heart was filled with hatred toward this man, who seemed ever to be causing grief and sadness to others, and he knew within himself that if he wished to meet him on equal terms he would have to work underhand, as Saunders always did.

He climbed noiselessly over the lawyer's back fence and was soon digging at the foot of his old apple tree. His spade struck something hard and he gave a little laugh of relief; the enamelled tin box was still there. He filled in the loose earth, tucked the box under his arm and made for home again. He did not know what the box contained and, what was more, he did not care. This much he knew: what was inside must be of importance, otherwise Saunders would not have gone to the trouble of hiding it. Furthermore, the fact of his hiding it proved he was afraid it might be discovered in his possession.

Sandy buried it carefully at the back end of his own garden and went to bed, satisfied that so far his plan had been successful.

Although it was the last day before the examina-

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tion, he did not go to school next morning; but, as soon as he thought Saunders would be up, he started out. Peering in at the back window of the cottage he saw the lawyer sitting in front of a blazing fire in his cosy little bedroom. There was a bottle and a half-filled tumbler on the small table at his side and he was counting a roll of notes, smiling to himself in a most self-satisfied manner. Sandy knocked at the door and Saunders shouted, "Come in," hastily stuffing the notes into his pocket.

He started, somewhat surprised when he saw who his visitor was, but, recovering himself quickly, he exclaimed with a smile:

"Good morning, Sandy, my boy; glad to see you! But I fancied you would be at school to-day. It won't do to lose time, you know, and the examination so near at hand. Sit down a while and make yourself comfortable. It isn't every day you pay old George Saunders a visit. Sit down," he repeated, looking over at Sandy. "What's making you so white? You look as if you had seen a ghost, laddie; or maybe stolen something."

Sandy was indeed pale, and he was at a loss to know just how to explain his call, for he was aware this crafty old lawyer knew many moves in the game that were new to him and he did not wish to venture anything which might spoil his plans. However, his anger finally overcame his fear and he walked over to the table beside Saunders. In a calm, though somewhat unnatural tone, he commenced:

"There is your receipt, Lawyer Saunders."

He placed the paper on the table, beside the whisky bottle.

"I want the money you got from my mother yesterday."

"Money, did you say? Money?" queried the lawyer. "Sit down, man, and don't talk nonsense. I never got money from your mother, not a ha'penny. You must have dreamed it."

"If you didna get her money," answered Sandy, "why did you give her a receipt?"

"Od sakes, Sandy! and that's true enough," came the reply, slowly and quietly. "I never thought of that. I must have got the money all right. But what if I did? What the devil do you want with it, anyway? It isn't yours. Your mother has given it to me to invest for her, and all for the purpose of giving you a decent schooling. And here you are, you ungrateful young rascal, wanting the money to spend, I daresay, on some silly thing or another. No, no, Sandy; you can't have it. It wouldn't be good for you. You go home and give your mother that receipt; and remember it is sinful to steal such things from the hard-working mother that loves you."

Sandy looked at the lawyer for a moment or two, and then he repeated his request doggedly:

"I tell you, I want the money you got from my mother. I'm here at her bidding. Give it to me, or it will be the worse for you."

Saunders half rose in his chair and pushed Sandy back a little, with his elbow.

"Don't crowd me, boy," he said gruffly. "I couldn't

give you the money if I wanted to. Go away; I've no time to be bothered with silly nonsense."

Sandy breathed hard. He was a little afraid that the greater part of the money might be gone already. Still, he knew Saunders had a considerable sum in his possession: he had seen him count it. He knew, also, that the lawyer had been proved a liar on many a previous occasion.

"That's no' true," he cried. "I saw you counting it before I came in. I saw you through the window, so you had better give it to me. I'm no' going to leave here till I get it."

"What?" yelled the lawyer, in rising anger, "you dared to pry into my room like a young thief? If you don't get out of here in two minutes I'll throw you through the window. I never heard the like of it."

Sandy did not feel at all afraid now, and, mere boy as he was, he made up his mind he was going to fight Saunders if he had to. He knew that the lawyer had been trying to deceive him and he told him so, plainly.

"Your receipt says the money is to be invested and the proceeds have to go to my mother's account. I know the investing you'll do; it'll be in whisky you'll invest it. Look you here, Mr. Saunders, I wouldna come here unless I meant what I tell you. I want that money, and I want it now, and what's more, unless you give it to me, you'll never again lay your hands on that tin box you had hidden under the apple tree in your garden."

The effect of Sandy's words could not possibly have been greater. Saunders paled to the lips, his mouth twitched and he lay back in his chair for a space and gasped, with his eyes closed. Then he sprang up and seized Sandy by the coat.

"You are lying, you damned young thief. Confess you are lying, or I'll murder you."

Sandy wrenched himself free and Saunders raised his clinched hands high above his head, as if he would strike him down; but his arms fell limply by his sides again and he turned and rushed out into the garden.

From the window, Sandy watched him grovelling on his hands and knees, and pulling away the loose earth round the foot of the apple tree, with his long, boney fingers. In a few moments, he was back again and his demeanour was greatly changed. He sat down, rubbing his face and his hands with his handkerchief; then, turning to Sandy, he said:

"Don't mind me, Sandy; I was excited. The box, it only contained some old letters, love letters, long ago. I don't want to lose them, though. Bring the box back to me, right away, there's a good lad; and I'll see about letting you have the money."

"No, no, Mr. Saunders!" replied Sandy, with decision, becoming bold in the knowledge that things were coming his way at last. "I have never done you a wrong turn and you can trust me. You did my mother a wrong turn yesterday, and I'm no' going to trust you. Give me the money now, and you'll have your tin box inside o' ten minutes."

Saunders sat twisting his fingers. He was beaten, and he knew it. He swore to himself, as seems to be a habit with beaten men, that he would pay out this impertinent youngster before he was many days older. But, what interested Sandy more, he pulled out a roll of notes, counted them out and handed them over. Sandy checked his count carefully, and, when he found there were exactly one hundred and thirteen pounds in the bundle, he flushed with pleasure, executed a little dance upon the floor, beamed on Mr. Saunders as if there never had been the slightest difference in the world between them, and ran out, shouting:

"I'll have your box back in a jiffy, Mr. Saunders; don't be frightened. And I'll no' read the love letters, either, although they must be great ones if they are worth a hundred and thirteen pounds."

True to his word, Sandy hurried back again. But he did not trust himself into Saunders' house. He tapped on the window from the outside. When Saunders looked up, he placed the box upon the sill and walked away, whistling like a lintie.

Sandy's mother was out washing all that day and he did not see her until the evening. But when he heard her footsteps at the door, he jumped up to meet her. She noticed the light of gladness in his eyes and she knew he had been successful.

"There you are, mother," he cried, putting the roll of notes into her hands. "It's all in notes now, but it is as good as the money you gave to Saunders. Hold it tight; there's ower much o' your heart's

blood in that money to entrust it with such an unhung scoundrel as he is."

"Ay, laddie," she said, "I have learned my lesson and I'll no' part with it again till it pays for your fees or your keep when you go to the College."

"Now, now, mother!" he answered, tapping her lightly on the cheek. "Don't torment me any more about that, for it's like licking your lips for the honey when you see the bees among the clover; and I feel like Gavie Rorieson, I havena the ghost o' a chance against Cairnglen. And I'm frightened now, that what has happened yesterday and the day will no' be very good for settling my mind on the work I have before me the morn'."

CHAPTER XVII

The Bursars

THE school concert, which always marked the last day of the term, was in full swing.

This was one of the great social events of the year for the hard-working wives and mothers of Piershaws, and many were the new tartan shawls and black dolmans paraded in honour of the occasion. From the muffled whispers which went on between each item on the programme, from the proximity of the bonneted heads, from the significant nods, the long faces and the you-don't-tell-me expression of the eyes, it was evident that some rare titbits of scandal and gossip were being exchanged by some; while others were expounding on the nocturnal habits and general demerits of somebody's else man, or the best way to break a baby off swallowing rubber soothers and safety pins; while here and there other ladies wallowed in the deeper enjoyment of giving harrowing details of their pet maladies.

"The Village Blacksmith," "Lord Ullin's Daughter," and "The Beggar Man," made their usual bow, being recited with the same gusto as of yore and applauded with the same annual relish.

It was a simple matter to discover the parent of

each performer from the encouraging wags of her head, the fierce glare she gave to any who dared to whisper during the recital, her anxious endeavours to prompt her offspring when it commenced the wrong verse or forgot the third line, and her long and hearty hand-clapping at the end of the piece, not to mention the sigh of relief which oozed out, uninvited, together with the air of resignation with which she arranged her person to meet the exacting demands of a school seat, which, doubtless, would have fitted her more readily some forty years before, and to listen to the remainder of the programme, now, to her, dull and uninteresting.

Mr. Galt was doing all in his power to make things pleasant for the ladies, and his polite attentions brought out unstinted praise from those on whom they were showered. Needless to say, he took considerable pains to see that these attentions were served all round in equal proportion.

He had been very anxious to receive the results of the examination before closing day, and the Government Inspector in London had promised to let him have them at the earliest possible moment; but the arrival of the train that morning failed to bring with it any news.

The entertainment was drawing to an end; the senior classes were in the midst of a heart-breaking rendering of the "Trial Scene from the Merchant of Venice," when a telegraph boy sauntered in with a message. Mr. Galt put a stop to that individual's whistling and tore open the envelope. He read the

communication hurriedly, then struck the desk before him with his fist and gave vent to a happy "hurrah," which could be heard all over the room. It was a decided interruption. Everybody stopped and looked at him. He blushed in a shamefaced way.

"Excuse me," he said, "I'm sorry. Just go on with the piece."

As soon as it was over, all eyes were fixed on the master again, as if expecting him to speak. Many of the boys knew, intuitively, that he held the long-looked-for results in his hand.

"I have just received word of the examination," he went on, "and no one can tell how glad I am. Boys, we have won the Championship."

Immediately, a wild yell broke out all over the school. Slates were rattled on the desks, feet were stamped and Bedlam seemed to run riot for a few moments; for, lots of the scholars, who had no more than a passing interest in the examination, could not let such a glorious chance of making a noise in school slip past unhonoured. The older folks stuffed their fingers in their ears until the shouting and cheering died down. Mr. Galt raised his hand and all became quiet once more.

"I know you will be anxious to hear the names of the fortunate boys who have won, for the first time in the history of Piershaws School, the great distinction of being given the chance to take their Degrees at that mighty seat of learning, the Glasgow

University. I shall read the telegram as I have received it:

“Result of Caldermains Scholarships:—Highest possible marks, 500; First, Alexander Porter, Piershaws, 493 marks. Second, Archibald Campbell, Cairnglen, 491 marks. Third, Gavie Rorieson, Piershaws, 483 marks.”

The previous noise was monastic silence to the uproar which now let itself loose, and Mr. Galt made no effort to restrain it.

When Sandy heard his name read out, he gave a sigh like a weary being; his head dropped on his arm on the desk and he cried in relief and joy. Mr. Galt went up the narrow aisle and laid his hand kindly on his shoulder.

“Dear me, Sandy, this is nothing to cry over. Shake hands, laddie, I am more than proud of you, and of Gavie.”

Sandy felt the strong hand round his and he regained his composure.

“Mr. Galt,” he whispered, “I know it’s babylike, but it meant so much to me, and my mother. I wanted badly to go to College, and I know I can manage now.”

Quite the opposite effect was noticeable on Gavie. He laughed and was inclined to treat the whole thing as a joke, for, never in his wildest moments did he dream of his Aunt Kirsty allowing him to stay at school any longer than the law demanded, no matter on what pretext. Yet, in this, he was agreeably surprised.

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She was sitting in her small seat, bolt upright, fat and stiff and proud, her mouth pursed tightly and her face more red than ever with trying to breathe without making a noise. She had come straight from a heavy forenoon's washing and her large, bare, red arms refused to be hidden under her shawl. The careworn and somewhat forbidding scowl on her face had given place to the dignified expression supposed to be in keeping with the aunt and guardian of Calder Bursar. This was a new attitude for her, and Gavie was not quite sure just how to approach it. He went over to her cautiously and, in a coaxing voice, addressed her:

"Dinna be angry with me, aunty, and I'll no' do it again. I just wanted to show them that I wasna so thick in the heid as auld Todrick said. Somebody else can have the bursary that wants it. I'll go to work and earn my keep."

His aunt pounced on him like a cat on a mouse.

"What's that you say, ye young imp, and me working mysel' to death to give you a schooling?" Then, in a louder voice which all could hear and with a look around to see that Mrs. Tyler and the other women folks were listening attentively enough, "You're going to the College, Gavie Rorieson, if I have to take you there by the lug, as I did once before to this very school. And, what's more, you'll go right to Peter Black now and give in your warning. It's no' the thing for a College man to be shovelling coal and chasing weans to get back the empty buggies."

The master, who was standing near by, laughed merrily, then to conceal his mirth, he devoted his energies to getting the scholars out of the school in an orderly manner.

Gavie pulled a long face as if he were about to swallow a pill, but inwardly he was dancing with joy.

"Weel, aunty, if you'll let me keep on with auld Peter till I get something better for my spare time, I'll go to the College."

"Just like a Rorieson," replied his aunt, "always laying doon condeetions. But you can have your own way this time.

"Gavie, you can kiss me," she added, presenting her cheek.

This was a bigger surprise to Gavie than winning the scholarship, but he obliged, before the older people who still remained in the room, with an alacrity which tilted his aunt's straw hat, bent the rooster feather on it, knocked out a few hairpins and almost took her breath away.

Little Nelly Porter, demure and quiet as usual, was a very proud lass that afternoon as she walked along the road between Sandy and Gavie. As she looked from one to the other, she hardly knew which she liked better, the rollicking, happy, careless, orphan laddie, or her serious, determined, strong-willed brother.

CHAPTER XVIII

Doreen's Departure

"SO you're back to the auld smiddy," cried Ben, one morning. "How long are you going to stay with us this time, Sandy, lad?"

"Oh, just till the College takes up again, Ben," he replied, shaking his old friend by the hand. "I have one year in now, and that's one year less to go."

"You'll find this a lot harder work than reading books," interposed Andy Rogers. "It'll dirty your hands a bit, Sandy."

"Maybe, Andy, but that'll no' matter much. My hands will wash again; and a bit of hard work won't do me any harm, after the nice easy time I have had all winter and spring, sitting with my feet on the mantel piece, smoking a pipe and reading novels," answered Sandy, with a laugh and a wink to Ben. "You should have a ding at it yoursel', next winter."

Sandy changed his tone, suddenly, and went over to Rogers in a friendly manner. "But look here, Andy, we're no' going to be hitting at each other all summer, so give me a shake o' your hand, and say no more about it."

Andy took the proffered hand, but did not look up from his work, contenting himself with the remark:

"I'll no' hit at anybody, Sandy, if I'm left alone."

The days that followed were glorious ones for the young student. He could feel his chest expanding and his arms growing hard with the heavy work; and sound sleep came to him at night, unwooed. He loved the glare of the furnace, the music of the anvil, and the warm, live sensation on his cheek as he pressed against the horses' flanks while he shod them.

"I say, Sandy," remarked Ben one day, "we'll be having a visitor before long who will set us all in quick motion. Doreen Telford's back from school and she'll be tearing all over the country-side on that mischievous we: mare o' hers, wearing shoes through, pulling them off, losing a nail or ripping a pad, or some such business. There's scarce a day passes when she's home that she doesna come here for something or other, even if it' only to put her bonny face in at the door and say, with a dainty bow, 'Good morning, Mr. McQuirter!' as if she were canvassing at election time or selling tickets for a soiree. We'll all have to keep our noses clean now, I warrant."

"Good preserve us! talk o' the deil! if you can do that when you're thinking o' angels; here she is, rattling doon the road, full kilter."

Sandy looked through the open doorway and saw her making for the smiddy at breakneck speed. His heart beat quickly and his breath came fast. It had always been so when she was near, and each time worse than before. He could feel the blood leaving his face, and, lest any of the men might notice his

perturbation, he retired to the far side of the forge, deep in the shadow.

Doreen drew up at the door, with a jerk, jumped off her horse and came in at a run. Her hair was flying and her cheeks were glowing with the violence of her exercise.

"Back again, Ben," she cried. "I want four shoes, the best steel and a first class job. My, but it's fine to be away from school, where 'you must do this,' and 'it isn't proper for a lady to do that.' Oh, dear, I do get sick of it. But just think, three months, chasing all over the country on dear old Meg, furnishing work for you, Ben, and ordering you around, and you so big and strong and 'bearded like the pard!' I think I shall die of pleasure, it is so splendid."

"That's all right, Miss Doreen," replied Ben, resting on his sledge, "I'm sure we're all glad to see you back again, and looking so weel and braw. I dare say you'll be wanting me to do the job for you this time, as usual."

"That I do, Ben. I have never trusted Meg with anyone but you. O ho! who is this hiding in the corner and never uttering a word?" she cried, tiptoeing toward the forge and peering in Sandy's direction. "So it is Sandy, and working like a Trojan, never deigning to look up even; as if I were not vastly more important than a piece of red hot iron. Come out and let me look at you!"

Sandy came forward with a smile on his face; her

bantering almost making him forget this embarrassment. She held out her hand.

"I am glad to see you, Miss Doreen; but you'll excuse me not shaking hands," Sandy said. "You know, blacksmithing isn't as clean a job as working a sampler."

"Oh, I don't care for that," she replied cheerfully, "it's good honest toil, so put out your hand, like a good boy."

She looked up and down at the broad-chested, capable-looking young blacksmith, with his light, curly hair and clean-cut features; with his bare arms and leather apron; and she said almost in a whisper, but with a little touch of admiration:

"You've grown quite a man." Then, turning to Ben, she continued:

"Is Sandy good at shoeing?"

"Ay, he is that," answered Ben, "maybe a bit better at it than I am."

"All right then, Ben; I won't trouble you this time. Come on, Sandy, see what kind of a job you can make with Meg, for her feet are in an awful state."

"I think Ben could make a far better shape at it," he replied, "but, if you wish, I'll do my best."

While he busied himself with the mare, Doreen chatted gaily all the time. "Do you know, Sandy, I am so glad you are at College. Why, some day, you will be a Vet, like father; for you are going to be a Vet?"

"That's what I want to be, Miss Doreen; but I'll

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never be as good a one as your father."

"Well, father says you shall, and he ought to know.

"Oh, yes! and there's another thing, too," said Doreen. "I know now why you were always reading poetry. I wondered, and wondered; but I read the College Magazine for this year and I found out. That little poem of yours, about 'Work being better than play,' was real nice. Just think of it, Meg," she cried, stroking the mare's nose, "you are being shod by a real, live poet, and at the old price, too."

Sandy blushed. "Did you think it half passable, Miss Doreen?" he asked. "The boys insisted on my contributing something and I had to oblige, although I was dreadfully ashamed of my production and quite nervous when I saw it in cold print."

"Well, you had nothing to be ashamed of. It was very nice. And I am going to get you to write something for me, some day. Will you, Sandy? Now, look at me," she cried, in an aggrieved tone, pulling at his sleeve. "Don't pretend to be so terribly busy; that nail is all right, you have driven it in as far as it will go."

Sandy released the horse's foot and straightened himself up. As he looked at Doreen, he felt the old sensation of rare and unknown perfumes playing about his nostrils and catching his throat, making his breath come uneasily. But he replied modestly:

"I could not write anything half good enough for you, so I must een wait a while till I improve."

"Spoken like a poet," replied Doreen with a pout.

She was beginning to know the power she possessed with men; she was wont to try it at times; and this wholesome, handsome, sturdy lad, with the thoughtful gray-blue eyes, presented a splendid opportunity. "But all the same, I think that's mean; most men would promise, you know; in fact, some boys I know do it already, without being asked. One I know tried to rhyme 'love' and 'stove.' "

Sandy laughed.

"Still," she went on, "yours is half a promise, and I'm not going to let you off."

"I hope you will find the mare tolerably well shod," said Sandy, changing the subject and turning away, as Doreen led the horse from the smiddy.

"I'll be able to tell you that later," she replied. "But come here, Mr. Ungallant. Ben always helps me up. Won't you?"

She placed her little foot in his hands and lept lightly into the saddle, shook the reins and was off like the wind.

Sandy stood at the door, watching, until she was almost out of sight. At the drop in the hill, she turned and the sun caught her hair. She waved her riding switch to Sandy, and was gone; thoughtless of the fires she was fanning around her, which later she might find hard to check.

Doreen had known Sandy all her lifetime; she liked his open, honest ways and his cleverness which had already raised him above his fellows. To-day, it pleased her to see the looks of admiration which he flashed on her when he fancied he was unnoticed.

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It was nice to tease him and play with him; and—but there were no “ands”, for that was all.

Still Sandy stood, with his shoulder against the doorpost, gazing in front of him and seeing nothing, till a shout from Ben brought his thoughts back again to common things.

“She’s a gey nice lass,” grinned Andy, looking over the back of a horse, from where he had been observing all that had passed, “but she’s no’ for the likes o’ you and me, so hold your sighs for somebody a bit nearer your ain level.”

Sandy did not reply to the taunt, but, when only Ben and he were together, the old man caught him by the arm and said earnestly:

“For Heavens’ sake, laddie, dinna let your mind travel in the direction o’ Doreen. She’s a bonny lass, and she’s good, but you ken she’s far above us folks, as Andy put it, and it’ll only give you worry and trouble to see her going off with some laird or another, later on. And, if all reports are true, she’s going abroad for the winter with Sir James and young Philip Calder. They say the youngster has an eye after Doreen, himsel’; so whatna chance have you, Sandy? Whatna chance have you, laddie?”

“Take an auld man’s advice in good part; dinna put oot your hand and try to stop the wind, let it whistle by.”

Sandy looked sadly at his friend.

“Ay, Ben, only the more I try, the worse it gets. She’s no’ for me, and I ken it. If she would only keep away and let me be, I might forget.”

But Doreen did not stay away.

She was not the one to inflict pain knowingly, but she did not understand how serious this serious lad was, nor had the idea of love, so far, ever taken possession of her. She liked Sandy as she liked Ben, and Philip Calder, and many other of her friends; she sought him out to talk to because of the pleasure she derived from his company. We all seek after the environments that suit us, the pleasant places and the pleasant people, and, when we find them, we are wont to linger with them as long as possible; hence our friendships, our love of home and our love of motherland.

And Sandy did not forget.

He tried hard, for well he understood the futility of his longings. Time and again, he had seen Doreen and Philip cantering along the country roads and by-ways, chatting merrily in absolute harmony and freedom. And yet they never passed him without stopping for a few moments in friendly conversation.

Philip had grown into a slim, graceful, easy-going young man, quite unspoiled by the luxuries which his position afforded.

On the day before they went abroad, they called at the smiddy to say goodbye. Philip stood at the door, holding the reins of both horses, while Doreen went inside.

"Ben," she said, "I am going away and I shall not be back for a long, long time. Goodbye! Goodbye, Andy!"

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She went over to Sandy last of all.

"Goodbye, my dear old friend!" she said, as she held his strong hand in both hers. Her eyes were mellow and her voice quivered just a little. "We have been good friends, you and I, and I am sorry when it comes to parting with good friends. I shall be away this winter and all the following year. Maybe longer than that, for I am going to school in the far south of France. By the time I get back, Sandy, you will have won through your Arts course, and then it will be Alexander Porter, M.A., and all by your own efforts, too. Oh, how glad I shall be to welcome you as such. But, after all, you can never be anything else but Sandy to me."

She spoke out before all of them and in all her girlish exuberance and innocence.

Sandy's heart was bursting, but not for worlds would he have betrayed himself. He looked down at her and said simply:

"Goodbye, Doreen!" lingering softly on her name, for he felt that it was, indeed, "goodbye."

"Why, Sandy!" she cried, opening her eyes in astonishment, "you said that as if you were never going to see me again."

A faint smile flickered around his mouth and he moved with her toward the door.

"We can never tell, so it is foolish to bid farewell in any other way. But I know you shall be well taken care of, for you are in good hands."

"Oh, yes! Philip will look after me all right.

Won't you, Philip?" she inquired, as she neared her waiting escort.

"That I will, Doreen," answered Philip briskly.

He stepped forward to help her into her saddle. She waved him back imperiously.

"Not this time, Mr. Philip. When I am at the forge, that's Sandy's privilege."

Philip laughed in his own good-natured way; her foot was in Sandy's hand and a moment later she and Philip were gone.

And, to the one that was left, all that was worthwhile seemed to have gone, too.

CHAPTER XIX

Light on an Old Mystery

IN his spare moments, after Doreen's departure, Sandy betook himself, more and more, to the country and to his books. Late in the evening, early in the morning and all day on Sunday, found him walking slowly along the Glen Road, reading as he went; sitting in the shade of a hedgerow; or lying, face downward, full length upon the grass on the beloved old Knowe which looked over the sleepy little town.

Summer was passing swiftly and he was preparing himself for his second year's study. He looked forward to it with longing, as a means of concentration for his ever active mind, which could not be kept under control except by hard work. Never at any time talkative, he became less so now than ever; and, outside of his own home, or with Ben or Gavie, it was difficult to draw him into conversation; although, to those who succeeded, it was effort well expended.

Every one referred to him as Serious Sandy, and the name was apt and probably well-earned.

He had been out on the Knowe, as usual, and was wending his way homeward in the gathering dusk, when he met Doctor Telford and Sergeant McKenzie coming up the hill.

"Just the man we are looking for, Sandy; come away back with us," said the Doctor.

"Ay, come away! We can do with another fine, for it's hard to tell what's wrong," put in the Sergeant.

"Why? What's the matter? Poachers or thieves?"

"Neither this time; come along the road and we'll tell you as we go."

Sandy turned and went back with them.

"You see, George Saunders hasna been seen for four days and his hoose is locked up. It's kind o' suspicious like. I'm going to break in. He might be lying ill, or dead, for all we ken. I met the Doctor on my way up and thought I would be none the worse o' his company."

They arrived at Saunders' house and tried to gain an entrance.

Both doors were locked and the windows were shut tight. McKenzie inserted a few keys in the locks without result.

"Put your shoulder to this, Sandy," he cried; and their combined weight sent the door flying inward, as the broken lock rattled on the floor. Save for the dismal mewing of a hungry cat, everything was ghastly quiet in the house and nothing seemed to have been disturbed for days. As they looked into Saunders' bedroom, the waning light was shooting aslant, through the bottom and sides of the drawn blind, disclosing a figure, sitting with his back to the door, in front of the charred remains of a fire.

They saw at a glance that Saunders had gone to his last account. He was in his dressing gown; his head hung limply on one side and his eyes were open and glazed. An empty whisky bottle and a decanter full of water sat at his elbow. A tumbler lay shattered at his feet. Silent witnesses all, of the life he had lived and the death he had died.

"We can do little here," said the Doctor. "He has been dead for several days. Let us lay him on his bed. Do all you require to do, McKenzie. Call in Doctor Walsh. I'll see to the burial."

Doctor Telford also took in hand to clear up Saunders' business affairs, and, as soon as the funeral was over, he and Sandy went through his belongings. For a time, nothing of any importance was discovered.

The Doctor thought it strange.

Suddenly Sandy remembered about the enamelled tin box, and he told the Doctor its history and how it had been the means of restoring his mother's money.

The Doctor's brows clouded.

"Laddie, it's a lucky thing for you that you got the money back, for it seems he was spending faster than he was getting. The only documents we seem to light on are accounts, and accounts and accounts, in endless array. But we must try to find that box, for there might be something there that would clear up a few matters."

Sandy went out into the garden and dug up the soil under the apple tree, but his search there dis-

closed nothing. The box evidently had never been put back.

As he passed the rubbish heap in the corner of the yard, he found its battered remains, rusty and useless. He hurried into the cheerless house again.

"It's no use, Doctor, the box is lying on the top of the rubbish pile, broken and empty, where it has probably lain for months."

"Well then, Sandy, there's nothing more we can do. Oh, yes," he added, "empty out the pockets of those old clothes, and lay them aside—some poor body will be glad of them to cover him this winter."

A few loose coins, a penknife, a pipe and a tobacco pouch were all that Sandy found. But, as he folded up Saunders' coat, he heard the crackle of paper. He went through the pockets again, this time more carefully.

"Do you know, Doctor," he ventured, "I think there is something inside the lining of this coat."

"That's hardly likely, Sandy, unless it is brown paper to stiffen the cloth with. But you might as well look. Rip up the seam with your knife; it would be strange, indeed, if old Saunders went to his grave without leaving some secret to be discovered."

Sandy put his hand through the rip and pulled out an envelope—the same yellow envelope with the beaver seal.

"Why, Doctor," he cried, excitedly, "it's yours; see, your name is on it."

The Doctor gazed in astonishment.

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"Well, of all the old rascals, how on earth did he get that. It is not worth the paper it is written on, but the last time I remember seeing it was in one of the pigeon holes in my own desk."

Sandy thought for a moment, and exclaimed suddenly:

"Why, I know now; he must have stolen it, for, long, long ago, he tried to get me to get it for him." And Sandy told the Doctor all he could remember of his interview with Saunders so long before.

"Well, Sandy," said Doctor Telford at last, "it is not of much account, anyway; but, still, if it was worthless, why did he want to have it? Why did he sew it up inside his coat? Laddie, that envelope was what he had in that box, or I'm far mistaken. And, when you found it, he could not trust it in the same place any longer, and kept it about him. I'll keep this for the present. Canada is a greater country now than it was a few years ago, and, who can tell but that this land may be more valuable. I'll get Lawyer Ross to make inquiries for me. Don't say a word to anybody about it. Saunders was bad, through and through, but he's dead now, and, if we were to mention this, it would just cause talk. We'll leave the judgment to his Maker and not to the idle gossipers of the whole countryside."

The two walked down the road together.

"Sandy, it's early yet," said the Doctor, "come away in for a while and have a chat."

They had been seated in front of the fire in the Doctor's study for the better part of an hour, and

not a word had been spoken. Both were gazing, in a dreamy kind of way, at the glowing coals and the red, tapering flames, with their ragged fringes of blue, reaching and disappearing into nothingness in the chimney. Their thoughts were running along the same lines, although, had they tried to analyse them, they would have found themselves in difficulties. They were neither asleep nor awake, but in a delightful state of restfulness in mind and body. Suddenly the Doctor roused himself.

"Sandy, you will be thinking I am a fine man, asking you in to have a chat with me and sitting here like a 'dummy.' But I do believe you are in the same mood yourself."

"Yes," he replied. "I was thinking of Saunders and the chances he had; and the mess he made of his life. That led to something else and I was soon far away from my original thoughts. Just where I was, I could not tell exactly; but, all the same, I feel that it is not good for a man to get money too easily. The harder he works for it, the better use he makes of it."

"You never said a truer thing, laddie. How many men can you count in this countryside, who have made money easily and yet made good use of it after they got it? Some, no doubt, but they are few and far between. I had to work hard for mine, and, if I had a son, he would have to work hard too; if it were only to keep him out of mischief. That is why I haven't done all I might have done for you, Sandy. I have only given you an odd chance, here and there,

to do things for yourself. And you haven't missed one; I'm glad to say.

"But, as soon as you take your Degree, it will be practice that you will need, and, by that time, you will have had plenty of experience in the smiddy. I want you to help me a bit more then, although you will be none the worse of an hour or two in the smiddy as well, to keep you fit. You could take some of the easier jobs off my hands entirely, and assist me with the harder ones. You will learn more that way in a month, than you would in a year by reading books. Nevertheless, mind you, books are very necessary also. And, what is just as important, this new arrangement shall be the means of increasing your earning capacity."

Sandy was overjoyed at the news and promised the Doctor to work all the harder now that something practical was in sight.

The old man had a horror of being thanked and Sandy knew it. He felt that the best thanks he could render was to prove himself worthy of the trust reposed on him. He rose to go and the Doctor accompanied him to the door.

"You must come in here often, laddie, now that Doreen is away, for I miss her badly. The house seems so quiet-like. But I must not grumble, for the change will do the lassie good; she'll see a bit of the world and, when she comes back, she'll be better able to understand the things around her. That reminds me: the morning she went away she made me promise that I would see that a daily supply

of fresh eggs, fresh milk and fresh butter was sent to your house and, that if you objected, she would never have another word to say to you."

"Yes, Doctor," answered Sandy, "I have been going to speak to you about that, for I hardly think we will be able to pay for so much once I go back to College. And mother thinks we could be doing with a lot less."

"Hoots man; who talked about paying?" said the Doctor, quite gruffly. "You haven't had a bill sent you yet, and, when you get one, time enough to worry. If you don't get the produce, it will only go to waste or into stomachs less deserving, for we have more than we sell or can use ourselves. Doreen is long-headed enough to understand that a man can't stuc; his best unless his inside is well lined, so, say no more about it until she comes back. And she'll give you your answer; never fear."

All the way home, Sandy thought how fortunate he was in having such a good friend as the Doctor and how he had been helped in a thousand little ways; and he wondered if he ever would be able to repay the kindnesses.

As Sandy approached his home, he heard the sound of voices. He peeped in at the window as he passed. Gavie Rorieson was seated there, with his mother and Nelly, and they were laughing happily together at the cheery fellow's lighthearted banterings.

Gavie often dropped in, on his way from Caldermains Farm, where he had been working during the

summer vacation. And Sandy noticed that these visits were becoming more and more frequent. He guessed the reason, and it gave him a thrill of joy, for he loved Gavie as he loved his own.

He was charitable with his friend and played the part of one who did not see and did not understand.

But deep down in his heart he envied, just a little, him who could love and hope for love in return.

CHAPTER XX

A Fight in the Forge

JEAN the dairymaid popped her head in at the smiddy door. That was as near as her maidenly modesty would permit her to venture to such a den of iniquity.

Every man in the shop stopped work and shouted cheery salutations.

"Wipe your feet and come in, Jean," called Ben.

"'Deed, no!" she answered in her shrill voice.

"But if I ever do come in, I'll wipe my feet on you.

"Here, Sandy Porter, the maister wants you up at the hoose, and he says you're to hurry. What's more," she continued, addressing the entire smiddy,

"I would have you aiken that I wouldna come near this place unless I had to."

She disappeared without waiting to see if her message were understood.

Sandy threw off his apron, put on his coat hurriedly and ran across to the hoose. As he did so, his pocket-book fell on the smiddy floor; but, in his haste, it lay where it had dropped, unnoticed by him.

He was no sooner gone, when Andy picked it up and walked toward the window, where he turned it over and examined it carefully. He scanned the con-

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tents, then gave vent to a coarse laugh which caused the men to look up from their work.

"What have you got there that's making you cackle like a hen laying a foundation stone?" cried one of them.

Andy tapped a horse on the flank with his hammer and pushed his way to the forge, holding up his find.

"There's only one blacksmith I ken in this toon that would be seen carrying such a contrivance as this. It belongs to Sandy, o' coorse—the man that's ower big for his boots."

"If it's Sandy's," interjected Ben, "you had better lay it down, for he's no' the one to care about other folk meddlin' wi' his gear."

"A lot we care about his care-aboots," replied Andy. "If it is so mighty important, he should keep a better grip o' it. What do you think o' this, though?"

He struck an extravagantly dramatic attitude and recited from a slip of paper. And even Ben was too inquisitive not to listen attentively.

"I know a lady fair, with sunny golden hair.

She's neat, and sweet, and most discreet; her manners are quite debonair;

And she'd bewitch you by the glance from out her eye;

Her curls entrancing, ever dancing, all her many charms enhancing,

Till one is wond'ring why such lavish melody

Should ever grace one pretty face, in perfect blended harmony."

Andy laughed loud and long, displaying his large teeth stained with tobacco juice. The others joined heartily in the merriment.

"That's blamed good," cried one of the journeymen.

"Ay!" said Ben, "there's no' much wrong with it. If you could do as weel, Andy, you would be using a pen instead o' a hammer and playing the gallant with every dairymaid in Caldermains."

"Call that good!" growled Andy. "Any fellow can make a rhyme. If that's the kind o' stuff they learn at the College, then thank Goodness I never went. Forby, we all ken who he's writing about. The likes o' him setting himsel' up alongside the daughter o' the man he earns his bread off. I call it damned cheek."

"Weel," soothed Ben, working at the bellows, "a tu' penny cat can look at a queen. But you needna be so indignant about it; I heard her, mysel', a while before she went away, asking him to write something for her."

"Maybe she did, Ben; but she was making fun o' him, as she always does, only the fool, Sandy, hasna the sense to see it."

"If she likes it," replied Ben, "and Sandy doesna object, it's none o' oor business. The best thing you can do is to lay that by, now that you have had your laugh at his expense, and no' make things any worse than they are between you and him; for Sandy's hard hit and he's no' in the best o' spirits lately. Many a time I wonder that he doesna turn on you."

"Him, turn on me?" was the derisive reply. "Heugh! he might, if he had the pluck, but it's no' in him. If he had ever been going to match his strength against mine, he would have done it long ago, for I've given him lots o' chances."

"Weell! if the time ever comes," said Ben finally, "I hope you get all you deserve."

The matter was dropped there for the time being, but a few moments later Sandy returned. He hung up his coat, put on his apron and rolled up his sleeves, ready for work again.

Andy sauntered over to him. "Here's some o' you fal-lals you dropped when you went oot," he said, holding up the pocket-book.

Someone sniggered, and Sandy felt by the apparent tension that there was something underlying. He took the proffered book and examined the pockets of it.

"Is this everything?" he asked.

"O' coorse it is. What do you think I am? Do you think I went through the thing?" answered Andy, with menace in his voice.

Sandy looked him over quickly, from head to foot, and pounced on a piece of paper which protruded slightly from Andy's vest pocket.

"You liar!" he cried passionately, the animal in him breaking bounds. "What's that?"

The hammering on the anvils stopped and the bellows ceased their roar.

For answer, Andy swung and struck him savagely under the chin, sending Sandy staggering backward

into a corner, where he lay in a heap. "That'll maybe teach you manners," he growled.

It was a cowardly blow, and Ben rushed angrily in between.

Sandy, remembering the advice given him long ago by Dr. Telford, was on his feet again in a second.

"Stand back, Ben!" he snapped, with a flash in his eye that brooked no interference and before which Ben and the others drew away.

"I've stood for you long enough, you bully. You can do your worst now."

He pushed his hair from his brow and squared up.

The two faced each other; Sandy pale and on guard, Rogers grinning, ferociously confident of his superior reach and strength. The latter swung his arms and swept in on Sandy like an avalanche; and, for a moment, it looked as if Sandy would be overwhelmed, but his guard kept well up and the onslaught left him merely grazed in one or two places. As Rogers stepped back to renew his impetus, Sandy saw an opening and darted in, his first coming in contact with his opponent's eye, which swelled up at once.

"That's all square!" he panted lightly.

"You Hell-cat!" snarled Rogers, as he bore in again. "It'll no' be square for long."

But Sandy lept aside, keeping away from the terrible arms and hands which were trying to reach him.

Round and round the old smiddy floor they fought; the grim silence broken only by the shuffling

of feet and the sounds of blows and heavy breathing. Not a murmur was heard from the earnest onlookers, for they saw and felt that it was more than a common quarrel this time and that one or other of the combatants must drop before it would end.

There was something terrible, something fascinating, in watching these two young men, with their passions loose in red riot, smashing at each other with primeval ferocity; civilisation, education, religion, brotherly love, all swept away before this tide of hatred and resented wrongs.

Andy's eye was closed and his face was cut and bruised, while Sandy's lips were puffed and bleeding.

Arm struck on arm, or crashed through with a sickening noise on more tender flesh.

Rogers soon grew tired of open fighting, where his strength was expended and lost. He preferred getting hold somewhere; and, with this purpose in view, he jumped in again. Time and time again, Sandy evaded him successfully. Still the mad rushing went on. Sandy endeavoured to avoid him once more, but, in doing so, he stumbled over a piece of iron, staggering backward. Rogers was on him in a trice. He caught Sandy by the throat and bore him down.

"Let up! let up!" broke in the men at once, drawing close to the struggling pair.

"Get back, and mind your own damned business," shouted Andy, pressing hard with both hands and choking the life from his wriggling opponent.

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Rogers knew his power and the advantage he had, and exultation showed in his angry face.

Sandy felt his eyes bulging, and he knew that, in a moment or two more, his strength must leave him. He concentrated all his energies on Andy's little fingers as they lay loosely on his throat. He caught them firmly and bent them back with all his remaining might. One of them snapped. Rogers gave a cry of pain and loosened his grip immediately.

Over and over on the smiddy floor they rolled. Suddenly, Sandy sprang up, clear. Andy scrambled up after him and sailed in anew, his face black with fury and shouting,

"I'll have you yet, you young panther." But his courage was gradually oozing out before the cool defence of his lighter adversary. His breath began to tear his chest as it whistled in and out. His little finger hung broken and useless on his left hand.

Sandy knew now that the fight was his and he sought to end it as quickly as possible. He guarded well, then, lunging forward, caught Rogers full on the chin, sending him with a thud to the spongy flooring, among the parings and filings. Sandy stood over him, ready to finish the work as Rogers rose on his elbow, but the latter cried out,

"Keep off! keep off! I've had enough."

As he rose slowly and painfully, Sandy turned away from him toward the trough to bathe his face and hands.

He was bending over the water, laving himself, when he heard a sharp shout, then a crash. He

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darted aside, as the heaviest sledge-hammer in the smithy fell at his feet, grasped tightly in the nerveless fingers of Andy Rogers, who sprawled on his face with blood pouring from a deep, jagged gash in the back of his head.

"By God, laddie!" cried Ben, rushing forward, white with excitement, "that was the closest call I ever saw. The cowardly brute! I just thought he would try something like that, for I saw it in his eye.

"Man! I never threw a horse-shoe straighter in all my life.

"Eh, Sandy, but you're a bonny fighter," he added, in admiration.

"Thank you, Ben, thank you!" said Sandy earnestly, shaking his preserver's hand, "But I hope we havena killed him between us."

"Weel, it was he or you for it. But he's no' deid. Deil the fear o' it. His kind are no' so easily done away with."

They raised Andy's head, they shook him, they rubbed his hands,—but he showed no signs of coming-to.

"Here!" shouted McPhail, one of the journeymen, "let me see him. I'll wake him up." He went to the water trough and filled a pail from it.

"No; no!" interposed Sandy, "that wouldn't be fair, Mac."

"Fair or no' fair, what's the odds. If he's deid, it'll no' hurt him. If he's just unconscious, it'll bring him round;—the very thing you're all wanting.

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Besides, I've a right to this much, for the half-crown he borrowed from me and never paid back."

McPhail swung the large pail and dashed its contents over the prostrate man, drenching him from head to feet.

Rogers gasped and spluttered, rubbed his eyes and sat up. He looked around him in a dazed way, then he seemed gradually to come to himself.

Ben and Sandy sighed in relief.

Andy rose slowly, bedraggled and towsled. He took off his apron and tossed it into a corner, then, pushing his arms into the sleeves of his jacket, without a word or another look, he passed out at the door and round the smiddy corner.

CHAPTER XXI

The 'Three M. A.'s

TIME flew by as on a lightning flash. The capping ceremony, with its Latin Prayer and irrepressible interruptions, its cat-calls and pedagogic speeches, was over for another year; and Aunt Kirsty, Mrs. Porter and Nelly sat down at the tea-table, for the first time, in the presence of three Masters of Art, one of whom was almost afraid to sit, lest he should soil his new honour, which, to him, was closely associated with the white shirt he wore. And he was uncertain in his mind whether the shirt or the honour was responsible for his uncomfortable feeling; but, so suspicious was he of the shirt that he had determined to experiment by removing it at the first convenient opportunity. He did not know how far, in other directions, this uncomfortable sensation was likely to make itself evident, and he was intensely relieved to find that his appetite was still unimpaired.

To Sandy, however, his new attainment was merely a stepping stone toward the realisation of his ambition, as several years of study still lay ahead. But it marked the time when his mother would no longer require to go out to work, for he would now be able

to earn sufficient to keep her and Nelly in comparative comfort; and, as the gentle idolising mother sat there, her face wore a look of abandoned happiness and utter contentment, basking, as she was, in the new found joy of being able to devote all her time to her home, a privilege which only those who have borne the domestic yoke ever can appreciate fully, and one which raised her to the plane of a real lady, although, unfortunately, a man bearing the name would consider it a degradation to the level of a servant.

On Job Gait the heavy day lighted, from long usage. But it felt like an investment to look upon the first fruits of his earnest endeavours and to realise, in his own lifetime, that his work would be perpetuated.

"My, but this has been an exciting day," said Gavie, after the edges had been worn off his appetite. "I'm sure there's something wrong with my head, for I'm going round like the minute hand of a ha'-penny watch."

"There's something wrong with it, all right," replied Sandy paukily. "We've known that for a long time."

"If you would hold your tongue for a while and give your Degree time to settle, there would be less wrong with your heid," remarked Gavie's Aunt. "Can you no' stop your humming?" she continued. "You've been at it since ever you sat doon and it gets on my nerves,—or whatever you call they things that give ye the jumps. The noise you are making

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is like drawing a fender across a stone floor. Forby, Gavie, it's no' manners."

"Well, Aunty, it's a song of Sandy's, and it's the best students' chorus we had during the whole of last year. We didn't forget to let the Bigwigs hear it this forenoon."

"Sandy never shows us any of his poetry," broke in Nelly.

"Doesn't he, though? That's real mean of you, Sandy. But I'll pull you out of your shell. If none of you mind, I'll sing that chorus to you now; just to let you hear it." Gavie cleared his throat and eased his neck from his tight collar as preliminaries.

"You'll do nothing o' the kind, Gavie Rorieson," interrupted his Aunt. "Don't imagine you're going to disgrace me before folk, even if you have a title to your name. And don't delude yoursel', either, that I canna give you a cuff on the lug, the same as before."

Gavie looked disappointed.

"It's not a title, Aunty, it's a Degree," he explained.

"Weel, it is as broad as it is long. Anyway, we're going to have no' singing at the tea-table.

"When I was table-maid to Sir James' heid butler, it wasna considered the thing to hum and sing at the table, and Sir James' heid butler was in a posection to ken what was right and what was wrong."

"Still, we would like to hear the poetry," suggested Mr. Galt.

"Let me read it then," added Gavie, by way of a compromise.

Sandy was the only one who made further objection, but, as he was prejudiced, Gavie paid no attention, but read slowly,

'Hi, ho! for the maid that is merry,
Hi, ho! for the heart that is true.
Here's to the lips that are red as a cherry;
Here's to the eyes that are bonny and blue.

Hi! hi! hi! for the maiden;
Hi! for the maid that is loving and true.

Hi, ho! for the shout and the laughter;
Hi, ho! for the voice that can sing.
Here's to the present, a fig for hereafter;
Here's to the joy that the present can bring.

Hi! hi! hi! for hilarity.
Hi! let us shout till the rafters shall ring.'

"Isn't that great? But it's far better when it's sung. Shall I try it, just once?" he pleaded, in mock earnestness, looking aside at his Aunt Kirsty.

"That'll do now, Gavie!" said his aunt, with an admonishing glance. "I'm no' saying it's no' good rhyming, but the sense o' it is far too worldly for a when beardless callants."

"Ay! I hardly thought that was Sandy's way o' looking at things," remarked Mrs. Porter.

"O' course, Mrs. Porter, you must allow a little for young blood and animal spirits in College boys,"

said Mr. Galt, in an endeavour to excuse them. "They never mean half what they sing about, you know."

Sandy, who was at the far end of the table, felt it was time he said something in his own defence.

"You're quite right, Mr. Galt, and it is doubly true where the College boy happens to be the poet as well. You see, I don't fancy that silly chorus a bit, yet Gavie likes it: all which merely proves the real poet, who must think and feel for others, and write as if the experiences were his own. He would require to be a chameleon if he underwent all the sensations he wrote about.

"The Poet, Burns, made odes to his Mary, his Jean, his Chorlis, his Nell, his Peggy and his Nancy."

"You think then, if he really had all those sweet-hearts, he would have very little time to write poetry?" interrogated Mr. Galt.

"Exactly! Some say Burns was fickle, but the possibility is that he didn't have any more sweet-hearts than other ploughmen had, which is granting quite a bit. I attribute it to his genius. More than likely he was writing poems, at half-a-crown a time, for every love-sick swain within a radius of fifty miles."

"Then," said Mr. Galt, with a wink, "that will be what is called the Poet's license. I daresay you have had quite a busy time in that way, yourself, Sandy?"

"By Jove! Mr. Galt," laughed Gavie, "that explains a whole lot. Many a time Sandy used to ex-

cuse himself from coming out with us boys, by making us believe he was cramming, while the money-grabbing scoundrel was vieing with the sausage machine. In the one case, it is in goes the pig and out come the sausages; in the other, in goes a piece of paper wrapped round half-a-crown, and out comes a poem,—guaranteed to relieve the most stubborn cases, or the money returned; as the quack advertisement says.”

“Indeed no!” replied Sandy. “I was never good enough at it for that, even if such a rarity could have been discovered as a student with a spare half-crown.”

“What was that you said about a Poet’s license,” put in Aunt Kirsty, reverting back. “If that doesna beat all. I’ve heard o’ a gun license and a dog license, but I didna ken poets had to have one as weel; although, mind you, from what I hear, I dinna doot but that they’re more in need o’ being licensed than either guns or dogs; and the authorities seem to be a lot easier on poets than they were on Wullie Thompson, who kept the Public Hoose at the Moor End. He lost his license for selling whisky to a drunk tinker. As if any publican ever saw, let alone sold whisky to, a sober tinker.”

Mrs. Rorieson sat back in her chair and panted for breath, after such a long speech.

“You are all far too hard on poets; and it is very discouraging to any who have aspirations in that direction.” remarked Sandy resignedly.

Gavie dropped into the Doric.

"You're none the worse o' getting it rubbed in, Mr. Sandy. But, never mind, you're no' such a bad poet after all.

"I'll read you another; a serious one this time," went on Gavie, addressing the entire table, "for, you know, Sandy is sometimes as serious as a cook who has just discovered herself trying to make raspberry jelly form a recipe for mushroom sauce. This poem is about the time the Professor shut his coat-tails in the door. The subject of the verses is not the Professor, nor yet the door; it is the poor, silent-suffering coat-tails."

Sandy jumped up.

"Keep that in your pocket, Gavie Rorieson, or I'll lick you the minute I get you outside."

Gavie pulled out some papers, and the first thing he noticed was an envelope addressed to himself. He stared at it.

"Well, of all the fatheads!" he cried. "I knew there was something wrong with my head. The Clerk of the Trustees of the High School was at the ceremony this forenoon and he handed this to me as I left the College. I put it in my pocket and that was the end of it, till now."

He tore the envelope open, read the letter over and laughed heartily.

"Well, that is a joke. Here, Sandy, read it out,— I'm too modest."

Sandy took the letter and, as he read it aloud,

the previous light conversation was entirely forgotten.

Office of Trustees,
Cairnglen High School.
Parish of Piershaws.

Mr. Gavin Rorieson, M.A.

Dear Sir,

As the position of Assistant Master of Cairnglen High School is presently vacant, the Trustees have decided to offer it to you, at the same salary as was paid to Mr. Jackson, who has resigned on account of ill health.

Kindly give this matter your careful consideration and communicate your decision to the Trustees, at an early date.

W. CRAWFORD,
Clerk.

There was visible excitement as Sandy finished. They all talked together, with no one, apparently, listening. After a bit, Aunt Kirsty succeeded in making herself heard.

"Now, Gavie, you just get ink and paper this very minute and write them and tell them that you'll tak' the poseition. Hurry now, before anybody else gets wind o' it."

"Oh! there's no hurry on that account," put in Mr. Galt, who evidently knew more of the matter than he gave out. "The Trustees only make the offer to one at a time."

"But I don't think I want this position," said

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Gavie, lowering his brows. "No, no: I can't take it," he added decidedly, "not on any consideration. It would mean wearing a white shirt all the time and that would kill me. I'm nearly dead now and I have only had it on six hours. I would rather shovel coal for Pet. : Black."

Gavie's aunt thought he meant it. She gasped. Tears came into her eyes and she fumbled for her handkerchief.

"There, there," he cried, jumping up, "I was just fooling, aunty. Do you think I would let a chance like this slip past? Not likely! "Let me kiss you?"

"Weel, ye can," she replied, relieved and pacified, "just this once. But I want you strictly to understand that I don't like that College trick you have o' kissing on the least provocation."

CHAPTER XXII

An Old Wound Reopens

“**S**ANDY, do you remember that deed of mine which you discovered in the lining of old Saunders' coat?” asked the Doctor, as the former was about to leave the study, where he had been getting some instructions regarding a call he had to make.

“Yes, Doctor, I don't think I shall ever forget that.”

“I have just received a letter from Lawyer Ross. He says the land is right in the centre of a thriving district now and is worth about fifty times what I paid for it. He has sold half of it for three thousand pounds and he advises me to keep the remainder, as values are still rising.

“Saunders was a crafty old rascal, and no mistake. Little wonder he wanted the deed. He must have known I did not have it registered, and he must have known of the land's increasing value. I cannot understand why he kept it hidden away, instead of making use of it.”

“Man, Sandy, what could not a man like that have done had he kept away from drink?”

“Yes, Doctor, Saunders did himself as much harm

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as he did anyone else," replied Sandy. "But I am glad the land has turned out so well."

"It was luck, Sandy: pure luck. However, I am turning over the balance to Doreen, for I have all I need. You see, laddie, when a man gets left alone, he can always put out his hand to help himself, but it comes hard on a woman; especially if she has never known what it is to earn her own bread. I want to make her secure against that, in all circumstances.

"My dear little lass will be back here again in a few days, I am pleased to say. She's been away a year longer than I ever intended, but the schooling she was getting was doing her good, so I thought I would let her be.

"Nobody knows how much her mother and I have missed her. I don't think we shall ever let her away for so long, again. It is wonderful the difference a cheery face and a merry laugh make in a house."

"Why, who can that be?" he asked suddenly, listening, as a gig drew up at the front door.

There was a sound of voices; one high pitched and excited.

"Doreen," he cried, bounding up and tearing out the study and along the corridor with all the energy of a schoolboy.

Sandy staggered and clutched the side of the desk. He also heard the voice and it echoed through his being like a sudden, but pleasant reminiscence of some old happiness, which had lingered awhile and faded away into sorrow. He knew how foolish he was, and he had been so confident of himself all the

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time she was away. But now, at the first sound of her voice, his walls of resolution lay crumbled at his feet.

"Still," he argued, drawing himself together, "it is only the suddenness of it all, it will pass away, and he must fight down his feelings."

He felt he could not bear to meet her then. He wanted a few moments to collect himself. There was no way out, but the open window. He slipped through, into the garden, trembling with suppressed emotion as he sat down on the old seat, among the trees and shrubbery.

"You had better go into the study," said the Doctor to Doreen, after the first burst of greeting was over. "Sandy's there, but you will hardly know each other now."

In her old, impetuous way, she pushed the door open and rushed in.

"Why, father mine," she exclaimed, "There's no one here."

Doctor Telford laughed. "He's a wise boy, is Sandy. I suppose he did not want to be in the road, so he cleared out for a bit, by way of the window. He won't be very far off; you can be sure of that."

"I call that real mean of him!" said Doreen with a pout. "But I'll find him. I shall be back directly, father," and she ran out into the garden.

Sandy heard her coming along the gravel walk and he stood up to greet her, taking off his cap. He was more at ease now, although the dazzling change in the girl he once knew almost took his breath away.

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She had become a woman, full and rounded, and fair to look on, with a subtle polish in her manner that placed her,—oh, so far away from him. The very distance gave him courage.

She looked at him in silence, for a brief space, from his light, wavy hair to his large thoughtful eyes; from his broad shoulders and deep chest down to his clean-cut limbs.

“Alexander Porter, M.A. — presume!” she said at last, with a deferential bow. Then she stamped her foot and gave a little gesture of annoyance. “No, I don’t like it a bit;—Sandy,—that’s best of all, Serious Sandy. But I am so glad to see you again,—the old house, the garden, the trees, the birds, the very air; and you,—everything feels like home.” She held out both her hands and Sandy took them in his.

“And I am glad to see you,” he said solemnly. “I much prefer to be called Sandy. The other doesn’t feel quite comfortable. But how did you know they called me Serious Sandy?”

“Do they? Why! I didn’t know; but, dear me! it is so terribly apt,” she laughed. “Don’t you like it?”

“I don’t mind it, Miss Doreen, it is quite respectable when compared with some of the nick names I hear around me.”

“That’s true, still, if you don’t behave yourself, someone will be calling you Fighting Sandy. Oh! I heard all about it,” she continued, shaking an admonishing finger. “Father wrote me full details of

your fight with that man Rogers; just as he got them from Ben, and I clapped my hands and read the letter over and over again. Then I had to read it to Philip.

"Father said you were all well rid of Rogers. We could not understand, though, how you managed to overcome such an animal of a man; but I know now, for you are so much bigger and stronger than when I saw you last. And I do believe you have a fearful temper."

Sandy blushed at the raillery. "I am afraid Ben has been telling tales out of school, Miss Doreen, and with all the abandon of an Arabian Nights Entertainer, and the glamour of the footlights to set him off, for I assure you I did not seek the quarrel, nor did I enjoy it when it was on. Indeed, it was a very commonplace affair, after all."

"Yes, Sandy," said Doreen, pulling a twig from the bush at her side, stripping the bark from it, "but I also heard, in a vague kind of way, that it was all over a love letter of yours, which he took from your pocket-book. I didn't know you had a sweetheart, although I might have guessed; for all College boys have."

"I have no sweetheart," replied Sandy, earnestly, "and it was not a love letter that Andy stole from me."

"Now, Sandy, you are quibbling, if it wasn't a love letter, it was a love poem."

"Well, yes! since you put it to me directly, it was a poem," he answered slowly, with a faint smile.

"You have not yet written for me the one you half-promised you would, so long ago, so terribly long ago that the half-promise must, by this time, have grown to a whole one.

"Won't you show this one to me, Sandy?"

Sandy grew a little confused, for Doreen had a coaxing way which he could not resist, despite the promptings of his inner self.

"Why! that might have been the very one you speak of, Miss Doreen," he answered, "although it never reached the party about whom it was written."

"Oh, then, you *wili* give it to me?" she pleaded, drawing nearer, placing her hand on his arm and looking into his eyes. "Please do, Sandy it will be so nice to have it, now I know its history."

Sandy extracted it from his pocket-book and handed it to her, watching her closely as she read it.

"That is nice," she said sweetly, looking up with a smile, "but do you think I am like that?"

"I thought you were, when it was written, but that was a long time ago," he answered.

"And it is not like me now?"

"No, Miss Doreen, you were a girl then: you are a lady now, and I would not dare to attempt a description."

She looked at him seriously, almost pettishly.

"Now, Sandy; that will do. From quibbling, you have switched to flattery. Any Frenchman can do that, and, if you do it again, I shall not speak to you any more, for it doesn't suit a broad, strong, healthy man like you."

Then, changing like a flash, "But you can give me that pink rose right up on top of that bush there," she added, pointing to the one she wanted.

Sandy reached up for it. As he did so, Doreen's desire to possess it, departed, if the desire were ever really there. He turned round again, to present it to her, but she had gone like a will o' the wisp, which Sandy would have followed gladly, had he only known its whereabouts.

He looked at the rose he held in his scratched hand and he felt rather foolish. Then disappointment, and anger at himself for his presumption and thoughtlessness, got the mastery. He tore the rose in pieces, strewed it on the path and walked away rapidly, with a deep frown on his brow.

The bushes parted and Doreen came out laughing nervously.

"Why!—he's just like Philip," she said, "only,—in a strong forceful sort of way, and, dear me! what a temper. I don't know really whether to like him or hate him."

CHAPTER XXIII

A Cry and its Consequence

A LONG time passed ere Sandy encountered Doreen again. He had no desire to meet her on unequal terms and he knew of nothing that ever would be likely to make it otherwise. He would always be the poor, befriended drunkard's bairn, and she the daughter of his benefactor. He was too strong willed and determined to allow himself to be toyed with; although he knew Doreen would not cause him pain wittingly. It was no fault of hers that he loved her with all the force of his virile being and that she could not love him in return.

The very sound of her voice made him afraid for himself, for he had a premonition that, sooner or later, something must happen which might bind them closely, but, more than likely, would part them forever. Doreen could have no idea of all these thoughts of his. Probably she had never known what love was, and certainly not so far as he was concerned. He could tell that from her naturalness and her easy manner of conversation with him.

Young Philip Calder was her equal and all the chances were his. Everyone could see that the heir to Caldermains sought Doreen's company and that

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his company, in turn, was not distasteful to her. In fact, all seemed to expect, at any time, to hear of an engagement between them.

Sandy kept more and more to himself and to his studies. Apparently, none guessed the cause of his growing reserve; but, if any did, they wisely kept their own counsel. His mother and sister became anxious for him and feared that he was applying himself too closely to his profession. He treated their solicitude with kindness and consideration, but scouted the suggestion of his taking a holiday, declaring he would gladly welcome more work, rather than cut it down.

He had still many things to be thankful for: his home, his work, his strong arms, his books, and the old circular road by the Glen and the Knowe, with its ever changing glory in the altering light; the double hedgerows, the oak trees; the long, stretching thick wood of evergreen firs over on the hill behind the pasture lands; and the pretty little lodges, here and there, overgrown with ivy and roses, nestling at the many entrances to Caldermains Estate. All these still contributed to his enjoyment in the quiet of the evenings.

He had been out for several hours and was now wending his way slowly homeward, down the hill toward the Knowe. The shades were gathering closely and the old sun was sending out flashes of deep red as it sank behind the trees. The birds had gone to rest, the flowers had drawn their petalled coverlets over their hearts, the wind was hushed in

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its play among the trees and all nature seemed to be standing still in awe of the approaching night.

Sandy stopped, as if by some inward command. He looked around and thought how peaceful, how tranquil, how harmonious were the works of the Creator; how good the world would be if man had always obeyed the Supreme Will and had been content to remain as part of such a great Conception.

Suddenly, his trend of thought was interrupted: he heard, or fancied he heard, someone cry out. It came again, this time sharp and shrill; the cry of a woman in fear. He bounded forward in the direction of the sound and, as he reached the bend in the road, he saw a woman struggling in the arms of a man, only a few hundred yards ahead. On hearing him coming, the woman's assailant released her, leapt over the dyke and disappeared among the dense firs. As Sandy approached, his heart thumped loudly and his blood ran fast, for Doreen Telford stood before him, pale, wide-eyed, terror-stricken and trembling. And Sandy thanked his God for the privilege of his timely appearance.

She was greatly excited, but he could see a look of relief coming quickly into her eyes.

"Oh, Sandy, Sandy!" she cried, falteringly, clutching his arm tightly, "you were just in time: that man stopped me and demanded money and my bracelets, and, when I refused, he tried to take them from me. His rough hands grasped my wrists, he——"

Sandy looked at her for a moment, then made a movement toward the wood.

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"No, no!" she implored, "you must not go after him. The foliage is so thick, you could never find him, and he might take advantage of his cover to do you an injury. Don't go, don't go! you must not leave me again, Sandy."

Sandy was holding himself in check, for her voice, her touch, were like wine to him. He felt his only safety lay in getting away at once. He would rather face a dozen highwaymen, than stand the pressure of her dainty hand on his arm and hear the plaintive, pleading sweetness of her voice, knowing, as he did, how hopeless were his longings.

They walked along in silence for a while, then Doreen stopped suddenly; her bosom heaved and she sobbed in relief. The reaction had taken hold and her womanly weakness was in possession.

Sandy stood quietly by, anxious and disturbed to witness her tears, for he would gladly have given his life to save one precious strand of her golden hair. He was seized with a great longing to comfort her. His eyes rested on the perfect curves of her full, red lips; and, without warning, a wild surge of uncontrollable passion swept over him. He caught her up in his arms and held her close to him, showering kisses on the lips he had so admired, on her hair and eyes, murmuring, "My love! my darling! no one shall ever harm you again."

She struggled in his embrace. Sandy released her and stepped back. His mad folly was spent and he stood pale and speechless. Doreen gasped for a

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second: the hot blood mantled her face and her eyes blazed with indignant fury.

"How dare you! oh, how dare you!" she cried, in a low, piteous wail.

"And I thought you were such a gentleman; you, you are worse than the thief who has gone."

With a quick movement, she struck him full on the cheek with her little gloved hand. "You miserable coward!" she cried in a tone of bitterness, then, with a look of hatred and scorn, she turned and hurried away.

Sandy was too dazed to think. He could feel the finger marks on his face burning like red-hot irons. He stood for a moment, as if struck to stone. Then a great blackness seemed to swallow him up. He reeled to the side of the road and fell face downward on the grass.

Doreen was fast disappearing over the brow of the hill, when something restrained her and she looked back. As she saw him lying there, her anger passed away, like mist before the warm sunshine; and something came to her, just then, that she had never known before, swelling her heart till she thought her bosom could never hold it. She wanted to go back and throw her arms around him, but she was afraid, and she ran on, never stopping, until she had locked the door of her room and thrown herself across her bed in abandonment to her feelings.

When reason returned to Sandy, the night was almost spent. The veil had lifted in the east and a cold grey was creeping over the sky. He rose.

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stiffened and shivering, and, as he looked around, everything came back to him with a sickening reality, making him long for the stupor which had so long possessed him. He turned in the direction he had come, taking the long way home, distraught with anger and remorse, cursing his weakness and lack of manhood and his ingratitude to the man who had done so much for him.

His self-esteem was gone and all his prospects were ruined.

Doreen could not fail to inform her father of what had taken place, and he knew how furious the Doctor would be, for neither he, nor any other, could possibly understand this momentary madness. True, he could run away from all of it, but that would be the act of a coward; and, surely, he was never that. No, he would face it to the end, whatever the end might be. Anyway, the deed that was past could never return. That was all over now. He would no more vibrate at the sound of Doreen's voice, nor would his face light up at her approach, for he was forever disgraced in her eyes.

It was better thus, but the pity was that the condition had to be bought at such a price.

The fresh morning air played about him and his thoughts became clear. He bathed his face in the ice-cold water of a little spring, by the wayside, and was refreshed.

He reached home at last, entered without disturbing his mother and sister, and slept, in utter exhaustion, long into the afternoon.

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On the following day, he received a hasty summons from the Doctor and he hurried over, prepared to hear the worst, but it proved no more than an urgent call into the country. And it was evident from the Doctor's geniality, that nothing had been said by Doreen, and Sandy wondered if she proposed remaining silent.

He might have known that it was not in her nature to injure wilfully. She knew what it would mean to his prospects and it looked to Sandy now, as if she intended keeping his misdeed her secret. It gave him one more chance to be a man, to earn his livelihood and to hold his head up; and it proved that, although she could have no confidence in the hold which he had on himself, she still had confidence in his ability and had neither desire nor intention to mar or hinder it.

That spark of her faith, at least, was left to him, and he vowed that her confidence would not be misplaced, nor her kindness forgotten.

As he took his departure from Doctor Telford's office, he came face to face, in the corridor, with the girl of his thoughts. He felt the spot on his cheek where she had struck him, flush crimson. He stood aside stiffly and she passed by. She raised her hand nervously, as if she wished to speak, but Sandy's cold, blue eyes looked straight into hers and his mouth closed grimly. He bowed silently and hurried through the doorway.

CHAPTER XXIV

Philip Calder's Wooing

PHILIP CALDER, always straightforward and honourable, had of late wished to speak to Doreen of what lay nearest his heart. He had been brought up in her company since he was a child. They had played together, they had studied together, they had reasoned and argued together, until each missed the other when apart and longed for the time when they should be together again.

Philip's education was now completed. It was his father's intention that he should take up many of the duties and responsibilities of the estate, so that, when the time came, he would be in a position to look after his own interests satisfactorily.

Sir James had always encouraged Philip in his companionship with Doreen and ever looked forward to the time when she would be more to him than a merry, laughing-eyed visitor. He had spoken to Philip of his hopes and was glad to discover that his son's feelings were in accord with his own.

Time and again, the young laird had been on the point of unburdening himself to the lady he loved, and, time and again, he had put it off. Not that he was in any way indifferent, but simply because it was

part of his nature. He was far too much of a gentleman to have taken advantage of his position while they were in France under the guardianship of his father and, since they had returned, the time had slipped along, dilly-dallying in happy companionship.

Again, to the best of Philip's knowledge, he had no possible rival for Doreen's affections; in consequence, he was confident that all would be right when he should come to speak, and that nothing could possibly interfere with the strong bond of comradeship which held them together, a bond which might, at any time, be cemented into something stronger, something deeper, something more lasting.

Doreen's birthday was drawing near, and he decided that, on that morning when he called to pay his respects, he would lay bare his heart to her.

He had planned a little surprise, to pave the way for his wooing, but he encountered one difficulty in its execution. Luckily, he thought of Sandy as a means to helping him out, and, with that object in view, he arrived at the smiddy at six o'clock one morning just as the bellows were blowing the furnace fires into action for the day.

He hailed Sandy from the doorway. Sandy returned his greeting cheerily.

"Good morning, Mr. Philip! You certainly are an early visitor."

"Well, Sandy, you know the story about the early bird."

"I do, Mr. Philip, but I hope I am not the early worm."

"That's just what you are this time," replied the other with a laugh, "but I am not foolish enough to try to gobble you up, especially when there is something I wish you to do for me.

"Let us go down the road a bit, while we talk."

Philip took Sandy's arm and they proceeded across the yard to the footpath: a striking contrast—Philip, tall and slim; dark, pleasant-featured, immaculate in his white silk scarf, his riding breeches and brown leggings: Sandy, stout and of medium height, leather-aproned, his muscular arms bared to the shoulders, his throat and chest exposed to the morning air; fair of face, firm-jawed, solemn-visaged and thoughtful-eyed.

"You see, it is like this," began Philip, a little nervously. "I have a sweetheart; and she has a birthday next week. I am particularly anxious to send her something nice, by way of remembrance. I should like to have a few original lines to send along with it. She is well-read, this sweetheart of mine, and an extract of any kind, from one of the poets, might appear to her too matter of fact.

"If I were any good at it myself, I would not impose on your good nature, Sandy, but, I am not. Now, you are: we all know that, who know you. I want you to write something for me; only this once."

As soon as the young laird commenced to talk, Sandy grew pale. Too well he knew the destination of Philip's gift. But Philip did not perceive his perturbation for his thoughts were elsewhere.

"I am afraid you over-estimate my ability," replied Sandy, steadily enough. "This is something I have not tried before."

"Oh! that won't matter, old fellow," cried Calder, releasing his companion's arm and slapping him on the shoulder. "Better late than never! Probably this will help you."

He took a neat, little, velvet case from his pocket, touched a spring and displayed a prettily-carved, gold buckle.

"I wish something to go along with this: something short and sweet; something strong and hopeful; something bubbling with expectancy. I leave it to you entirely; only, I must have it by Wednesday.

Sandy liked Philip, and he was anxious to help him if he could. The incongruity of his position and the novelty of it appealed to him, so he determined to do his best.

"All right! he said, "I'll do what I can; and, if it doesn't suit your taste, you can destroy it."

Early on the Sunday morning, remembering his promise, Sandy went up on the Knowe. He wrote and re-wrote until he had what he thought might answer the purpose. Philip called for it on the Tuesday evening and laughed in delight as he read the product of Sandy's endeavours.

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"You're but a little buckle,—that is true;
Yet, paltry trinket, how I envy you!
Little you dreamed, when first to eye displayed,
That you should grace the form of such a maid.
Mayhap, you'll clasp the circlet round her waist,
Or on her fair, young bosom rise and fall.
Perchance, upon her shoulder you'll be placed,
Some silken draperies to hold in thrall.
Haste then! speed on your mission! play your part!
And whisper my devotion to her heart."

"Man," he cried, in high glee, "that's just the very thing the Doctor ordered. It is good enough to win a Princess. And, I don't mind telling you, Sandy, I would not exchange her for any Princess living."

"I am glad the verse is what you want," replied Sandy quietly, "and, I wish you luck in your wooing," he added, with an effort, but, nevertheless, in all sincerity.

"I know you do, Sandy, else you would not have written this for me. And I appreciate your wishes more than you can imagine."

Philip dispatched his gift early in the morning of Doreen's birthday, and, a few hours later, he hastened to her side.

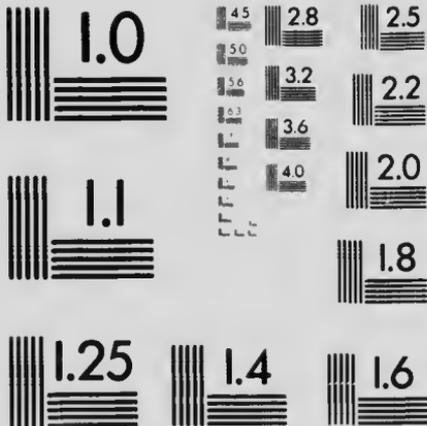
She received him in the large, old-fashioned high-roofed parlour, with its heavy green carpet, its chaste oak furnishings and its tall, glass overmantel above which hung so many quaint trophies of sport and war.

Doreen was attired in a clinging gown of pale green; her favourite colour. Her hair was loosely



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coiled, with a single ringlet hanging over her left shoulder and shimmering a golden bronze in the sunbeams as they poured between the parted curtains. The usual robust freshness of her cheeks was slightly subdued and her eyes appeared wider and more expressive than usual. But there was a buoyancy in her step and mirth in her face, as she greeted her visitor.

"I am ever so happy this morning, Philip," she said, sitting down on the couch in the corner, near the window, "everyone has been so good to me. Sit down by me and let me tell you all about it."

She chatted away, lightly and guilelessly, with ever varying expressions and inflexions. Philip fancied he had never seen her look so charming and he longed, more than ever, for the time when she would be his very own.

"And there is one thing more, Philip, which arrived this morning," she said at last. "See, it is over there, on show. But, do you know, it was not the proper thing to send that to me. It ought to have been flowers or chocolates." And she laughed at the thought. "However, I don't mind," she continued. "it is the spirit and not the gift that one appreciates, and in your case I have accepted it in the spirit in which it was given."

Philip misconstrued the purport of Doreen's last remark and he immediately took advantage of the opening.

"There was something else along with it, Doreen: did you get it also?"

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"Ay," she answered proudly, "and I value it best of all. See, it is here." She drew the paper from out her bosom.

Young Calder's heart beat fast.

"But I never knew that Philip was a poet!" she continued, taking a side-long glance at him. He flushed slightly, as he answered,

"Doreen, there are times and conditions in life which make poets of us all. And it is because I wrote it, that you like it? Is it not so?"

He moved toward her, looking earnestly into her face.

"Now," she replied, leaning away from him, "I can see you are going to tell a lie: a little, weak-kneed, half-hearted, wobbly sort of a one,—but still a lie, and I cannot permit. I have read this verse before, Philip, so you must not tell me that it is original,—your very own,—the outpourings of your innermost thoughts."

Philip started. He wondered if Sandy had fooled him and foisted an extract on him, from one of the poets. But he put away the thought at once, for he knew that deceit, of all things, was foreign to his honest friend. Nevertheless, he was greatly perplexed.

"I don't quite understand," he said. "What makes you doubt its originality?"

"Listen, Philip, and I will tell you, for I can see in your face that you are still in the mood for discussion on the point; and I hate discussions, unless they are about horses, hats, or the minister's wife.

"Last Sunday forenoon, I was sitting on the
Knove, reading. A little piece of paper came tum-
bling and twirling toward me, propelled by the sur-
mer breeze. I picked it up and there it is."

She handed him a torn slip as she spoke.

"The identical verse, you see, but only half
finished, crude and unpolished!"

Now Philip understood.

"And you know who wrote it?" he asked.

"Surely! I have seen his writing many times."

"Doreen," he cried suddenly, with a fear gripping
his heart, "I cannot bear it any longer. I am not
poet, but still I love you. I love you, I want you,
I need you. Tell me, Doreen, tell me that I may
live for you, only for you? Tell me in turn that
you love me; that you are mine; that you will be
mine for all time."

Doreen tried to stay his words, but she could not.
Her bosom heaved and tears glistened in her eyes.

"Oh! Philip, Philip! why did you say it?" she
whispered piteously. "You have spoiled all our
happiness and we can never be the same again.
I did not know, I did not understand. I thought we
were good friends, only good friends, and, oh! such
good friends. Forgive me, please, please forgive
me; for you deserve the best that the world can give
me. But, you and I, Oh—no,—no,—no—."

She hid her face in her hands.

Philip was stunned; he doubted his own ears. He
had not expected this. He drew away from Doreen
and his hand tightened on the back of the couch.

"Surely, Doreen, surely that is not your final word?" he asked brokenly. "Take your own time; I can wait. I shall not speak of this again for another year, two years, only tell me that I may hope on?"

"No! Philip, no!" she answered kindly and with greater composure. "It would be unkind, unfair to you. Surely you would not have me when my heart is elsewhere?"

"There is someone else, then?" he asked anxiously.

Doreen rose and walked slowly toward the window. She looked away out into the garden, and, in the distance among the trees she could see her father and Sandy in earnest conversation.

"Yes!" she cried softly, "there is someone else;— someone—else—. But, I shall never marry. Love came to me once—strong, forceful, and unbidden. When it came I did not know it for what it was; it was so fierce, so overwhelming. I thrust it from me and it went away. Now, I love alone."

She wept silently, as she concluded.

Philip went over to her and took her hand in his.

"Goodbye, Doreen, my dear friend! Goodbye! I am sorry, sorry for both of us."

CHAPTER XXV

Glad Heart and Sad Heart

DON'T imagine you are going out the Glen Road yoursel', the night, for I'm going with you; the walk'll sharpen my appetite, and I have something to tell you anyway."

So said Gavie, making up on Sandy, as the latter passed under the Railway Bridge, on his usual stroll; talking in the language of his boyhood, as was the habit of the two when alone, as it had a warmer flow and acted as a kind of password to the innermost recesses of their natures.

"Come away then!" cried Sandy. "I'll be glad o' your company, although you are such a clatter-bag. But I might as weel put the book in my pocket, for I'll have small chance o' reading while you are around." Sandy looked at him and raised his eyebrows. "But tell me, Gavie, what makes you so nervouslike the night? Have you a bad conscience or did you eat something that didna agree with you?"

"Hold a wee, Sandy! and I'll tell you all about it, for it's serious this time."

"Right you are then," said Sandy. "But I'm thinking it will be the first time ever you were serious in your life."

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Gavie skirmished a bit for a way to begin. He put his arm through Sandy's, as he walked along.

"You and I have been good chums, Sandy, since we were wee shavers, and we've been in many a pickle together. We've confided most all oor troubles to one another. For all that, we've aye been a wee diffident in talking o' oor love for some lassie that each o' us kent was dear to the other. But the time has come, Sandy, when I canna hold my tongue any longer. With me, it's Nelly, your Nelly. Ever since the day she stood up for me before auld Todrick, I've had one aim in life. She was a bonny wee lass, even then, and a good lass forby; and I wanted her no' to think ill o' me. I wanted to do something that would show her I wasna such a dunderheid after all. Mr. Galt gave me the chance and I did my best. Many a time I felt like throwing up my studying and running away, but I would see Nelly walking down the road or sitting someplace, reading a book, and it brought me up.

"One night, getting on for suppertime, when I was hungry as a hawk, I looked through your kitchen window and saw her with a white apron on, setting the table and making the tea; and my heart was bursting, I wanted her so bad. Sandy, she minded me o' somebody I think I dreamed aboot, long, long ago, when I was a wee laddie, no' able to toddle. It was the clean, white things that did it, and I have never gotten it oot o' my heid since. I often wonder if there was some' ody like her that I belonged to.

"I never wanted to run away after that. At the

school, and through the College; every day and every night, it was, and still is, Nelly, Nelly, Nelly, until I fancy the birds are singing her name and the wind is catching it up and whistling it among the trees. The flowers seem to bend their heads to her and the grass grows up, just to kiss her feet. Sandy, I want Nelly, and I want you to help me. I have never mentioned love to her, but I think, sometimes, she might like me a wee. She hasna a faither to watch over her and I need the sanction o' both your mother and you, before I would feel at liberty to tell her all. You'll help me, Sandy, say you'll help me?"

Sandy listened in breathless attention at the earnest outpourings of his genial, open-hearted companion, at whose conclusion he laid his arm round his shoulder and said, with a solemn smile:

"My mother has just one lassie, Gavie, and I have just one sister, and she's dear to both o' us. I have just one chum on whom I can aye rely, and there's just one man I could wholly trust Nelly with, and his name is Gavie Rorieson."

The two young men faced each other and gripped hands.

"Go in and win!" added Sandy. "You have all the luck. I envy you, Gavie, but I don't grudge it."

Neither spoke for a considerable time; the one was too happy for words and the other was thinking of the happiness his destiny had denied him. They passed on, through the Glen Village with its white-washed row of little, straw-thatched houses, past the

old one-horse smiddy at the corner, past Granny Manswell's sweetie shop with its display of glass jars, striped sweeties and stone bottles of ginger beer.

Here and there, the dim light of an oil lamp, or the spasmodic flicker of a fire, betrayed the presence of some weary toiler, not yet retired to rest.

It was not until the village was far behind them and they had reached the loneliest part of their walk, that Gavie ventured to speak again. They were nearing the tall clump of trees, where somebody was discovered once, dangling and dead, overhanging the roadway moist and clammy ever since; and they were passing the rough-hewn, sandstone pillar which covered the remains of some hunted covenanter of by-gone days, a witness of the grim suicide over the way but still holding its secret in sympathetic silence.

"Maybe I shouldna speak, Sandy," said Gavie, "but you must just forgive me. You're no' the way you used to be: we don't hear you laughing now-a-days. You're aye thinking, thinking."

"Noo!" interposed Sandy hastily, placing his hand lightly over Gavie's mouth. "Don't you worry about me; I'm as right as a trivet."

Gavie jerked his head aside.

"Let me have my say, Sandy," he said, "and we'll both feel better for it. Your mother has noticed it, and Nelly has noticed it, and they don't know what ails you. I have noticed it too, but fine I know. Sandy, it's Doreen Telford. Don't be angry with me now, for saying it.

Man! I wish you could forget her. She's meant

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for some grand body, and likely to get whoever she wants. She doesna travel your road. Will you no' try and forget her? There are lots o' other lassies who could make you happy, and would be glad to have you forby, if you would only give them half a chance."

Gavie looked at Sandy as the latter walked along by his side silent and serious, then he broke out again passionately.

"It's no' fair, she's no' worth it! She'll never get another like you: what's more, she doesna deserve to. Oh, it's a dagont shame!"

He caught hold of Sandy's hand, which tightened over his like a vice.

Sandy's voice sounded strange and tremulous as he spoke.

"Gavie, say no' more, for I canna bear it. You mustna speak ill o' her; it's no' her fault. If she belonged to another the morn, I would kill the man that said ought against her.

"Listen! you know me by this time, and when I try, I try hard. God alone knows how hard I have tried to forget Doreen, and failed, always failed, and always will fail. What other can I expect, when the glint o' her e'e,—the shimmer o' her hair,—the swish o' her skirt, the sight o' her glove on the Doctor's desk, her footprint in the gravel, the very mention o' the name Doreen, sets my blood on fire and makes me dr ik?"

"Gavie, Gavie! sometimes I fancy I'll go mad, and I canna chance that.

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"It'll no' be much longer now," he added shortly, nodding his head in sadness.

"I'll soon be through the College, and, once I have my Diploma, well, they're badly needing Veterinarians in India. Maybe that'll help to make it a bit easier for me. Even though I canna forget all together."

"My dear auld Sandy!" cried Gavie, in deep sympathy, "I knew you were hard hit, but I didna think it was quite so bad.

"However, I'm no' caring, if you go away, I'll go too," he added decisively.

Sandy turned and looked him straight in the face.

"No, Gavie! you'll no' do that; you'll just stay at home and look after Nelly,—and my mother."

CHAPTER XXVI

Poison and Antidote

IT was a wild night, and Mrs. Porter lay awake, listening to the howling of the wind outside and the swirling snow plastering against the window. During a lull, she fancied she heard a knock at the door. She listened, and it came again, more sharply. She sprang up, taking the lamp in her hand. As she loosened the latch, a gust of wind threw the door wide open, casting the melting snow around her.

"Come in, whoever ye be," she cried.

A slight figure came forward, wrapped in a mauve cloak and hood.

"Miss Telford!" gasped Mrs. Porter. "For the Lord's sake, lassie, what takes you out alone on such a night and at this late hour?"

Doreen went up close to her. Her eyes were tear-stained and red.

"Oh, Mrs. Porter, get Sandy,—hurry! Someone has poisoned Meg and she's dying."

In a few moments, Sandy was dressed and at her side. It was many months since he had exchanged words with her.

"Tell me all, quickly," he said. "Why didn't you send someone else for me? You ought not to be out in a night like this."

"I didn't care about the night, Sandy: Meg's dying. Read that; I found it pinned to her stall. I can tell you the rest as we go."

Sandy read the pencilled note, which had been hastily scrawled.

"It will take mair than a smiddyman to fix this job."

Sandy crumpled it in his hand. "The cowardly brute," he muttered to himself, "to take his revenge on a poor animal. Well I know who has done this, but what definite proof have I after all?"

As they hurried along Doreen told him what had happened.

"You see, Sandy, father has gone off for two days, to buy some horses for Sir James. I went into the stable to-night, as I always do, to give Meg some sugar and bid her good-night, and I found her rolling on the stable floor in terrible pain."

"But that was hours ago," said Sandy curiously. "Why didn't you send for me ere this?" He was angry. What chance had he with a horse which had been poisoned so long before?

"Sandy," cried Doreen, "I wanted to, but I could not. You know how strict father is in allowing no one to go to you in the winter time, while you are studying. I sent for Doctor Crawshay; he came two hours after and he was drunk. He said he could do nothing; it was too late: and—and that a Doctor's daughter ought to have known that, instead of bringing him out of doors on such a useless errand, on such a night. He would not lay a hand on Meg,

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and he went away, swearing. What was I to do I couldn't bear to lose my poor Meg. To think any one would hurt her. Oh, I wish they had poisoned me instead."

She cried on and Sandy made no attempt to stop her. He remembered what had happened once before. He fortified himself with the thought of the work he had ahead of him. He took a lamp and went into the stable. He examined the horse carefully. She was lying on the straw, gasping with great heaving sobs, and he could see at a glance that the case was next to hopeless, and certainly far beyond his poor ability.

"I must go into the library for a little," he said to Doreen, "and consult some of your father's books. Stay here! I shall be back directly."

He was all business now and his only thought was the sick horse.

He lighted the reading lamp and sat in the Doctor's chair, taking out book after book, and turning over page after page, until he was in desperation to find anything to suit the needs of the case. If he had known three hours before, it would have been different, but the poison was now through the animal's entire system.

How long he had remained in the library, he did not know. He heard the door open and Doreen came in.

"Sandy," she cried piteously, "won't you please come? I cannot bear being there alone."

"Stand where you are then," he said gently, "I

shall not be long now. But I am afraid I cannot do much: only put her out of pain."

He pulled out another book, written, for the most part, in the Doctor's own hand. Under the heading of 'Poisoning' he came across something which caused his heart to leap. A prescription was given, beneath which the Doctor had written:—Only to be used as a last resort. Drives the animals insane: 75 percent permanently so, thereby necessitating destruction.

"By jove," said Sandy loudly, "I'll try it."

He went into the laboratory and mixed the ingredients very carefully, the very names of which made him shudder, knowing their tremendous power and action.

Doreen and he went back to the stable together. Sandy procured several coils of rope: he roused Meg into a standing position and commenced tying the trembling animal to the four posts of her stall.

Doreen looked on, for a time, scarcely realising what was being done, then she ran forward and, with rising indignation, tried to pull the ropes away.

"What are you doing?" she cried. "It is cruel to tie up a dying animal like that. She can hardly stand as it is; I won't have it, I won't allow it." And she stamped her foot.

Somehow, Sandy expected the outburst. "Miss Doreen," he said, with a dignity she had never seen in him before, "you called me to attend your horse! I am in command now. I understand the circumstances better than you do. If you are going to inter-

fer with my work, I must ask you to go outside at once."

Her anger died away instantly and she said humbly, with trembling lips, "Please forgive me, Sandy, I did not really mean to interfere. Let me stay and I shall do whatever you wish."

Sandy tied the horse's legs securely, forced open her mouth and kept it in that position by a wedge, and a piece of rope which he passed around her neck and muzzle, throwing the end across a beam in the roof, straining her head upward.

"Now, Miss Doreen," he said smartly, "if you wish to help, hang on to that rope while I climb the ladder and give her the contents of this bottle."

Doreen obeyed promptly and Meg swallowed the antidote. Sandy secured the horse's head and Doreen and he both stood back.

"Are you not going to release her now?" asked Doreen holding up the lantern and looking at him in quiet appeal.

"No," he replied, "otherwise I should never have tied her up. Poor Meg may never survive this, but it is the only chance. The medicine we have applied will drive her mad; if only temporary, then we shall save her; but, if permanently, she will have to be destroyed."

As they watched, Meg neighed shrilly and began to move uneasily, getting more and more restive, until her whole body was struggling fiercely and the stall was shaking and cracking with her violence.

Doreen now understood the necessity of tying the

horse up, but it was pitiful to see the animal in such paroxysms and to hear its cries high above the storm which was raging outside. Unconsciously, Doreen caught hold of Sandy's arm for protection. Removing her hand gently, he told her not to be afraid.

But, in a moment more, he was at Meg's quarters. She had one of her feet free and was kicking the place to pieces. Sandy was in a quandary what to do first. He knew that if Meg broke away it would be a serious matter for anyone who happened to be in the stable. He could afford to take no chances with Doreen; he caught her up in his arms, carried her outside and deposited her in the snow, closing the door quickly.

Doreen hurried over to the stable window, scraped away the drift and peered in. From there she witnessed a struggle between man and beast which made her blood chill in her veins, although an exultant thrill ran through her at the grit and determination displayed by the man for the mastery.

In her eagerness, she forgot the wind, and snow, and cold.

Meg had succeeded in getting both hind feet free and Sandy tried hard to bind her up again; but time and again she beat him, throwing him heavily against the side of the stall. He knew that whatever he did had to be done quickly, for, if she ever got loose, the last chance of saving her would be gone. He made a loop with the rope, threw it round one leg, with the dexterity of a cowboy, and drew it tight. Then bracing his feet against the post he pulled with

all his might. The rope was taut and he felt his muscles almost bursting with the strain. But gradually, gradually, his strength told and the animal's limb was at last against the post. With a quick movement, he bound the rope round and round and secured it tightly. He succeeded in pinning the other leg in similar fashion; then he examined the foreleg fastenings carefully, making everything sure with additional ropes.

When he had finished, he leaned against the pillar to regain his breath, and wiped away the perspiration from his face with his shirt sleeve. The place felt stuffy. He went to the door and threw it open, in order to fill his lungs with the fresh air.

"My God, girl!" he exclaimed, as he observed Doreen's figure at the window, "I had forgotten you. Why did you stay out here in the cold and snow? It is enough to kill you. Run into the house at once and get warmed up."

"Sandy," she cried, with tears in her eyes, "I did not know, I did not feel the cold. But, oh, I was so afraid. Tell me, are you hurt?"

"Hurt, not I," he answered lightly. "Knocked about a little, but that's all."

"Is Meg dead?" she asked again.

"Bless you, no! It will be touch and go, but maybe we'll pull her through yet. If you promise to go, I will let you see her. There is no danger from her now; she seems to be quieting down a bit, but, whether from exhaustion or relief, I cannot say."

Sandy went up to the horse's head, crooned softly

in her ear, stroked her muzzle and wiped away the foam and moisture with which she was lathered.

She rubbed her nose on his shoulder and answered him with a sound which was almost a whinny of gratefulness.

"You must go into the house now, Miss Doreen," he said. "These attacks may come on again. I shall stay here, with Meg, until the morning."

"I'll go, but I shall not be able to sleep. May I look in, now and again?" she asked.

"Well, yes! you may," he answered, "but do not come too often, for when I am disturbed it puts me off my work."

Doreen turned and went away, slowly and reluctantly. She did not consider that Sandy was harsh or cruel with her, for she knew all his attention was on saving her poor dumb friend; but she did think he might have looked at her for a little, and spoken just a few kind words.

All through the long night, these wild outbursts seized Meg; but each one with lessening violence.

Sandy was kept on the alert every moment of the time; and, as the morning broke, he was utterly tired out.

Doreen came in regularly every hour and Sandy buoyed her up with strong hopes of success. In the early morning she brought in some hot coffee, and she stood looking at him steadily, almost greedily, as he drank. The intentness of her gaze disconcerted him, for he did not understand. He did not

know that she was suffering on in silence now, as he had suffered.

The morning wore on and the horse showed signs of drowsiness. Sandy boarded up the stall firmly, released Meg's limbs from the ropes and gave her sufficient space in which to lie down in comfort.

When Doreen came again, she cried in happiness, for she saw the animal resting peacefully on a bed of straw; and Sandy told her that Meg would surely get better.

The stable-boy was left in charge, while Sandy followed Doreen into the house to refresh himself. He sat down before the blazing fire in the Doctor's study; and the comfort of it, with the exhaustion in himself, soon overpowered him.

When Doreen came back to announce breakfast, she found him prone on the rug, with his head resting on his arm, fast asleep.

She covered him over with a carriage wrap and knelt down by his side.

She had not had an opportunity of watching him so closely before. Her eyes leisurely travelled the contour of his brow, his nose, and his chin. She lingered admiringly on his clean, firm lips; and she longed to clasp him to her bosom. She passed her fingers through his hair; she looked at his cheek where once she had struck him. She fancied she saw the finger-marks still. Her breath caught in her throat and her heart throbbed loudly and unevenly.

A tear dropped on Sandy's cheek. She brushed it away hastily but gently with a few strands of her

hair, the hair that Sandy loved so well. She bent over him and softly, ever so softly, her lips touched the place where the tear had fallen.

Sandy did not move. His eyelids trembled, and that was all. Sleep robbed him of a reward of which he had little dreamed, of a joy his waking hours had not known.

CHAPTER XXVII

Philip Plays the Man

ON the following day, Doctor Telford returned home, and it was not long ere he was in possession of all the facts concerning the stirring events which had happened during his absence. He was greatly angered at the meanness of the outrage, but his delight at the prompt action of his young protégé, was hard to conceal. He sent for him in the evening and gave him, indeed, a cordial greeting.

"Man, Sandy! you are a daring young rascal," he said with a smile in his eyes. "Do you know, I have tried that antidote four times and only once has it been successful; and, here you are, at the first attempt, a brilliant success. What put it into your head to take the risk?"

"Well, Doctor!" said Sandy quietly, "the horse was past ordinary curing; she was going to die anyway, and I thought, whether by poison or the hammer, it would not much matter. Then, on your own showing, she had one chance in four. So, I did not think the risk was too great after all."

"That's true," replied the doctor, "and it proves your deductions as well as your mettle. You have gone up a thousand percent in Doreen's estimation,

if that were possible." The doctor stopped and sighed, then he went on,

"Poor lass," he continued, "I hardly know what has gone wrong with her of late. She is getting more and more listless every day. Doctor Walsh says there is something on her mind, but we know of nothing she can have to worry over."

The Doctor sighed again and resumed along the lines of his former conversation.

"It will not be long now, Sandy, till you get your Diploma from the Veterinary College?"

"Only three months," replied Sandy.

"Three months, just three months," mused the Doctor, tapping the desk in front of him, with the end of his pen, "and it seems but yesterday when you started going with the mi'k. Well, three months will soon go past and we must look a little bit ahead.

"I have watched you closely, Sandy, since you were a little laddie, and I am well pleased. You have been a big help to me those last few years; and, now that I am getting old, I need someone to take the burden off my shoulders. Instead of trying to break new ground, how would it be for you to come in with me? We can share and share alike; and, when I wear away, it will all be yours."

Sandy's much dreaded moment had at last arrived. The Doctor had made him feel, at various times, that this offer was in view; although he had never expressed himself in so many words. It did not come, therefore, altogether as a surprise. Sandy knew, for his own sake, that he must refuse, but he

was at a loss to find a way to do so without hurting the Doctor's feelings. He did not answer for a few moments, then with a break in his voice, he said,

"Doctor, I thank you with all my heart, but, I'm afraid I canna accept it."

Doctor Telford looked up in great surprise and astonishment. Sandy's answer seemed to have taken his breath away. "Surely, laddie, surely you don't mean that? Well I know you will be a big man in your Profession some day; but there is plenty of scope for your work here, for it is the biggest and best practice in the county."

"No, no!" cried Sandy hastily, "it isn't that, Doctor. Yours is the most generous offer one man ever made to another and I only wish I could accept it, for it must seem ungrateful, after all you have done for me."

He stood by the desk with a troubled look on his face.

"But, laddie," said the Doctor again, "You must not imagine that I am giving you something for nothing: it is just a straight proposal, man to man.

"I shall be getting as much, and more, than I give. Haven't I seen that my own clients ask sometimes to have you sent instead of me? Ay, they have even gone direct to you, never approaching me at all, and have paid the account to me, with a smile, when I sent it in.

"One man told me to my very face that he would support you from the moment you started up for yourself. Why, man! if I didn't have the foresight

to take you into partnership, I would be out of work myself within a year, for, by that time, you would have every horse in the neighbourhood under your protection."

"Doctor, it makes it hard for me," said Sandy nervously. "You have been good to me all my days, and, but for you, I would still be what the other lads are around me. Do not ask me why I have to refuse your further kindness, for I canna tell. I am going to India as soon as I am through the College."

The Doctor stared vacantly in front of him for a time then he rose slowly and placed his hand on Sandy's shoulder, in his own fatherly way,

"I am hard hit, laddie," he said sadly, "hard hit. I have been building on you for years. But it is not for me to venture on the knowledge of what is best for you, for, wherever you go, I know you will play the man.

"I shall not take this answer of yours as final: no, not until I see the boat carrying you away. And, afterwards, if things don't turn out as you thought they would, come back here, Sandy, for my offer shall remain open to you as long as I live.

"Think it over, laddie, think it over before you go: ay! and as you never thought before."

With a sad heart, Sandy left the old Doctor. He was relieved, however, to think that this long dreaded interview was over.

He had little time for brooding. His last examination was at hand and he was engrossed in active preparation for his departure.

But there was one who heard the news with growing unrest, Philip Calder. He was a gentleman indeed, and, although Doreen's refusal had shattered his hopes, he still loved her in a pure, unselfish way, and gladly would he have done anything whereby she might be happy.

That she loved someone, he had no doubt. That Sandy Porter loved her, he felt almost certain, for no man would refuse such an offer as he had heard Doctor Telford had made to him, for an appointment abroad, in an unhealthy climate, away from friends and familiar surroundings, unless there was a woman in the question. The knowledge was common property, that, outside of his own relatives and the Telfords, Sandy never had sought the companionship of the opposite sex. Many maintained that he purposely avoided all womankind.

Doreen had given Philip to understand, on that never-to-be-forgotten morning, that there was something between her and the one she loved that was likely to keep them apart for all time. What this something was, he did not know; but, that it might be cleared away, he fancied possible, and, with this in view, he sent word to Sandy, asking him to take his Sunday morning walk in the direction of the Caldemains House.

The two met in the long avenue and they strolled leisurely past the house, and up over the hill, talking interestedly on the many subjects which they had in common. They sat down on the grass, overlooking the rich farmlands, through which the river Castles

flowed in great winding sweeps; and it was here that Philip opened up the question which lay nearest his heart.

"Is it really true that you are going away to leave us?" he asked. "I never thought we should lose you, especially when there is so much scope for a man of your profession in our own countryside, to say nothing of the backing of Doctor Telford. But, if it is so, I am really sorry. They shall miss you at home, Sandy, your sister, your mother, and——"

Sandy tapped his foot impatiently.

"Please, Philip, don't remind me of it all," he replied. "It is hard to leave everything and everybody, and it might have been different; but I have thought it all over, day after day, night after night, and it is better, far better; I must go: I owe it to myself."

"Forgive me, Sandy, if I seem inquisitive," continued Philip, "but surely there is nothing, no stain on your character, no unpaid debt, calling you so far away?"

Sandy laughed, almost boisterously.

"Oh, no! nothing like that! My hands are clean and my conscience is clear,—thank God."

"Well, then," burst out Philip, "it is a woman."

Sandy's face flushed and he sprang to his feet quickly.

"We shall not discuss this further," he said. "Most of us have some little recess curtained off in our hearts which we hold sacred and private, and we resent intrusion."

He betrayed himself, just sufficiently to show Philip that his conjectures were correct and the latter had no intention of ceasing his endeavours right at the very beginning. He rose also.

"Dear old fellow!" he said kindly, "far be it from me to pry into your private affairs. But you have never been angry nor quarrelled with me all these years and I know you will not now. This shall probably be our last meeting alone: it is quite possible that we may never see each other again. Won't you let me say all I want to say, just this once, and promise me not to be angry?"

There was something irresistible in Philip's pleading and Sandy felt ashamed of his momentary anger.

"Go ahead," he replied, "although I hardly think anything you may say will alter the face of things at this late date."

"Well, Sandy, first of all; sometime ago I asked Doreen Telford to marry me, and she refused."

This was indeed news to Sandy; although it came to his memory now that he had not seen Doreen and Philip together for a long time past, for he had always thought that a marriage between the two was only a matter of time and arrangement.

Young Calder continued. "She refused me because there was someone else. There seemed to be a barrier between her and the one she loved, for she said it was more than probable she would never marry. Sandy, it isn't easy for me to tell you all this; but her happiness, her health, her life, are at

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stake. Oh! can't you understand? She loves you, you, with all her soul. Are you blind or crazed that you cannot see it? Why don't you speak, man? why don't you tell her? Surely, in God's name, she is worth the asking?"

Sandy caught Philip's arm.

"Do you know of her having met anyone in France?" he asked excitedly. "You were with her. You should know."

"No, certainly not! Of that I am sure. What makes you ask such a question?"

Sandy laughed bitterly. "You and I are in the same box, Philip; that is all. She refused me, and I fancy in stronger terms than she did you."

It was Philip's turn to be surprised. "Tell me," he asked with anxiety, "when did this happen?"

"So recently, that the scar is still visible and the pain still remains," was Sandy's evasive reply.

"Good-bye, Philip! I am going now. I thank you, for we understand things better."

He shook hands with his friend and walked rapidly away.

Philip knew that his interview had been a failure, but he determined upon one more effort. He went into the study, wrote a short letter and dispatched it to Doreen.

"Dear Miss Doreen," it ran,

He is going away soon, and the time is short. As you value your future happiness and his tell him what is in your heart. Nothing can ever make him

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understand, nothing but that. It will be too late
when he has gone.

Ever your friend and well wisher,

PHILIP CALDER."

late

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CHAPTER XXVIII

Joy at Twilight

FOR the last time! How different everything seems and how keen our senses are, when, for the last time, we look upon the haunts and scenes of our childhood; when we say our last words to an old, beloved acquaintance; when we give the last handshake to our dearest friend.

Sandy betook himself for the last time over the old road he loved so well. The stagnant pool where the ducks sported, as in a crystal stream—which he was wont to pass so hurriedly—now held him in reminiscent fascination. He lingered lovingly over the snug, little, ivy-clad cottages and he pondered on the broad expanse of familiar green fields; on the tumble-down dykes which separated the fields from the big wood beyond, where he could just catch a glimpse of the long, stretching drives of soft, velvety turf whose cooling and refreshing kiss had been so often welcomed by two small, bare feet in the heat of many a summer day.

Slowly he wended his way past the hamlet in the Glen, round the road and over the incline, until in the distance before him he could see the old Green Knowe; and further away still the smoke curling

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lazily upward from the chimney stacks of the Pottery and the Mill in the little home town in the hollow.

As he neared, the grassy slopes of the old hill called him just as they always did, and he climbed up. He lingered in his love, and lingering, looked back over the country he knew so well. His mind clung to the happy days which seemed so long gone by.

And now he had to leave them all. This was the long anticipated last time.

Good-bye the merry wood with its worlds of mysteries and enchantments! Good-bye the dear old fields; the refreshing hedgerows and the gurgling burns!

He felt like a flower wantonly torn up by the roots, to be transplanted in some less congenial clime or thrown by the wayside to die. He stretched out his arms in mute appeal. But the sun shone on and birds continued their twittering in the bushes.

Nature was unresponsive to the call of the human.

Silently and sorrowfully he stood, and his eyes became blurred.

"But what was that?" He turned sharply and listened.

A sound, keyed to the pitch of his own suffering, fell upon his ears. It was the agony cry to heaven of a torn heart.

"Sandy; my Sandy! You're going away, and I shall die. Don't go, Sandy! Don't go, laddie, oh, don't go, don't go!"

The cry ended slowly and in a tremulous moan.

It was the voice that had always moved Sandy, but the intensity of it was never so thrilling to him as now. Heaven, hell and India were forgotten. He sprang over the brow of the hill and raised Doreen up gently from the grass where she was lying all unconscious of Sandy's nearness.

She looked at him with tear-dimmed eyes, in surprise and wonderment. She raised her hands toward him.

Sandy caught them fiercely in his own. His throat was parched and his voice sounded low and hoarse.

"Tell me, lassie—for God's sake tell me—was that cry for me, Doreen? was it for me?"

"Yes, oh, yes! Don't leave me!" she implored.

"My Sandy, oh, my Sandy, my laddie!"

She swayed and Sandy caught her up hungrily in his strong arms, holding her to his breast and murmuring like one long imprisoned in darkness and suddenly transported to freedom and light:—

"Oh, God—my God!"

THE END.

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