JIM

by J. J. BELL

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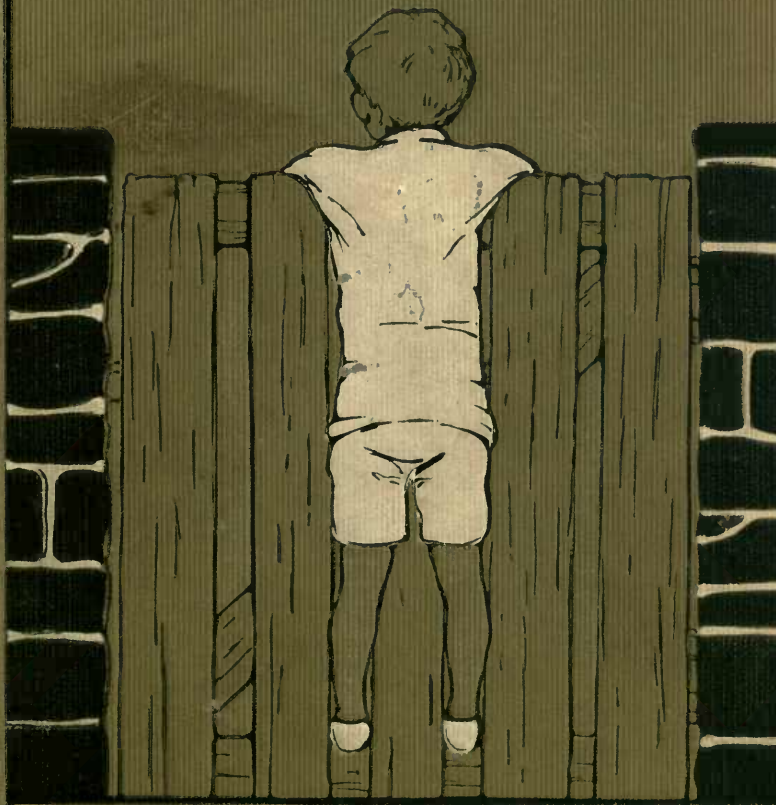

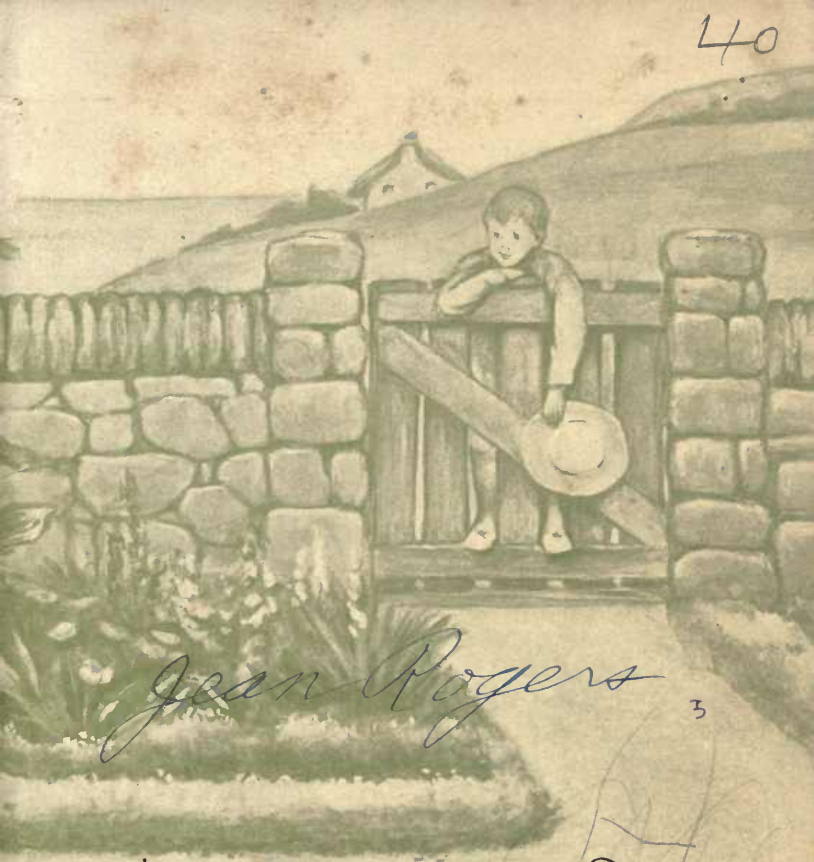

Jean Rogers 3

~~Asta Mahalie Rogers~~

Merry Christmas

1911

JIM

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BY

J J BELL

AUTHOR OF
"WEE MACGREGOR," "OH! CHRISTINA!", &c., &c.

HODDER & STOUGHTON
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TO
JIM'S MOTHER

CONTENTS

HE APPROACHES THE OLDEST INHABITANT

Mr. Girdwood, the reputed oldest inhabitant of Clure Bay, sat on the narrow bench against the front of his cottage. The cottage was, as the poet said, a thatched one, but the outside, though a hundred years old, would have struck none but the most jaundiced eye as mean. In the August sunshine the lime-washed wall was well-nigh dazzling, and was only saved from being monotonously white by the crimson ramblers on either side of the doorway. The door itself, like the frames of the two little windows, had been recently painted a rather vivid green; and altogether the place wore a joyous aspect.

The same cannot be said of the owner, whose facial expression and rigidity of body betokened mental strain of some sort. Yet, but for the rigidity, the pose would have been natural enough. Mr. Girdwood's back in its Sabbath coat was, perhaps, a trifle straighter than usual, but his legs, in their Sabbath trousers, were quite in their everyday resting attitude — that is to say, the calves

made right-angles with the thighs, and the feet, in their Sabbath boots, were planted flat on the ground, about twelve inches apart. A gnarled, brown hand covered each knee. From his moleskin waistcoat depended a heavy silver chain, and under his grey and somewhat untidy beard one might have gained a glimpse of white linen. The only article of raiment not pertaining to the Sabbath was the flat bonnet resting on the shaggy head; and its presence instead of that of an ancient silk hat may be explained by saying that Mr. Girdwood drew the line at wearing the latter on a purely secular occasion like the present.

Half-an-hour had passed since the old man had taken his position on the bench. His collar was irritating his neck, and he was assailed by a craving for a smoke. It was warm, too, and he was inclined to drowsiness. Over the strip of garden in front of him, gay with pansies and calceolarias, sweet with mignonette, bees laboured and butterflies sported; yet though he loved every inch of the soil, he never once let his eyes fall to it. He could not prevent them from blinking, and he had a desire to rub them; but he could — and did — keep them fixed on a spot in the meadow, some fifty yards away.

The green door was opened, and a woman stood on the snowy step. She looked very old, yet she

was but little bent, and she impressed one as being almost literally wiry.

"Samuel," she said, "yer denner's ready."

Mr. Girdwood paid no attention.

"Samuel, yer denner's ready."

Mr. Girdwood's clasp on his knees tightened. Otherwise he made no movement. But in an angry whisper he said —

"Away, woman, away! Ye'll spile the pictur!"

. . . . . .

Upon a hillock in the meadow James Nevis was busy at his easel. On his right rose a wooded hill; on his left, under sheer cliffs, lay the sea, stretching away into the summer haze that concealed the islands of the firth. In front of him, and a furlong beyond the white cottage, rose the ancient, ruined castle, perched on the verge of a precipice overhanging the little harbour and fishing village. He wrought assiduously on the large canvas, for there were certain impressions he desired to secure ere the light changed.

On the grass, close by, sat his son, a fair-haired little boy in white jersey and shorts and a big man-o'-war hat. He, too, was painting, but evidently tiring of his occupation.

"Your sea isn't nearly so blue as mine, Doody," he remarked.

"Not nearly, Jim Crow," Nevis replied absently.

"But you're not looking at mine. Look at it!"

Nevis obeyed. "Yes; yours is *much* bluer. Aren't you going to put a boat on it?"

"I don't see any boat."

"Oh, beg pardon."

"This is a real picture — an artist picture," the boy explained, tearing it from the sixpenny block.

"Rather! Are you going to do another? The castle?"

A head-shake was the reply. "You don't get such good paint when you don't put the brush in your mouth. I wish I had oil paints, Doody."

"You'll get them some day. Are you hungry now?"

Jim glanced at the basket with the napkin of sandwiches and the pair of Thermos flasks.

"No," he said. He was not going to be hungry before his father. "I suspose," he went on, "you are not quite nearly finished."

"Well, you see, Jim Crow, I want to catch yon little bit of blue at the harbour before the sun goes off it. You don't mind, do you? After I've got that, we'll have a rest together ——"

"And you'll tell me another snake story?"

"Serpently!"

"Why do you say *serpently* for *certainly*, Doody?"

"Don't you think it's rather funny?"

Jim shook his head.

"Then I won't say it again. Now I must go ahead. Do make a picture of the castle till I'm ready."

"My water's done," said the boy. "'Sides, I don't think I'm in the vein to-day."

Nevis checked a laugh just in time.

"I think I'll go and look for puffballs till you're ready," the boy went on, "and then——"

"No, no; we'll look for puffballs together later on. They are too near the cliff."

"Well, I'll go and speak to the old doody," said Jim, indicating Mr. Samuel Girdwood.

"Yes; you may do that. His name is Sammy, and he says he is the oldest person in this place. So you must be polite. Ask him if he remembers me. I don't suppose he does, for it's eight years since I was here last. But I remember Sammy (though I never heard his other name) quite well."

"I don't remember him."

"You weren't here then."

"Why wasn't I here then?"

"You weren't born."

"Why wasn't I borned?"

"Well, you see, you were a treat in store, Jim Crow."

"What's that?"

"Well, you and I have a treat in store just now. When mother comes home from her long voyage ——"

"I wish she was home now, Doody."

"So do I, my son. But her home-coming is our treat in store. You see?"

Jim nodded gravely. "I pifer" (prefer) "treats out of the store, don't you?" he said presently.

"Everybody does; but sometimes we have got to wait till the shop opens. But I say, old man, if we go on talking like this, I'll miss that bit of blue. Just give me five minutes, and then we'll have grub."

"All right," said Jim agreeably, and strolled off in the direction of the cottage. His mother had been at some pains to bring him up with a sense of respect for his elders in whatever walk of life, and as he drew near the old man he gravely touched the brim of his sailor hat.

Mr. Girdwood, however, paid no attention to the salute.

It had been a kind world to Jim thus far, and he was not easily abashed. Halting at the little rickety gate in the low fence which bounded the strip of garden, he said quite distinctly —

"How do you do, Mr. Sammy?"— and leaned against the gate.

"Eh?" said Mr. Girdwood, starting slightly.

But he immediately recovered himself and his rigid pose. Then he tried to speak without moving his lips, but not being a ventriloquist the result was not clear to the boy. "Stand aside, my lad. Ye'll spile the pictur."

"What?" Remembering his manners, the boy added, "Beg pardon, Mr. Sammy."

"Stand aside, stand aside!" Involuntarily the old man made a gesture with his hand, which Jim understood.

"I suspose your gate is too old and rotten," he said pleasantly, and moved a step or two to the right. "I could climb over the fence, if you like. I came to see you, you know. Doody remembers you, but I don't because I wasn't borned. So it isn't my fault. But I'll remember you another time, Mr. Sammy."

"H'm!" muttered Mr. Girdwood.

"Couldn't you speak a little louder, please?" Jim regarded the hairy, wrinkled, but by no means forbidding, countenance with a friendly gaze, and wondered if people lost their voices when they grew very old. "I could climb over quite easily," he said. "I wouldn't spoil your garden. It seems a very nice garden, Mr. Sammy."

Mr. Girdwood noticed that the artist was lighting his pipe.

"Who was tellin' ye my name was Sammy?" he

inquired, a little suspiciously but almost in his natural voice.

"Doody. Mine is Jim Crow."

"Eh?"

"Jim Crow. But when I go to school it will be James Crowley Nevis."

"Folk should stick to the names they was baptized wi'," said Mr. Girdwood, who objected to "Sammy," though the "Mr." prefixed by the boy had all but neutralised the annoyance on this occasion. "I was baptized Samuel."

"Oh," remarked Jim, looking thoughtful. "Haven't you got a middle name, Mr. Sammy Samuel?"

"Tits, laddie! My name is Samuel Girdwood."

"But Doody said it was Sammy."

"Well, tell him 'tis Samuel."

Jim looked a trifle disappointed, but promised to inform his father. "Doody," he went on, "said you was the oldest doody in this place — but p'r'aps you aren't."

"The oldest what?"

"Doody — I mean man. You see, when I was little I used to call Daddy Doody; and then I called all men doodies, and I often still call Daddy Doody. — He pifers it."

"Aw," said Mr. Girdwood doubtfully. Sud-

denly he brightened. "But yer daddy's right about me bein' the oldest man in Clure Bay — ay, he's right! He's a wise man, yer daddy. An' I'm not sayin' I *never* was called Sammy."

Jim was gratified. "I could climb over quite easily," he said.

Mr. Girdwood shook his head. "Ye would file yer fine breeks. I'll let ye in at the gate another time, but ——"

"Now!" said Jim, eagerly.

There was no response. The old man was sitting as stiffly as ever, his gaze on the artist who had resumed work.

"Please!" said Jim.

"Away to yer daddy, my lad," Mr. Girdwood muttered. "He would be vexed if ye spiled his pictur."

Jim stared. "How could I *spile* Doody's picture?" he demanded at last.

"Tits, laddie! Can ye not see I'm doin' my best for to assist him? If ye speak to me, I canna keep still; an' if I dinna keep still, he canna pent my portrait. I — I'll be gled to see ye another time." For an instant Mr. Girdwood's countenance relaxed, but only to become more severe than ever.

It took Jim a little while to realise the situation.

When he did so he blurted out, "But my Doody isn't painting your portrait, Mr. Sammy. He's painting the castle and a bit of blue ——"

"*What?*"

"So you needn't sit still any more," said Jim very kindly. Next moment he recoiled from the fence as Mr. Girdwood, rumbling with wrath, rose from the bench and tottered into the cottage.

A sort of fascination prevented the boy from at once running back to his father, and ere it passed he was being addressed by Miss Girdwood, who came hurrying, with surprising agility, from the cottage. At first, Jim took her to be an old witch, and regarded her with interest, for he had not been taught to be afraid any more than he had been encouraged to be reckless. But as she had no broomstick he decided regretfully that she was only a "fun-lady." It should be mentioned, however, that he forgot to touch his hat.

"Never heed him," she said gently, coming close to the fence. "Did he frighten ye, dearie?" As the boy did not look alarmed, she continued, "I seen ye an' heard ye from the window. Ye maun try for to excuse Samuel for thinkin' yer fayther was pentin' him. Ye see, Samuel's gettin' old ——"

"Why did he make fun-noises and run away?" Jim asked.

"Ah, well, ye see, dearie, he was disappinted-like. He's been wantin' for many a year to get hissel' pented in a fine pictur, an' when he heard yer fayther was comin' to the Bay, nothin' would please him but to get the house pented an' white-washed, so as yer fayther would notice it. An' when he seen you an' yer fayther comin' 'cross the field this mornin', he got terrible excited, an' I had an awfu' job to soothe him. An' when he seen yer fayther settin' up his weasel ——"

"Easel," Jim mildly corrected. "A weasel's a thing that goes pop, you know. Sometimes it's a beast, too."

"So it is," she said agreeably. "I thought penters called it a weasel.— But we're always learnin'.— So, when he seen yer fayther settin' it up, he thought the time had come at long last, an' nothin' would please him but to dress hissel'— an' a terrible business it was to get on his Sabbath things on a Wensday. It was worse'n a funeral. But mind ye, dearie, I thought the time had come mysel', for yer fayther was aye lookin' at the cottage ——"

"It was the castle Doody was looking at, and the little bit of ——"

"Well, well, it canna be helped. I'll jist ha' to tell Samuel he would ha' been pented the day, if it hadna been for the castel. An' ye'll excuse Sam-

uel, for he's gettin' old. Now I best gang an' get him his denner. 'Twill maybe help him to get past the disappintment." She stooped and plucked a few carnations, which she handed shily to the boy. "An' ye'll excuse him, dearie, for he's gettin' old."

"Yes, thank you," said Jim gravely, "I'll 'scuse him," and remembered to touch his hat to her retreating figure.

He found his father ready for lunch and related his experience at the cottage, though his report of Miss Girdwood's remarks may not have been altogether exact. "But I 'scused him," he said in conclusion.

"Ah," said Nevis solemnly. "I'm sorry I can't oblige old Sammy by painting his portrait," he added.

"Why can't you?"

"Because, Jim Crow, we have come here to try to make some pennies, and I can nearly always get some pennies for my pictures of castles and things, but not for pictures of old doodies."

"Why can't you get pennies for pictures of old doodies?"

Nevis did his best to explain, without succeeding in satisfying his son.

"I'll give you my savings," said the latter, at last, "if you paint him."

"Thanks, old man. But you must keep on saving up, and the next time mother goes on a voyage we'll be able to afford to go with her."

"But mother won't be going another voyage."

"Not without us. And it would be fine to be able to take her a voyage some day, wouldn't it?"

There was a brief pause.

"I think I would like to hear the snake story now," said Jim, who could associate his mother with nothing but home.

. . . . . .

Later they spent an hour in hunting for the desired puffballs, and about the same period in playing at trains, Jim being an express engine and his father anything from a passenger to a signal post. Then they rested on the hillock whilst Nevis, pad on knees, wrote a letter to his wife. He had not finished when Jim suddenly announced his intention of making another call on Mr. Samuel.

"Don't be long," said Nevis absently. "We must be getting home for tea soon, you know."

"All right, Doody." And Jim marched off to the cottage with a confident look on his young countenance. Under his arm he carried his sketching-block, in his hand his little paint box.

He opened the rickety gate very carefully, and without hesitation advanced to the green door and knocked.

It was opened by Miss Girdwood, whose withered face seemed to grow a trifle younger at the sight of him.

"Ye've come back, dearie," she said kindly. "But I doubt Samuel ——"

"I've come to paint his portrait," said Jim Crow, adding, "'cept the whiskers."

Whereupon Miss Girdwood put her hand to her mouth and quaked.

"Oh, dearie, dearie!" she gasped, controlling herself. "Will ye come in an' see Samuel?" she asked gently. "He's broodin' yet, but surely this'll mak' him better."

Jim Crow expressed his entire readiness to enter, and gave her his free hand.

In the kitchen, by the old-fashioned fire-place which shone with much brass, sat Mr. Girdwood in his shirt sleeves. He was indeed brooding, but his expression softened at the sight of his visitor. The laddie was not to blame anyway.

"Samuel," said the old woman, half humorously, half appealingly, "the young gentleman's for pentin' yer portrait."

"'Cept the whiskers," put in Jim. "'Cause, you see, I don't know how to paint whiskers." Then as if struck by a happy thought —"P'r'aps I'll get Doody to paint them on afterwards."

The frown that had come at the boy's very per-

sonal reference faded from the old man's face. He emitted a series of deep chuckles. He rose and held out his hand.

"Well, well!" he said; and again, "well, well! Did ye ever hear the like, Elizabeth? Where's yon wee poke o' peppermints?"

And, after all, Jim Crow included the whiskers in the likeness, and Mr. Samuel made no objections whatever to their being a sort of pink.

It took Jim Crow just three days to feel quite at home with the oldest inhabitant of Clure Bay. That Mr. Samuel Girdwood did not within the same period become so completely at his ease in his intercourse with the little boy was doubtless due to the natural caution of old age and a lack of experience in the ways of "genteel" childhood. For one thing, Samuel was not accustomed to having hats touched to him; in fact, he could not remember such an event happening prior to Jim's first approach; and while the compliment was peculiarly sweet to his soul, he had frequent qualms of doubt as to its sincerity. The village children, as he had long ago realised, failed to perceive in him a person of any special importance — even on the Sabbath; their grins of greeting, when vouchsafed to him, were not invariably respectful, and it was not a full year since two youngsters, whom he had reprimanded for fighting, had united to cast stale fish at him. It was fortunate for the old man's comfort of mind that the adult members of the small community had always allowed him to believe that they regarded

him as a sort of oracle. Indirectly this may have helped him to combat his suspicions of the boy, who, he argued secretly, was at least old-fashioned enough to be accepted seriously. As a matter of fact, Jim Crow at this time was far less old-fashioned than imaginative. He had already taken Mr. Girdwood beyond his intellectual depth on several occasions, though Mr. Girdwood had been too puzzled to be resentful.

They were sitting on the bench against the front of the cottage. Miss Girdwood had scrubbed the bench that morning, lest the "young gentleman" should take it into his head to pay a visit. Now she lingered in the doorway, watching the twain. There had been a longish silence, during which Mr. Girdwood had methodically filled his pipe with some tobacco presented to him by the boy's father.

"'Tis good tobacco," he remarked at last.

Jim Crow did not appear to have heard. "Mr. Sammy," he said abruptly, forgetting, as he frequently did, the more formal name, "where are all your children?"

"Eh?"

Jim suddenly remembered that it was not always polite to ask questions, so he sought the information desired in a slightly less direct fashion.

"I suspose you have a great many children, Mr. Sammy," he said.

"Children!" cried Mr. Girdwood; "bless yer heart, lad, I've been a single man all my life."

"Oh," said the boy, not comprehending. "I suspose you'll be having some later on. Children are very nice to have — when they're not too young."

Mr. Girdwood gaped, whilst his aged sister, stifling a cackle, fled indoors to listen, hand over mouth, at the open kitchen window.

"I've got heaps of children," the boy continued unconcernedly. "I've got two froggies ——"

"What?"

"Two froggies and a big humpty and a rabbity-pabbity and a teddy and a ephelant and three tewkens and two mices. One of the froggies has lost his legs —— Uncle Ritchie said he was the great chieftain of the puddock race — and the oldest tewken is busted ——"

"What's all this, what's all this?" Mr. Girdwood feebly demanded.

"Of course they're just pretend children," Jim frankly admitted. "I 'spect you would pifer real ones, Mr. Sammy."

"I never had any parteec'lar notion o' children," said Mr. Girdwood, recovering himself and feeling, no doubt, that he ought to say something. "Children is mostly a trouble an' a sorrow an'——"

"Whisht, Samuel!" came a loud whisper from the window. "Never heed him, dearie. He doesna mean what he says."

Jim gave a friendly smile to the withered face, which was immediately withdrawn, and turned again to his host.

"Hasn't Mrs. Sammy got no children, too?" he inquired.

"Mercy on us, laddie! She's jist as single as I am!"

"What is single?"

Samuel pushed back his bonnet and scratched his head. "Well, ye see, my sister an' me never had any parteec'lar notion o' gettin' married." He paused.

"Why hadn't you any parteec'lar?"

"'Tis a hard question," said the old man evasively.

"I'll ask Mrs. Sammy."

"But, my lad, Elizabeth's not a *Missis;* she's jist a *Miss.*"

"I see," said Jim slowly, and registered a query for his father, who was so much wiser than this old doody. Having done so, he somewhat inconsequently made the announcement that Mr. Froggie (the one with no legs) had just got married to Miss Tewken (not the busted one).

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Mr. Girdwood,

rather at sea, but thankful to get away from the more personal conversation. "What did ye say her name was?"

"Miss Tewken. She's a chicken, you know. She used to say 'tewk!' when she was new."

"Ay, ay. Ye mean a tewky-hen."

"You can call her that, if you like," Jim assented graciously. "I always call her Miss Tewken."

"So," said Mr. Girdwood brightly, "she'll be Mrs. Frog now!"

"No; she's Miss Tewken always," was the firm reply. "After Mr. Froggie is married to Miss Tewken he's going to be married to Miss Mousie, and then Miss Mousie's going to be married to Mr. Ephelant, and he's going to be married to Mr. Heigh-ho-Anthony Rowley——"

"Aw! but that canna be, that canna be!" Mr. Girdwood protested.

"Oh, yes, it can; it's quite easy, Mr. Sammy. Isn't it, Miss Sammy?" he called to the old woman, who had allowed her amazement to overcome her modesty.

"Surely, dearie, surely!" she replied, withdrawing once more from the window in some confusion, assuring herself that she had never "heard the like in all her days."

"Was ye never at the Sabbath schule, ma

lad?" Mr. Girdwood inquired, the least thing severely.

"No; p'r'aps I'll be going next year. But Mr. Froggie goes; so does Miss Mousie; *all* my children go, 'cept the busted ones. They like it fearful. Miss Mousie told me."

This was too much for Mr. Girdwood.

"James Crow," he said solemnly, "I could forgive ye for tryin' to cod me — I could forgive ye that — but when it comes to ye tellin'——"

"Oh, Samuel," came the voice from the window, "ye dinna need to be that serious. 'Tis jist a bit story he's tellin' ye. . . . An' do ye teach them in the Sabbath schule, dearie?"

"No," said the boy, undisturbed. "Mr. Monkey teaches them. There's something wrong with Mr. Monkey's squeaker. Doody tramped on him one day; he didn't mean it."

"I canna let him mak' a mock——" began Mr. Girdwood to his quaking sister.

"Can *you* tell me," interrupted Jim, eager with a fresh idea, "why small tewkens — real tewkens, you know — never have doodies?"

"But what in the world is doodies?" cried Miss Girdwood, who seemed incapable of remaining far from the window.

Her brother turned upon her. "D'ye not ken,"

he said quite cockily, "that a doody's a daddy, otherwise a faythe r?"

"Mr. Sammy didn't know till I told him," said Jim, without the slightest intention of abashing his ancient friend. "There's a lot of small tewkens where Doody and I are staying now, and they've got a mother"—he really said "muzzer," but corrected himself—"but no doody. And where we stayed last year there was heaps of small tewkens with mothers, but no doodies. Where are the doodies, Mr. Sammy?"

Possibly Mr. Girdwood was cheered by having the question put directly to himself, especially as it was one he *could* answer. He replied almost graciously—

"Oh, the doodies, as ye call them, is there sure 'nough. Ye'll see them walkin' about the yard an' whiles cryin' cockaleerie. Eh?"

Jim shook his head. "Those ones can't be the doodies, 'cause they're never kind to the small tewkens. They never give them things to eat, nor play with them, nor do anything kind. They *can't* be the doodies, Mr. Sammy."

"They're not very nice faythers, anyway, dearie," put in the old woman gently.

"They're as the Lord made them," her brother retorted, a trifle pettishly. "Hens is hens, an' cocks is cocks."

"'Cept when they're tewkens," said Jim.

"Would you like some rasps, dearie?" Miss Girdwood inquired hastily. "Well, sit ye still, an' I'll bring ye some nice ones. I'm for makin' jam the day."

Presently she came out with a saucer of picked fruit. Jim held up his face, and after a little hesitation she ventured to kiss his cheek.

"Ye're over-big for the kissin', James," remarked Mr. Girdwood, who was cheerful one moment and depressed the next.

"I 'spect I'll be too big next year," Jim replied, beginning on the rasps.

"I hope ye'll be stoppin' at the Bay till the brambles is ready," said the old woman. "'Tis a fine place for brambles, the wood up yonder."

"I'm going to the wood some day. I want to see the gnomes and pixies and elfs and ——"

"The what?" exclaimed Mr. Girdwood.

"Didn't you know it was a Magic Wood, Mr. Sammy?"

"Never heard o' sich ——"

Miss Girdwood touched her brother's shoulder. "Let him be, let him be," she whispered.

"It's just the same as a picture I've got at home," continued Jim; "'sides Mr. Froggie told me. And there's a kind Magic Doody in the wood. He lives in a tree with Mr. Skirrel and Mr. Dicky-

Dick and Mr. Fun-Owl, and he sees that everything is right in the wood, and doesn't let the brown gnomes and pixies and elfs be too naughty; and, *perhaps,* if you keep very quiet you can hear him, *and,* if you've been very, *very* good, you can see him. Mr. Sammy, shall you and I be very, *very* good, and go to the Magic Wood some day?"

"I never heard o' sich ——"

"Whisht, man!" muttered Miss Girdwood. "'Tis a pretty notion, dearie," she said to Jim. "But, ye see, Samuel doesna find the hill easy for his legs. He hasna been up to the wood for near twinty year."

Jim regarded Mr. Girdwood's legs with interest for several seconds. "Couldn't you try?" he said. "You see, Doody says that it's only very young people and very old people who can see fairy people, and that's why I wanted you to come with me. Doody would come, too, but he would just paint while we was watching. Doody *knows* about the gnomes and pixies and the others, but he can't *see* them. He thinks he may be able to see them when mother comes home —— but then we shan't be here. Couldn't you try, Mr. Sammy?"

"But I never ——" Mr. Girdwood began and halted.

"I suspose," said Jim regretfully, "I'll have to get Mr. Peter, the doody we're staying with, to go

with me. He said he would. He's not so old as you, but he *might* do. I'm sorry about your legs."

There was a short silence, during which several emotions might have been detected on the aged countenance.

"'Tis little good Peter Fraser would do ye, my lad," said Mr. Girdwood at last. "The man's half blin', an' he canna see nothin' at no distance wantin' his glasses, which has been broke for two year an' more. An' 'tis all nonsense 'bout my legs. If 'twasna for the rheumatis now an' then I'd be as quick on my feet as any man in Clure Bay."

"Samuel was a great dancer in his time, to be sure," put in his sister; "none better at the reels."

"An' 'tis reels I'd been dancin' yet, if 'twasna for the rheumatis."

"I'd like awful to see you dancing, Mr. Samuel," said Jim.

"Ah, well, ye never know what's afore ye, James Crow," Mr. Girdwood returned, with considerable briskness; "but if ye're for the wood, 'tis not me that would say 'no,'— so long as the rheumatis lets me alone. Jist you name a day ——"

"Oh, Samuel!" interposed Miss Girdwood, who now began to have fears.

"Hold your tongue, woman!"

"I don't think that is a very nice way to speak to Mrs. Sammy, Mr. Sammy," the boy observed.

"When Mr. Froggie speaks like that to Miss Mousie, he gets *beans*. That was how he lost his legs. But you didn't *mean* to be cross, did you?"

"Na, na, dearie; he didna mean it, an' besides, I'm used to it. But if he gangs to the wood wi' ye, ye'll not let him sit down on the wet places?"

"I 'spect Mr. Magic Doody will look after that," said Jim reassuringly. "Shall we go to-morrow, Mr. Sammy?" He laid a hand on the old man's arm.

"Ay, ay," cried the old man recklessly; "we'll gang to-morrow."

"And have a picnic! That'll be splendid! I 'spect we shall see some gnomes, 'cause, you see, you are razzer — ra-ther — like a gnome yourself, Mr. Sammy."

"Am I?" said Mr. Girdwood faintly.

"An' 'tis reels I'd be dancin' yet, if 'twasna one, and I'll be Puck. I wish you could be a fairy queen — but never mind. And I'll bring Mr. Froggie and Miss Mousie and Miss Tewken. What fun we'll have!"

Mr. Girdwood moved uneasily. "'Tis a queerish sort o' play," he murmured. "Yer fayther'll be comin' wi' us, I hope."

"Oh, yes, Doody will come."

"I meant for to say yer doody."

The pause that followed was broken by the old woman.

"I hope ye'll not be gettin' into any kind o' mischief, Samuel," she said, half jocularly, half anxiously. "'Twill be a great adventure for ye."

"We must be fearful good until to-morrow," the boy supplemented. "Do you like tea or soup when you're at a picnic?"

"Never was at a picnic. . . . Ye'll not be expectin' me for to climb trees an' the like, will ye?"

"I 'spect Mr. Fun-Owl would love if you climbed his tree, Mr. Sammy. He would say——"

"I'm not for any fun-owls or fun-anything-elses, thank ye," the old man declared. "I'll jist sit still, if ye please, an'——"

"Tell stories! Oh, will you tell me stories, Mr. Sammy?"

"I might do that, James Crow," Mr. Girdwood returned, obviously relieved. "I've seen some queer things in my time."

"Samuel was at sea in his young days," put in Miss Girdwood.

"Tell me a story now — please! — one about a boat bursting its boiler!" cried the boy.

"The boats I was on had nae bilers. But I could tell ye about—— Aw, there's yer fayther — I

meant for to say yer doody — wavin' on ye. I'll see what I can mind to tell ye the morn ——"

"In the Magic Wood!"

"But, laddie, there's nae ——" Mr. Girdwood stopped short at a nudge from his sister. Then, "Well, well," he said reluctantly, "in the Magic Wood, as ye call it."

"Oh, you're awful kind!" exclaimed Jim, ready to hug him. "I never thought you could tell stories, Mr. Sammy. And we'll come for you to-morrow morning, and you'll be all ready ——"

"If the rheumatis —— Well, well, I'll be ready."

Jim got up radiant. "I think I'll give you Miss Busted Tewken," he said generously. "I'll bring her to the Magic Wood to-morrow. And oh! I nearly forgot to tell you — Doody is going to paint your portrait some day soon. He promised me last night, 'cause I wanted him to do it. I 'spect you'll be very proud of it."

Mr. Girdwood's gratification of countenance is not to be described, but he seized the boy's hand and said brokenly, "James, 'tis a good lad ye are, to be sure."

"And I'll ask him to paint Mrs. Sammy, too."

"Na, na! She would spile the pictur!"

"Dinna fash yersel', Samuel," she said good-humouredly. "Thank ye, dearie, for thinkin' o'

me, but I've nae notion o' bein' pented — unless ye was for pentin' me yersel'."

Jim gave her a critical glance as she took the empty saucer from him. "I think I could make a good job of you," he said at last, "if I was putting the brush in my mouth lots. I think I could paint you for the rasps, too," he added, with that vague movement that made women want to kiss him. "They was simply scrumptious."

"The darlin'!" she said under her breath. "Ah, well, dearie, ye maun run to yer doddy ——"

"Doody," said Jim.

"My! but ye're the stupid woman!" said Mr. Girdwood, who was still smiling at the prospect of having his portrait painted.

"Good-bye, and thank you so much for a very pleasant time," said Jim, quoting from his mother.

He was half way to his father when a thought seemed to strike him and caused him to retrace his steps.

"Do *you* know," he said, halting at the fence, "do *you* know what I would do if I was a small tewken without any doody? I would make a nice nest, and I would lay a beautiful big blue egg with brown spots, and I would hatch it, and then I'd have a doody of my very own."

He touched his hat, turned, and walked sedately away.

"BUT 'tisna right to let the lad believe sich stuff an' nonsense," said Mr. Girdwood, looking out of the window for the twentieth time. "If I was his faythe——"

"Put that in yer pouch, an' dinna forget ye've got it," his sister interrupted, handing him a large red handkerchief. "Ye believed plenty stuff an' nonsense yersel', Samuel, when ye was his age."

"I didna!"

"Ye did! Ye believed there was a bogle in the Smugglers' Cave; ye believed the story about the Three Bears; ye believed that babies growed in cabbages; ye——"

"I — I never believed it was a magic wood——"

"Ye would ha' believed that, too, if I had telled ye. So dinna gang an' try for to spile the young gentleman's pretty bit notions. There's plenty wise folk in the world. An' if he says he sees a tome or a pelf, or whatever he calls his fairies, *ye've jist got to say ye see it too!* Mind that!"

Mr. Girdwood emitted an impatient exclamation.

"Woman!" he cried, "d'ye think I've nae conscience?"

"Aw, never heed yer conscience." Miss Girdwood took a peep from the window. "I see them comin' now. Did ye brush yer bunnet?"

"But 'tisna right, I tell ye. 'Tis agin the Scriptures an'— an' everything. Truth's truth, an' lies is lies."

"Sure," Miss Girdwood placidly assented. "An' fairy tales is true, if ye believe them. I'm thinkin' Moses an' Abraham an' the Twelve Apostles and all the rest o' them had their pretty notions when they was young ——"

"'Tisna the way to speak o' the saints, Elizabeth!"

"They wasna saints; they was children; an' I hope they was children as long as the Lord meant them to be, an' not jist as long as some stupid old wise man thought they ought to be. An' as for yer conscience, Samuel, jist you keep yer thumb on it, or ye'll be sorry after. An' if he asks ye to tell a story, ye needna be parteec'lar about it bein' the exac' truth, because the last true story I heard ye tell wasna worth the hearin'. Ye could tell far better stories o' yer adventures when ye was thirty year younger, for then ye wasna feart to — to imagine a bit. But dinna tell him anything fearsome, mind!"

"When did I ever tell a story that wasna true?" he demanded, with a glance at the field which Jim and his father were crossing.

Miss Girdwood patted his arm. "If yer conscience canna answer that, Samuel," she said, smiling, "ye best give it a rest the day."

But Mr. Girdwood was not to be thus pacified.

"If ye think I'm goin' to encourage James Crow wi' his stuff an' nonsense ——" he began.

Miss Girdwood held up her hand. "Samuel," she said solemnly, "he's a little one, an' ye're not goin' to offend him. An' what's more, I'll not let ye." She paused a moment and continued: "He thinks ye're the oldest inhabitant o' Clure Bay. I've never betrayed ye yet, but ——"

Mr. Girdwood's face fell. "Ye wouldna ——"

His sister turned away hers. "If ye offend the laddie," she said in a low, unsteady voice, "ye'll jist be the second oldest." To herself she added, "God forgimme," and went to the open door.

"Elizabeth!" The cry was almost plaintive.

"I hear ye," she replied, restraining her old, unwithered heart.

"Elizabeth, ye didna mean it."

"Ay, Samuel, I meant it. But"— her voice softened in spite of her —"but, Samuel, I ken ye would never drive me that far. You wouldna offend the laddie. For ye ken, Samuel, we're a long time old,

but we're an awfu' wee short time young. There, man! we'll not say another word. Tidy yer hair, an' come an' meet James an' his doddy."

"His doody, ye mean." The correction came quite naturally from Mr. Girdwood. Then he went to the mirror over the sink, smoothed his shaggy hair, groaned, sighed, and joined his sister. "Is the rasps ready for him in the parlour?" he inquired.

"Ay, ay," she assured him, and went down to open the gate.

They had decided the previous evening that Jim should have a dish of rasps before starting for the wood, and Miss Girdwood had been busy cleaning the already spotless parlour since somewhere about six that morning. Her best cloth was on the table; her best dishes were on the cloth; her best flowers decorated the apartment. No doubt Mr. Nevis noticed and appreciated these things; but his son, from the moment of his entrance, was held by a very different object.

"Fun-owl!" he exclaimed excitedly. And, sure enough, on a corner of the mantelpiece sat a shabby stuffed owl. It was some time ere he could be persuaded to look at the little feast prepared in his honour; it was not until he had been permitted to hold the owl in his arms and stroke its poor feathers that he consented to take the seat waiting for him.

The host and hostess, however, were much gratified by his admiration of their possession, which, to tell the truth, they had come to cherish rather absurdly.

"'Tis but an ornar' owl," said Miss Girdwood.

"He says 'tis a fun-owl," whispered her brother.

"An' so 'tis," she agreed willingly.

"Jim has his own names for things," remarked Nevis, returning it to the mantelpiece, followed by the longing glances of his son.

"An' very good names, to be sure, though my sister can never be mindin' them," said Mr. Girdwood somewhat loftily.

"Where did you get the fun-owl?" the boy inquired, looking from one to the other.

Miss Girdwood was about to explain that she had purchased it at a sale, for sixpence, many years ago, but her brother was before her.

"I — I shot it in Africa," he said, and Miss Girdwood put her hand to her mouth just in time.

"Why did you shoot it?" asked Jim.

Mr. Girdwood glanced helplessly at his sister. "'Tis a longish story, James Crow," he murmured. "See an' eat plenty rasps."

"He didna mean for to shoot it, dearie," said Miss Girdwood, with the best intentions in the world.

"I did! In my youth I was a crack shot," retorted the old man. "I shot it — I shot it because

we was shipwrecked mariners requirin' food. We was starvin'. Ye see?"

"I see," said Jim. "But how could you have eaten the owl when it's there?"

Mr. Girdwood wriggled, and was about to confess feebly that he must have been thinking of another owl, when a straw thrown by Nevis fell within his grasp.

"Perhaps," said the artist, "a ship hove in sight just as they were going to cook the owl."

"Ye're right, sir, ye're right," the old man cried, with a gasp of relief. "'Tis what happened exac'ly. I mind it fine now. An' so we didna need to eat the owl — and there it is to prove it!"

Curiously enough, there was no applause from Miss Girdwood.

"But you wouldn't have shot it if it had been Mr. Fun-Owl in the Magic Wood?" said Jim. "Would you?"

"Certinly not, James Crow, certinly not! I would ha' give it something to eat, poor beast."

"How ——" began Jim.

But, fortunately for the Girdwoods, Nevis at that moment started to ask the old man when he would give a sitting for his portrait, and as Jim was greatly interested in this matter the other was forgotten for the time being. Later, it is true, the boy desired to learn how Mr. Sammy could have

given an owl something to eat when he had nothing to eat himself; but by that time Mr. Sammy had become more advanced in the art of fiction.

Miss Girdwood helped her young guest to more raspberries, sugar and cream.

"An' how," she gently inquired, "is all the wee tuckens gettin' on that had nae doddy? — I should ha' said doody."

"'Tits, woman!" cried her brother; "'tisna *tuckens,* 'tis *tewkens.*"

"So 'tis, so 'tis," she admitted good-humouredly. She turned to Nevis. "Ye'll excuse me, sir, for callin' ye his doddy? I'm not extra quick at learnin' new words."

"I have the same difficulty," Nevis returned pleasantly. "Your brother," he went on, "has promised me a sitting next Monday, weather permitting. I wonder if you would care to give me ——"

"Na, na," put in the old man; "she's not carin' at all about her portrait. 'Twould be a waste o' pent, Mr. Nevis."

"Samuel's right," she said readily. "Ye see, sir, 'tis different for him, bein' the oldest inhabitant o' the place."

"'Tis so," said Mr. Girdwood, much relieved. "Excuse the liberty, sir, but will ye be likely to get

a hunderd pound for the pictur? There was a man cam' here once, an' he got fifty for pentin' some cattle in a gale o' win'."

Nevis laughed. "Certainly we ought to get more for the oldest inhabitant than some cattle, but ——"

"Well, well," said Mr. Girdwood, "'tis best not to count yer chickens afore ——"

"Tewkens," cried his sister, and put her hand to her mouth too late.

"Mr. Sammy was wrong," said Jim delightedly, "and Mrs. Sammy was right."

But Mr. Girdwood only chuckled. The sure knowledge that he was at last going to have his portrait painted filled his soul with satisfaction; there was no room for resentment just then.

Presently it was time to go to the wood, and a start was made after Jim had been allowed to embrace the stuffed owl. In the garden he confided (rather loudly, perhaps) to his father his admiration for the owl and his longing to possess such a joy.

"We'll have to wait till we can take a trip to Africa, Jim Crow," said Nevis, and poor Mr. Girdwood nearly fell from the doorstep, for in addition to his never having been in Africa, he was unaware whether owls existed there.

His sister called him back. "Mind an' not loss

yer hanky, Samuel," she whispered. "Ye did fine, man, but — but ye can put a wee tate truth in yer stories, if ye like."

Nevis, out of regard for the old man, was about to take the longer, but easier, road to the wood. Mr. Girdwood, however, insisted on the short cut and, assisted by his stout staff, did remarkably well.

"'Tis not so bad for four score an' five," he observed complacently when the hill had been surmounted. "An' I could ha' gone quicker but for James Crow here."

"You're a wonderful man," said Nevis, offering his tobacco.

"Couldn't you dance now, Mr. Sammy?" Jim inquired. "Slow, like a dancing bear, you know."

"That'll do, Jim," said Nevis, with a hint of warning in his voice.

The boy looked a little hurt. "Mrs. Sammy said he could dance," he explained.

"'Tis true," said the old man. "Why, I oncet got a medal for the dancin'. But the rheumatis ——" He proceeded to fill his pipe.

"I've brought Miss Busted Tewken to give to you," said Jim softly. "She's in the bastek with Mr. Froggie and Miss Mousie and the lunch."

"'Tis a good lad ye are, for sure, James Crow," Mr. Girdwood returned, patting the young shoulder,

"but ——" He broke off suddenly, remembering his sister. Then —"An' I've had a cravin' for a busted tewken all my life, my lad."

"I think you might have given Mr. Girdwood a hale and hearty tewken," Nevis observed.

"But he pifers a busted one, Doody. Don't you, Mr. Sammy?"

"Surely!" replied Samuel, now fairly on the downward path. He lit his pipe and, puffing smoke and satisfaction, marched towards the wood, which was now not a furlong distant.

"I hope we see the gnomes and pixies and elfs *and* Mr. Fun-Owl," said Jim to his ancient friend.

Mr. Girdwood refrained from saying that owls were very seldom visible in the daytime. "'Tis not unlikely," he said.

"*And* Mr. Magic Doody!"

"I wouldna wonder, lad. An' I—I hope ye'll p'int them all out to me."

"Of course, Mr. Sammy. I 'spect you'll like them. Mr. Froggie and Miss Mousie are *so* excited. Humpty and Teddy wanted to come, too, but there wasn't room in the bastek."

"I hope," said Nevis very solemnly, "I sincerely hope, Jim Crow, that your friends in the bastek haven't eaten up all the lunch."

"I *hope* not," returned the boy, as though he were full of doubts.

This make-believe business was trying on Mr. Girdwood, but he made an effort to do his share. Nevis had fallen behind to light his pipe.

"Did ye ever see a hedgehog?" the old man whispered.

Jim shook his head.

"Well, when I was in — in Africa, a hedgehog oncet ett my denner."

"Was that why you had to shoot the poor fun-owl?"

"The very reason, laddie, the very reason!" Mr. Girdwood cried eagerly.

"What was you having for dinner?"

". . . Sassiges an'— an' turmits. The hedgehog got them when my back was turned."

"Did it make a noise?"

"Na, na."

Jim looked disappointed.

"Well, maybe it made a kind o' a roarin'-squeakin' noise," Mr. Girdwood said hurriedly.

"Was your dinner in a bastek, Mr. Sammy?"

". . . Not exac'ly, James Crow, not exac'ly."

"What was it in, Mr. Sammy?"

"A — a bit o' newspaper, maybe."

After a pause —"What did you do to Mr. Hedgehog?"

"I — I — I cuffed his ears, James. He — he deserved it."

Just then Nevis rejoined them.

"Doody, what's a hedgehog like?"

"A hedgehog?"

Mr. Girdwood felt like making for home as fast as his old legs would carry him. But at the moment, when disgraceful exposure seemed inevitable, the whole subject was abruptly changed by the boy himself.

"*'Sh!*" said Jim, coming to a sudden halt, and pointing. "I do believe I see a fairy!"

The men stopped short. At the edge of the wood, half hidden by a furze bush, seated on the stump of a tree, was a small figure in pink.

"No," said Jim, in deep disappointment, "it's only a little girl."

They went on, and presently Jim took his father's hand and whispered, "Doody, she's crying."

It was true. The little girl, at whose feet lay a little bundle, was hugging a doll and sobbing bitterly.

"Mr. Sammy," said Jim, "would you mind very much if I gave *her* Miss Busted Tewken?"

Mr. Girdwood declared that he didn't mind; yet somehow he did mind.

"Please give me Miss Busted Tewken, Doody," said the boy.

With some difficulty Nevis extracted the lump

of yellow fluff from the basket. " Pity you haven't one of your others, Jim," he remarked.

Jim turned to the old man. " I'll *try* to give you another some day, Mr. Sammy," he said, with an effort, for he loved his " children " dearly.

Then they went forward to the little girl.

THEIR voices silenced, their steps almost soundless on the turf, they were quite close to the little girl ere she became aware of their presence. Then she started and looked up in a scared fashion, stared for a moment or two, and fell again to weeping upon her doll.

Jim laid the fluffy thing on her lap, whilst Nevis gently inquired whether she had lost her way. Whereupon she sobbed more violently than ever.

"It's for you," said Jim, endeavouring to direct her attention to his offering. "You can keep it."

But there was no response.

Jim turned to his father. "P'r'aps she's got a pain, Doody."

"I'm afraid there's a pain of some kind somewhere," murmured Nevis. "Come, my dear," he said to the child, "won't you tell us what is the matter?"

Mr. Girdwood took a step nearer. "'Tis the lassie that came yesterday to Miss Mingay that has Sea View for the summer. We was hearin' she was a niece o' Miss Mingay's."

Whereupon the little girl's distress still further increased, and for a moment it looked as if Jim Crow were going to join in the lamentation. Possibly the presence of Mr. Girdwood sustained him, and he managed to say in a somewhat emotional voice, "If you like, I could *lend* you Miss Mousie." (Miss Mousie, by the way, had frequently proved his own stay and comfort in time of trouble.)

But even this offer was without result, and so Nevis, who was rather a shy man, knelt down on one knee and took the little girl on the other. And at last he got her story.

Her name was Daisy, and her age was about seven. Her parents being unable to leave home, had sent her for the good of her health to spend a month with her Aunt Alice at Clure Bay. She had never been from home until now. She had cried on her arrival, and Aunt Alice had been cross. Later Aunt Alice had been cross again, so she had cried some more. She had hated going to bed alone, also waking up alone. She had got up very early and put on her special silk stockings and new shoes and her best frock and Sunday hat, and she had made a bundle of a few things in a towel, and she had taken her dolly; and then she had crept from the house by the back garden and set out to find the railway station. But she had not found the station, and had lost her way, and things had

kept falling out of her bundle, and a cow had frightened her, and her dolly had fallen in a muddy ditch, and she had got hungrier and hungrier and *hungrier*. . . .

"I guess we'd better have lunch at once," said Nevis, who could be practical as well as artistic, "and then I'll take Daisy home to her aunt."

At the mention of lunch Miss Daisy brightened; at the mention of her aunt she wailed anew.

"Well, we'll have lunch, and then we'll see what we'll do." Nevis gently set her back on the tree stump.

"I 'spect she pifers to stay in the Magic Wood with us," said Jim. "She could be the Fairy Queen, you know."

At this the little girl pricked up her ears and showed one eye and a bit of tear-stained cheek.

"If her face was washed, she would be rather like a fairy."

The eye blinked, and a small muffled voice said, "I — I've nothing to wash it with."

Nevis, however, was already dipping a handkerchief in a streamlet that ran close by, and a minute later the stains were removed. Then while he set about unpacking the basket, the little boy looked at the little girl, and the little girl looked at the little boy, and Mr. Girdwood regarded both with a genial smile.

"That's Mr. Sammy," said Jim presently. "He's the oldest doody in this place, and afterwards he's going to play at being King of the Gnomes."

Mr. Girdwood's smile went out.

"Aren't you?" said Jim.

"Will I need to climb trees an' so on?" Mr. Girdwood faltered.

"Not unless you want to. You see, if you're King, you can do anything you like — nearly anything."

Mr. Girdwood gave a grunt of relief. "If 'twasna for the rheumatis ——" He proceeded to relight his pipe, which he had allowed to go out.

Jim turned again to Daisy, and assisted her in brushing the dry mud from her doll. "I suspose she's an only child," he remarked.

"She's grown up — she's a lady," Daisy returned, with decreasing diffidence. "Don't you see, she has got a long dress and lovely petticoats, and ——"

"Her legs are fearful fat. Has she got a squeaker?"

"Nice dolls don't have squeakers — only the clown and injun-rubber kind. Mine is a superiorest French doll. And her legs aren't fearful fat."

"They're nearly as fat as my Auntie Hilda's — but then *she's* fearful fat all over. . . . But

she's a very nice doll. Wouldn't you like to cuddle Miss Busted Tewken, too? Feel her." Jim applied his gift to the little girl's cheek.

"It's nice and pussy," she allowed.

"She's awful nice to sleep with; and if the stuffing comes out, it's quite easy to put it in again. You're to keep her, you know."

Daisy rubbed the fluff against her cheek again, and smiled to Jim. "I think you are a very nice little boy," she said demurely. "What's your name?"

"Jim Crow — but I'm nearly as big as you."

"That's a funny name."

He was about to explain, when his father called them to lunch. Ere the simple repast was over, however, a good many personal explanations were exchanged, with the result that the little girl was on friendly terms with every one, not excepting Mr. Girdwood, who won her interest by relating how little girls in Africa had dolls made only of wood and stone, and without clothes.

Jim was proceeding to inquire which parts were made of wood and which of stone, when Nevis interposed.

"Now, Daisy," he said, "I'm sure your aunt must be worrying terribly about you, so I'll walk down now and tell her you're all right; and later on we'll take you to her."

At "aunt" Daisy's lips drooped; at "later on" they recovered. Youth can face anything — later on.

"Doody'll give her beans," Jim whispered confidentially and encouragingly.

"Will he?" said Daisy. "Haricot beans? What for?"

"You'll look after the children, won't you?" said Nevis to the old man.

"The Lord helpin' me," replied Mr. Girdwood a trifle louder than he intended. "Surely, sir. I'll keep my eye on them."

Nevis turned to his son. "Be a good boy, Jim," he said, not so much for convention's as the old man's sake, for Nevis knew that the phrase had as much effect upon a boy as "Good-morning" has upon the weather.

"All right, Doody." Jim had not time to think of being either good or bad, but he desired to reassure his father who seemed to be anxious about something. "No, Daisy; *not* haricot beans! Wait! — I'll show you." He produced Mr. Froggie, a xylonite affair in green and yellow. "You see, Mr. Froggie once had legs, legs that waggled. He could stand, too. But one day he was bad to Miss Mousie, and I gave him beans. Now he has got no legs! But I still love him. The beans hurt me more than they hurt him."

After about fifteen seconds had elapsed Miss Daisy slowly put the question: "But where are the beans, Jim Crow?"

. . . . . .

"Now," said Jim to the guardian, "let's go into the Magic Wood and look for gnomes and pixies and elfs *and* Mr. Fun-Owl." And he led the way along a path strewn with pine-needles.

"What sort of wood did you say it was?" the little girl, overtaking him, inquired.

"Magic," he replied, rather shortly.

It must be confessed that Jim was disappointed in Daisy. He had explained so many things, and she had understood so few. The heart was willing, no doubt, but the imagination was weak.

"Where's the magic?" she asked, gazing about her.

"I don't think," said Jim slowly, "I'll ever get married to you."

"Oh!"

"I think I'd rather get married to Mrs. Sammy."

Daisy's mouth twitched ominously.

"Well," he said, relenting, "I'll get married to you, too, if you like."

Mr. Girdwood, who was toddling close behind, found it hard to hold his peace.

"But," objected Daisy, drying one eye with her

doll and the other with Miss Busted Tewken, "you couldn't get married to two ladies at once."

"Not at once," he admitted. "I'd have to have a wedding for each. That would be two cakes."

"But I'd only get one," said Daisy, who was not quite so dense regarding practical matters.

Mr. Girdwood interposed here. "I'm thinkin' we best not go any furder, James," he said mildly, "for fear we get wandered. Here's a nice place for us to sit down on."

"I don't think it's dry enough for your legs. 'Sides, we haven't gone far enough to see the gnomes. I think I see the tree where Mr. Magic Doody and Mr. Fun-Owl live ——"

"Who?" asked Daisy.

"I've told you already. Come on!" And the boy hastened forward.

Daisy was left with the old man. "Please," she said; "is it true about those things in the wood? Is it truly a Magic Wood?"

Mr. Girdwood removed his pipe from his lips and coughed.

"'Tis like as not," he said, at last, with difficulty. "'Tis many years since I was here before."

"Were you ever in a Magic Wood? Did you ever see gnomes and things?"

Mr. Girdwood hesitated.

"Did you?"

"I — I seen some queer things, when — when I was in Africa ——"

He was happily saved from further fictions just then by a hail from the boy.

"Here's the very place, Mr. Sammy. Come on, Daisy." Jim was standing beside the trunk of a fallen tree. "We can hide behind it," he explained, "and watch for them. Let's kneel and keep fearful quiet."

"Could I not get sittin', James?" said the old man, after a painful failure to adopt the posture suggested. Eventually he was permitted to occupy a very knobby piece of root, which Jim named the Throne of the King of the Gnomes. He was given Mr. Froggie and Miss Mousie to take care of.

Then the children knelt by the trunk, their heads just above it, their eyes on the lights and shadows, the greens and browns and yellows of the wood, the blues and whites of the patches of sky. A very tall pine in the foreground was — so Jim decided — the home of Mr. Magic Doody and Mr. Fun-Owl; but he did not speak about it.

A great stillness fell upon them. It lasted for about half-a-minute.

"Do you see anything?" Daisy inquired.

"*'Sh!*"

Daisy held her tongue until the sudden cry of a bird caused her to give a jump and a screech and

let Miss Busted Tewken roll over the trunk. It was some time ere peace was restored.

Quite a long silence ensued, and it was Jim who broke it.

"I think," he said softly, "I'll ask a blessing, and see if that does any good. Oh, Lord, we thank Thee for Thy mercies, and forgive our sins, amen ——"

"That's not the one I say," said Daisy.

"It's the one Doody says when mother's with us," he returned. "Sometimes when she isn't, too."

"Would you like me to say mine, Jim Crow?"

Jim shook his head. "Let's keep awful quiet." He glanced at Mr. Girdwood, who was evincing signs of drowsiness. "I'm afraid some of us haven't been very, *very* good lately, Mr. Sammy."

Mr. Girdwood looked uncomfortable, but that may have been due in some measure to the Throne. "I hope ye'll see something soon," he said, rousing himself.

Once more silence.

Daisy feared that she had made a hole in the knee of one of her fine stockings, but managed to keep the trouble to herself.

"Please don't kiss your doll so loud," said Jim in an undertone.

Next moment he was pointing and whispering excitedly —

"I believe I see a gnome! Yes, yes; away over yonder, where it's very dark. See, it's moving!"

A cool breeze stole through the warm wood.

"It must be a gnome! — it's sort of brown! — and gnomes are brown —'cept when they're green. Mr. Sammy, don't you see it? Oh, it's away! — no, it's back again."

Said Daisy, her blue eyes very big, "I don't see anything, Jim Crow."

Jim appealed again to Mr. Girdwood. "But *you* can see it!"

"Me?"

"Oh, you're looking the wrong way! It's yonder — look! — quick!"

"Well, I don't exac'ly. . . ." Mr. Girdwood pulled himself together. "Surely," he said, bravely, "I can see it, James Crow."

Jim clapped his hands. "And it's brown, isn't it, Mr. Sammy?"

"To be sure!"

"With a brown hood on its head?"

"Why, cert'inly!"

"And it's got whiskers like yours, Mr. Sammy?"

"I — I won't deny it."

"Oh, we've seen a real gnome!" cried Jim.

But Daisy wailed, "I haven't! I haven't seen anything at all!"

Jim's pointing finger fell. "Oh, it's gone away," he said regretfully. "P'r'aps it'll come back Daisy."

But it didn't, and Daisy was disconsolate.

"You should have let me ask a blessing, too," she complained.

"I 'spect you didn't see it 'cause you're a girl," said Jim, not unsympathetically. But he really felt that she must have been very bad in some way lately. Which was, perhaps, his best reason for putting his arm round her neck and promising to appeal to Mr. Magic Doody on her behalf on another occasion. "And now," he went on, when she had been comforted, "we'll play! You'll be Queen of the Fairies — you can blow your nose with my hanky first — and Mr. Sammy'll be King of —— Oh, you mustn't get off your Throne, Mr. Sammy."

"But, if ye please, James ——"

Happily for the old man, Nevis appeared at this junction, having pacified a distracted woman whose worst sin had been a splitting headache on her niece's arrival the previous afternoon. She would have accompanied Nevis to the wood to embrace the child, had not the artist managed to persuade her to rest for an hour or two.

"Your aunt," he informed Daisy, who had almost forgotten her wanderings, "says you may stay a little longer, if you want to, and then we'll all go home together. She isn't cross, and she sent her love to you."

Thereafter Daisy became Queen of the Fairies, and proved almost as obedient as did Mr. Girdwood in his rôle of King of the Gnomes.

Of course Nevis had to be told of the real gnome. "And Mr. Sammy saw it too, Doody!"

Nevis looked at the old man, a trifle quizzingly perhaps.

"Sure," the latter murmured.

"And I 'spect," said Jim, with a happy thought, "Daisy would have seen it, too, if it had been a pixie or an elf."

Thereafter no marriage bell could have gone merrier than their play.

. . . . . .

That night, at the fireside, Mr. Girdwood had an argument with his sister.

"'Twas you that started me," he said.

"But I didna mean ye to gang so far wi' the stories. I near drapped when ye began about Africa — you that never sailed furder'n Dublin. Ye should draw the line, Samuel, ye should draw the line."

Mr. Girdwood grunted, then burst into a reckless fit of chuckling.

"I seen a gnome in the Magic Wood, the day," he said at last.

"Ye didna!"

"I did!"

"Oh, Samuel!"

"An' if ye had been wi' James Crow, ye would ha' seen it, too! In for a penny, in for a pound!"

A RAINY DAY

OFTENER than not we may tell a child's sex from the time the child spends at the window on a rainy day. Whatever the years make a woman, she is born domesticated; the little girl looks out of the window chiefly because something is happening outside, not because she wishes something would happen, and returns contentedly to her indoor interests. But however the years thin a man's blood, he is born an open air adventurer; the little boy tires of carpet play, and remains gazing at the rain and grey skies, wearying for the sun to shine.

Jim knelt on a chair at the parlour window of the cottage wherein his father had taken lodgings for the stay at Clure Bay. Mr. Froggie, Miss Mousie and the others sprawled neglected on the floor. On the table lay an open paint-box, some scattered brushes, and a number of "expression pictures," as the boy designated his more than usually gaudy sketches; also a tumbler of paint-muddied water. On the haircloth sofa rested several volumes of juvenile appearance. A small fire burned sulkily

in the grate. There was a feeling of heaviness and dulness in the atmosphere.

The hour was three. It had been a long morning; it threatened to be a longer afternoon. Since dawn the rain had fallen straight and steadily, and still the castle loomed dismally through the mist and the boats in the harbour appeared ghostly on the oily water. And it was the day on which Mr. Girdwood was to have sat for his portrait.

Nevis, a novel on his knee, drowsed in a chair which was "easy"—after one got the secret of its springs. He had done his best towards entertaining Jim and Daisy (who had invited herself) during the morning, and possibly his exertions then (he had been anything from a hippopotamus to a windmill) coupled with an early dinner were accountable for his present sluggishness.

The silence which had lasted for some twenty minutes was broken by the boy.

"Doody," he said softly, without turning from the window.

There was no answer.

"Doody!"

". . . Well?"

"If you was to sail from here as far as you could, where would you come to?"

"America."

"Oh! . . . Why would you come to America?"

"What?"

Jim repeated the question.

"Because you would," said Nevis, the least thing irritably.

After a short pause, "Doody!"

"Well, what is it?"

"If — if you didn't sail as far as you could, where would you come to?"

"Nowhere." Nevis let the novel slip from his knee and kicked it across the rug.

"But, Doody," said Jim, whose desire to carry on any sort of conversation was just then very acute, "but, Doody, if you came to nowhere you wouldn't know you was anywhere."

Nevis did not respond.

"How big is America, Doody?"

"I don't know. . . . Aren't you going to paint some more pictures?"

"The light's bad," quoted Jim. "Is America as big as ——"

"Botheration!" muttered Nevis; "can't you play with something or other?"

Jim gave a silent little gulp. "I've got no one to play with me," he said.

"Daisy would have come back this afternoon if

you had asked her. And she wanted you to go to her house. Would you like to go now?"

"No — no, thank you, Doody."

"Well, what do you want to do?"

"I d-don't know."

With something between a grunt and a groan Nevis closed his eyes, and a long silence followed, disturbed only by the occasional squeaking of a small wet forefinger on the pane. But at last even that sound ceased, and a little later Jim descended from the chair. He regarded his paints on the table, his toys on the floor, his books on the sofa; but for once they one and all failed to appeal to him.

He halted in front of his drowsy parent. His lip trembled.

"I — I don't think I'm feeling very happy," he said in a breaking voice. "Talk to me, Doody."

It was a gentle stab, but it went deep enough. Nevis sat up yawning, and took his son on his knee.

"What's the matter, old Crow?"

"I was feeling so lonely alone," said Jim, and gave way.

"Poor old Crow, I guess we'll both be glad when mother comes home. That was it, wasn't it?"

"If you hadn't went to sleep ——"

"Well, well, I'm not going to sleep any more. What would you like me to do? Tell you a story?"

"No; just talk."

"All right. . . . I wonder how our friend Sammy is getting along to-day. I expect he'll be rather wild at not getting his sitting."

"I 'spect so, too," said Jim, borrowing his father's handkerchief. "I 'spect he'll be fearful grumpy with Mrs. Sammy. I hope he doesn't bite her nose off."

"Oh, I don't think he would go quite so far as that, Jim Crow."

"I've heard her asking him not to bite it off, when he was grumpy."

"Still, I don't think she was really afraid of actually losing her nose."

"I suspose he would just give it a small bite, and leave it on."

"I hardly think he would even do that."

"Wouldn't he?" said Jim, not a little disappointed.

Nevis proceeded to explain that people sometimes said things without exactly meaning them. "For instance, you remember when old Sammy was telling us the story about the three lions he shot in Africa; he said when they roared he nearly jumped out of his skin. Now, you know, he couldn't have jumped out of his skin if a hundred

thousand lions had roared and he had tried with all his might. D'you see, Jim Crow?"

"Yes, I see, Doody. Of *course* Mr. Sammy couldn't jump out of his own skin——"

"Well, then——"

"But he *could* bite Mrs. Sammy's nose quite easily, if he wanted to."

"Let's have a look at the weather," said Nevis.

At the window Jim, whose spirits were up again, remarked that the froggies would enjoy this weather, and expressed a desire to give his own Mr. Froggie a mud-bath in the window-box.

"That's a delightful idea, Jim Crow," Nevis replied; "but what do you say to our putting on our waterproofs, and going down to the harbour, and getting a boat with lines, and seeing if we can catch some fish?"

The suggestion was hailed with rapture and a request for immediate departure. Nevertheless, it was first necessary to deposit Mr. Froggie in the window-box; "'cause, you see, he'll be enjoying himself, too."

"Hadn't you better pick up your other friends?" said Nevis mildly, indicating the sprawling toys.

"They pifer being on the floor," Jim replied, making for the door.

"All the same, we can't leave the room in this state," Nevis said, going to work.

"I don't think they mind *you* picking them up, Doody," Jim observed; "but they hate me to do it — they simply loase (loathe) it."

"You're a bit of a humbug, Jim Crow," the father remarked good-humouredly. "I don't know how you can make such a mess in a room."

"That's what mother says about the studio at home," the son replied. "Couldn't you be a little quicker, Doody?"

Within the next half-hour the weather gave some promise of improving.

Mr. Girdwood opened the cottage door for the fiftieth time that day.

"Ye needna think they'll be comin' now," said his sister from the kitchen.

"I never said I was thinkin' they would be comin' now," he retorted.

"Well, can ye not sit still instead o' dancin' about like a hen on a het girdle?"

"Clay up!" was the rude reply.

It had been a bad day for Mr. Girdwood, and he had made it a worse one for his sister. Now they had reached the acute stage of irritability.

"Whatever did it rain for the day?" he demanded, for somewhere about the hundredth time.

"I wouldna wonder if it was a judgment on ye

for all the falsehoods ye've been tellin' lately, Samuel."

"An' who started me at the falsehoods?"

There was a brief pause.

"If ye had left out the Africa falsehoods," said Miss Girdwood. "What made ye tell about lions and teegers an' polar bears an' buffoons an'——"

"Baboons, ye eediot!"

"— when ye've never seen a dangerous beast in yer life? What made ye do it?"

"I've seen plenty dangerous beasts in a menagerie. 'Tis jist the same as seein' them in Africa."

"You an' yer Africa! You an' yer bassoons! I wonder what the meenister ——"

"Hold yer tongue, woman, if ye canna keep yer temper. I said ba*boons!* A bassoon's not a beast; 'tis a musical instrument — a kind o' flute. A baboon's a kind o' monkey."

"You an' yer mutes an' flunkeys ——"

"Tits, woman! Ye're lossin' yer power o' speech. Clay up, for any favour! Ye canna even say flukes an'——" Mr. Girdwood left the doorstep rather hastily.

The rain had almost ceased. He strolled round to the back of the house, growling to himself.

Five minutes later his sister joined him. Left to herself her ill-temper had evaporated, and she

had thought of Samuel's rheumatism. Prepared for a rebuff, she laid a hand on his arm.

"Samuel, will ye no' get wet?"

But no rebuff came.

"Elizabeth," he said, and pointed. From the harbour mouth a boat was being rowed by one Andrew, a fisherman; in the stern sat Jim and his father.

"Elizabeth, I'm thinkin' ye was right," he said slowly. "'Tis a judgment surely." He turned abruptly and proceeded indoors.

She followed, and set about making the tea. "I didna mean it, Samuel," she said at last.

"What?"

"The judgment."

"But *I* meant it. . . . What's James Crow an' his doody goin' out wi' Andrew for? Can *I* no' pull a boat?"

"Oh, Samuel, dearie, ye ha' never been in a boat for twinty year!"

"Ye said that about the Magic Wood — an' I won there easy!"

"But yer rheumatis ——"

"They should ha' come to me if they was for the fishin'. I tell ye 'tis a judgment. If I ever see James Crow again I'll confess that I never was furder'n Dublin, an' never shot anything bigger'n a rabbit."

"Oh, but, Samuel ——" she paused, staring at the brown teapot in her hand. "But, Samuel ——" she paused again.

"An' I'll tell him the truth about the owl — that ye bought it ready stuffed for a shillin'——"

"It was jist a sixpence, dearie."

Mr. Girdwood waved away the soft correction.

"An' I'll tell him that I never really seen his gnome in the wood ——"

"Oh, Samuel, Samuel!"

"An' I'll tell him — I'll tell him that ye're three year older'n me!" Mr. Girdwood writhed in his chair.

With a cry Miss Girdwood set the teapot on the hob.

"Na, na, na — na — *na!* Ye mauna do that, Samuel, ye mauna do that! Ye mauna tell him anything. For ye see"— she moved her hands as if actually groping for solid arguments —"ye see, Samuel, yer stories never did the lad any harm ——"

"I ken. 'Tis me that's gettin' the judgment. An' I'll never get ma portrait pentit now — I can see that."

"Toots, man! Doesna the Lord send the rain on the just an' the unjust?"

"Ay; but 'tis maybe not so convenient for the unjust, Elizabeth. I tell ye, I'll never see ma portrait ——"

Poor Miss Girdwood! She had a sore time of it during the next three hours. Samuel's disappointment, his injured feelings, his jealousy, were not to be soothed by anything she could say. She was at her wits' end when a knock came on the door.

Jim entered followed by his father. The boy, glowing from the sea air, was in a high state of excitement. He dragged a big fish on a string across the kitchen floor, heaved it up, and planted it on the old man's knees.

"It's for you, Mr. Sammy. I caught it. Doody hardly helped me at all. Didn't you not, Doody?"

"Nothing to speak of."

"Mr. Sammy, isn't it a splendid fish?"

"Ay; 'tis a fine fish," said Mr. Girdwood gloomily, and sighed.

"Now, Jim Crow, we must be going," said Nevis. "I told you you could stay for just a minute."

"Oh, rest ye a whiley, sir," pleaded the old woman. "I'll warm him some milk to keep him from catchin' the cold." She lowered her voice. "He"— with a nod in her brother's direction — "had a sad disappointment the day. Bide a wee whiley, if ye please, sir."

Jim had already made himself at home close to Mr. Girdwood. "It was the only fish we caught,"

he said, "and it's to make up for you not getting your portrait painted to-day. Andrew says it's going to be fine to-morrow ——"

"Andrew kens nothin' about the weather," grunted the old man.

"Oh, but I hope it'll be fine, 'cause Doody is going to paint you the first fine day. Aren't you, Doody?"

"Certainly!"

"There ye see, Samuel!" cried Miss Girdwood, and put her hand to her mouth.

Samuel bowed his head and appeared to be deeply interested in the fish.

Miss Girdwood remarked that the warm milk would soon be ready.

"I'll tell you what we'll do now," said Jim. "Mr. Sammy, you tell the story you promised to tell me about the big, huge whale you caught at Africa!"

Mr. Girdwood wriggled, and the fish flopped on the floor, whereat Jim laughed heartily.

"Tell about the whale," he urged presently.

"I canna, I canna," protested the old man. "I'm awfu' obliged for the fish, James Crow, but I canna tell about the whale. Oh, na, na; 'tis not a story I can tell."

"Go on, Samuel, go on!" said Miss Girdwood in a hoarse whisper. "Tell about yer whale!"

THE FIRST SITTING

"Now, Jim Crow," said Nevis, settling himself on his stool, "if you're not going to paint Mr. Girdwood's portrait along with me, I think you should find something to do for an hour or so, because, you see, Mr. Girdwood isn't used to sitting for his portrait, and if you keep running about and speaking to him, he'll be very uncomfortable."

This in response to a timid appeal from the old man on the bench by the cottage wall.

"All right, Doody," said Jim agreeably; "I think I'll just do a small sketch of Mr. Froggie till Daisy comes. I've done Mr. Sammy already, you know."

"Very good," said Nevis.

His son looked gratified. "But it would have been better if he hadn't had whiskers. Which part of Mr. Sammy do you begin with?"

"You may see that for yourself later on, old chap. Now let's get to work." The artist turned to the sitter, who immediately drew himself up, assuming a pose of extreme dignity and rigidity.

"Light your pipe, Mr. Girdwood, and make

yourself as easy as you like. It's not as if you were going to be photographed."

Mr. Girdwood fished out his pipe, looked at it, and put it back. "I think I'll not smoke," he said after some consideration; "'twill be seemlier wantin' the pipe. But if ye've nae objections, sir, I'll give my nose a bit blast."

"No objections whatever," said Nevis gravely.

Mr. Girdwood produced a large red handkerchief and trumpeted loudly.

"Again, Mr. Sammy!" cried Jim, highly delighted. "Do Mr. Ephelant again."

"Quiet!" said his father. "Now, just sit at your ease, as if I were miles away, Mr. Girdwood. You are the oldest inhabitant, you know, and I want to show you enjoying the beautiful summer day in your garden. You understand?"

"Ay. . . . I maun try for to sit at my ease, sir." And the old man adopted an attitude of cramped misery.

"Of course it's not that I can't go on with the portrait," said Nevis patiently. "That's all right so far as I am concerned. But I don't like to see you suffering."

"'Tisna sufferin' exac'ly, sir. 'Tis liker a sort o'—o' agony."

"Agony?"

"Well, maybe no' that either. If ye would wait

till I ease my collar. Ye see, Elizabeth forgot where she put the wee stud, an' we had to use a button on a hairpin, an' the hairpin's — ah! that's better! Now, sir, I'll try my best to please ye."

"Perhaps," said Nevis, "you would like me to postpone the portrait till another day ——"

"Na, na! I'll sit easy, sir; I'll sit easy, if it chokes me."

Jim's request to be informed how "sitting easy" could choke anybody was cut short by his father, who pointed out that Mr. Froggie was evidently feeling neglected. Whereupon the boy applied his brush to his mouth, thence to the paint styled "emerald green," and proceeded to execute a design of which any parent would have been proud — after the parent had been told what it represented.

For the next five minutes or so all went calmly. Mr. Girdwood's pose could scarcely have been termed "natural," but he frequently smirked in a way that suggested a certain satisfaction of spirit.

"Doody," said Jim suddenly, "shall you paint Mr. Sammy's face first, and put the whiskers on afterwards?"

Nevis ignored the question — which was unwise of him, an experienced parent. Children don't ask questions merely for the fun of the thing; no counsel for the prosecution can equal their persistence.

Eventually Nevis was driven to replying that he painted the whiskers first and the face afterwards. Jim accepted the answer without comment, which shows how much better it is to reply promptly to a child. But he put another question.

"Do whiskers grow, Doody?"

"Yes, of course."

"Like grass?"

"Yes."

A brief silence.

"Doody, what is whisker seed like?"

At this there came from the open kitchen window a prolonged cackle.

"Hullo, Mrs. Sammy!" the boy called gaily to the old woman, who immediately dodged from sight.

Mr. Girdwood stopped in the midst of a chuckle. "Away, woman, away!" he cried sternly; "would ye spile the pictur after all?"

Having addressed a few warning words to his son, Nevis returned to his canvas, while the sitter gradually composed himself.

"Excuse my sister, if ye please, sir," said the latter. "How's the pentin' gettin' on?"

"I think we'll manage to make a start soon," the artist returned, laughing.

Mr. Girdwood gaped.

"The beginning is the worst," Nevis assured

him. "Now make yourself comfortable, and we'll go ahead."

Nearly fifteen minutes passed without interruption. Jim, having tired of painting Mr. Froggie's portrait, was painting Mr. Froggie himself; Nevis was working diligently; the old man was perspiring and smirking.

Then, all at once, the last mentioned threw out his right hand, and in a hoarse whisper said —

"Sir, I'm vexed to stop ye, but ——" His voice rose to a roar. "Elizabeth, shift frae that window! D'ye hear?"

For a marvel Miss Girdwood retorted quite crossly —

"I wasna lookin' at *you;* I was lookin' at James Crow."

"Well, I canna thole ye at the window when I'm gettin' my portrait pentit."

"Ye couldna see me."

"I heard ye breathin'."

Miss Girdwood retired, and Mr. Girdwood after several violent shrugs regained, with the utmost precision, his former position.

Jim got up. "I think I'll go into the house and talk to Mrs. Sammy," he announced, "and see the fun-owl."

"Do you think he might?" Nevis inquired of the old man.

"Please!" said Jim.

Somehow Mr. Girdwood did not much care about his sister having the boy all to herself.

"James Crow isna disturbin' me," he replied untruthfully. "He's fine where he is."

"But I want to go into the house, Mr. Sammy."

"I really think it wouldn't be a bad plan," the artist remarked, with a smile.

"Ah, well," said Mr. Girdwood reluctantly, "ye best gang in, my lad, an' see the owl; but — ye needna pay any attention to *her*. . . . Elizabeth!" he shouted, "open the door!"

The old woman obeyed almost at once. "What are ye wantin', Samuel?"

"James Crow's comin' in to see the owl I shot in Africa. Mind, 'tis the owl he's wantin' to see."

"An' ye're welcome to see the owl, dearie," said Miss Girdwood, delighted, to Jim.

"And you'll tell me again how Mr. Sammy shot it," he responded.

"Na, na!" cried Mr. Girdwood, greatly perturbed. "She's not to do that!"

"Aw, I'll tell ye about something else, dearie," she said kindly —

"Ye're not to tell him anything about me, woman! — mind that!"

"Oh, Samuel," she said soothingly, "dinna fash yersel'. Jist pay attention to yer portrait."

"I suspose," said Jim, "you don't know about all Mr. Sammy's adventures so well as he does."

"I — I never speak about them, dearie. Come in now, for I doubt we're keepin' yer doddy back."

"Doody!" yelled Mr. Girdwood as the door closed. "Oh, me! the stupeedity o' women!" he remarked to Nevis; adding, "I hope she'll not be tellin' him a heap o' nonsense about me." Once more he settled himself in position, but he was obviously nervous.

"I'm afraid that boy of mine has upset you for to-day," said Nevis at last, fairly baffled by the changing expressions of the ancient visage.

Mr. Girdwood did not seem to hear. He was listening anxiously with his mouth; his eyes were fixed in a sidelong stare on the window. He appeared to be expecting something to happen.

And it happened sooner than he expected. He all but fell from the bench when, with a merry "peep-bo, Mr. Sammy!" a small hand shot forth, grasping the stuffed owl. A badly stifled cackle followed the surprise.

The least Nevis could do was to be angry.

"That's enough, Jim," he called. "If you're not going to ——"

"Doody," cried Jim unabashed, "do you remember the book at home, with the picture of the doody standing beside the wild beasts he shot?"

"What about it?" demanded Nevis, hoping for a change of subject.

"Well, I think you should paint Mr. Sammy beside the fun-owl, 'cause he shot it. . . . Mr. Sammy, will you have it at your feet or on your knee? Do you hear Mrs. Sammy laughing? — razzer like a tewken! You do laugh funny, Mrs. Sammy; but I like it."

"Oh, dearie, ye'll be the death o' me!" gasped the old woman. Next moment she popped her head out of the window. "Samuel, dinna be vexed, man. 'Twas but a bit joke."

"I'm afraid," said Nevis to his son, "you have quite ruined the sitting. You had better come home with me at once."

"But, Doody ——"

"Give Miss Girdwood the bird, and ——"

"It's an owl."

"Give it to her, and come to me at once. I'm ashamed of you."

"You're not!"

"But I am. Come along, quickly!"

Said Miss Girdwood gently, "Oh, sir, he didna mean it. Him an' me'll bide in the parlour, an' let ye win through wi' yer job. I dare say Samuel's awfu' ill to pent. Let James Crow bide wi' me, if ye please, sir."

But Mr. Girdwood, his mind still obsessed by the

dread of being "given away" by his sister, said, "Clay up, Elizabeth! James Crow's better wi' his doody."

"Come along, Jim," said Nevis sternly. "See how you've spoilt everything. . . . I'm sorry, Miss Girdwood, but I must ask you to open the door for him."

"Can I not get givin' him a biscuit first, sir?" she pleaded.

Nevis shook his head. "Jim, I've already asked you twice to come to me."

"Three times, Doody," said Jim, and broke down. "But I'm coming," he sobbed.

"Oh, dearie!" sighed Miss Girdwood, and led him to the door. "I'm vexed there's not a single peppermint in the house," she continued. "Dinna cry, my wee laddie, dinna cry——"

"I'm not," said Jim, drying his eyes on her apron. "But — but Doody said he was 'shamed of me."

He went to his father without taking any notice of Mr. Girdwood. He threw himself on his father, sending palette and brushes spinning.

"Why was you 'shamed of me, Doody?" he wailed.

"Because — because——" Nevis, for the life of him, could not explain.

"I was never 'shamed of you, Doody."

There was a silence.

"All right, old man," whispered Nevis. "But you must learn obedience, you know. It all came of not doing what I asked. Well, well, I forgive you. No, no! — I'm not really ashamed of you. But you must go to Mr. Sammy, and tell him you're sorry for upsetting everything. Will you?"

"Y-yes, Doody. But — I've lost my hanky."

Presently he approached Mr. Girdwood slowly, far from willingly.

"Aw, the wee man!" muttered Miss Girdwood, and turned into the doorway, tears on her withered face.

But it was too much for the old man. Up he got and toddled to meet the boy, crying —

"James Crow, James Crow, 'twas most my fault. Oh, sure, 'twas all my fault. Will ye shake hands, an'— an' let it pass? An' if ye say 'tis got to be, — well, yer Doody can pent me an' the owl — the fun-owl — in the same pictur — an' I'll chance it!"

Jim clung to the old hand, but for a space said nothing. Then —

"I think I'd really pifer the fun-owl in a picture of its own," he said.

MRS. SAMMY SAVES THE SITUATION

"AND if Mr. Sammy hadn't fired guns and shouted very loud and made fearful noises with his feet, the whale would have gobbled him up!—Wasn't he brave, Doody?"

"I should say so," assented Nevis, who was examining a milky-hued pebble which he had just sifted from a handful of fine gravel.

Mr. Girdwood writhed on the flat rock whereon, with considerable diffidence, he had seated himself half-an-hour earlier.

"Did you ever hear of such a brave doody?" the boy persisted. "The whale had its mouth wide open, and Mr. Sammy had nothing on but his ——"

"Never!" said Nevis firmly. "I'm beginning to feel that Mr. Girdwood's African adventures would make rather an entertaining book."

It may be that one cannot blush after eighty—in this world, at any rate. But if Mr. Girdwood's colour failed to increase, he perspired freely enough.

"James Crow," he said feebly, "ye're not to bother yer doody wi' my stupid stories."

"They're not stupid," Jim promptly replied. "And Doody likes to hear them. I tell him *all* your stories, Mr. Sammy — don't I, Doody?"

"I believe you do, Jim Crow," said Nevis, taking up another handful of gravel.

Jim turned to the old man. "Doody liked the one about when you cuffed the hedgehog's ears for eating up your dinner in Africa," he said. "Doody roared and laughed."

"Aw," murmured Mr. Girdwood, and gazed in turn at sea, sky and cliffs. "'Tis time I was steppin' home," he said at last, making to rise. "Elizabeth'll be gettin' the denner ready."

"But you're going to have lunch with us, Mr. Sammy," said Jim. "You promised — and it's in the bastek for you. 'Sides, you've got to tell the story about the giraffes with the fezzers — feathers — on their noses. Doody wants to hear how you stole their eggs when they weren't looking. Don't you, Doody?"

"Certainly," said Nevis. "But, still, if Mr. Girdwood——" He fingered a fresh handful of gravel. "The pebbles are pretty scarce, aren't they?"

"That's what Mr. Sammy said about the giraffe's eggs. Didn't you, Mr. Sammy?"

"Aw," murmured the old man again, looking supremely uncomfortable. "'Tis surely very kind o' ye, James Crow," he continued, "but I — I best be steppin' home. Ye see, Elizabeth ——"

"She won't give you beans, will she?"

"No; 'tis pea-soup on Fridays. But, ye see ——"

Nevis roused himself. He and his son had been lying in the sunny cove since shortly after breakfast, and the comfort of the shingle and the hushing of the sea had made him drowsy. Mr. Girdwood had — apparently quite inadvertently — joined them about noon.

"The pebbles are pretty, but they are few," said Nevis, rolling over and sitting up.

"Very, very few, sir," the old man said, still writhing; "very, very few, indeed, to be sure."

"You said there was heaps," remarked Jim, eyeing him.

Mr. Girdwood was getting used to prevaricating. "I meant very few heaps, James Crow," he said hastily. "Ye see?"

"I see," Jim replied. "I can find more pebbles than Doody."

"Quite right," said Nevis, whose pockets bulged with his son's tribute in the form of sand, broken shells, pieces of flint and small stones. The milky and scarlet pebbles for which Clure Bay was noted

were really difficult to find; but it's a sorry sort of child that can't discover some treasures on the seashore at the first attempt.

"Did you get pebbles in Africa, Mr. Sammy?" the boy inquired.

Mr. Girdwood, afraid to commit himself, shook his head, nodded, then shook it again.

"Wasn't it a nice shore like this, Mr. Sammy?"

"'Twas a nice enough shore," was the slow, unwilling reply; "a nice enough shore for them as liked it."

"But what sort of shore was it?"

Nevis interposed. "I think you might give Mr. Girdwood a rest," he mildly remonstrated, "and then we'll have lunch."

"But he likes talking about Africa, don't you, Mr. Sammy?"

"In private, James Crow, in private," the old man answered in a whisper, desperately.

"What's 'in private,' Doody?"

"Mr. Girdwood means," said Nevis gravely, "that he prefers to tell his stories to one person at a time."

"That's why he always stops when Mrs. Sammy comes," said Jim, looking reflective. "I suspose, Mr. Sammy, you tell her stories when I'm not there."

Mr. Girdwood murmured something to the effect

that his sister did not much care for his stories, and added that he must be stepping home.

"Come along, Jim Crow, and help me to unpack the basket," said Nevis, in order to create a diversion. "Mr. Girdwood must have some soup before he starts to climb the hill — if he insists on going."

"Mr. Sammy's legs are much stronger than they used to be," observed Jim. "Aren't they, Mr. Sammy?"

Mr. Girdwood chuckled — doubtless with relief at the longed-for change of subject. "'Tis so, James Crow, 'tis so. They was only needin' exercise, I'm thinkin'."

"But I'm sure Mrs. Sammy would like the story about when you killed the four rhinoceroses with your sword. I'll tell her about it, if you like."

"Na, na! She — she doesna like to hear about dangerous beasts ——"

"Come along, Jim. Take the sandwiches to Mr. Girdwood," put in Nevis.

"All right, Doody. . . . I suppose she pifers to hear about kind beasts, like froggies and tewkens and fun-owls, and ——"

"Jist that, jist that!" cried the old man eagerly, the sandwich trembling in his hand. "Oh, she's terrible fond o' hearin' about kind beasts! I — I'll be greatly obliged if ye'll never tell her about nothin' but — but kind beasts."

"I suspose," said Jim thoughtfully, "a hedgehog is a *sort* of kind beast — when it's good and doesn't steal people's dinners. I'd like to tell Mrs. Sammy about the hedgehog."

"Na, na! Ye canna call a hedgehog a kind beast. 'Tis a terrible cruel beast ——"

"But it's not very big ——"

"Not very big! My! I've seen a hedgehog as big as — as — as ——" Mr. Girdwood paused, looking rather helpless. After all, he did not want to tell more falsehoods than he could help. "I — I hope ye'll never tell her about the hedgehog," he said at last feebly.

Jim appeared far from satisfied. "Would it frighten her?" he demanded.

"Not exac'ly; but — but ——" And then Mr. Girdwood received one of the inspirations of his life. In a hoarse whisper —"James Crow, I'll tell ye why ye're not to tell her about the hedgehog!"

"Why?"

"Because she canna bear hearin' about *jaggy* beasts. It — it mak's her creep."

"On the floor?" said Jim, highly interested.

"Na, na; it mak's her flesh creep, I should ha' said — her flesh, ye ken."

"But where does it creep?"

"Aw — it jist creeps."

"Does it hurt?"

"Maybe it doesna exac'ly hurt, but ——"

"Does her nose creep, too?"

"'Tis like as not," replied Mr. Girdwood very solemnly and impressively. "*All* her flesh creeps."

"If it doesn't hurt, I think I'd like to tell Mrs. Sammy about the hedgehog," said Jim.

Just then Nevis came over with a mug of soup in one hand and another of milk in the other.

"Thank ye, thank ye," the old man stammered, "but I think I best be steppin'——"

"Doody," said Jim, who already enjoyed a vision of Miss Girdwood's nose making a slow circuit of her head, "shall we go to see Mrs. Sammy after lunch?"

"Oh, I don't think we'll trouble Miss Girdwood to-day. We're going to examine the pools when the tide goes out, you know; and then, you remember, you are going to have tea with Daisy ——"

"But I'd like to see her just for a minute, Doody."

"Well, well, we shall see." Nevis turned with a smile to Mr. Girdwood. "Your sister has quite captured his heart, but she must not allow him to intrude whenever the spirit moves him in her direction."

Mr. Girdwood mumbled something incoherent, finished his sandwich and gulped his soup.

"I best be goin', sir," he said, slowly rising. "Maybe I'll see ye another time."

"Oh, don't go away, Mr. Sammy," the boy pleaded. "Stay and help us to look for things in the pools when the tide goes out."

But Mr. Girdwood would not be persuaded.

"Thank ye, James Crow, but I best be goin'," he said in a mournful voice. "I'm thinkin' 'tis bad for my rheumatis hereabouts. I — I'll maybe see ye an' yer doody another time."

Presently, with the aid of his staff, he was toddling up the rough track of a cleft in the cliff.

"Jim Crow," said Nevis kindly, "you must try to remember that very old people like Mr. Sammy don't always want to talk; sometimes they want to sit quiet. If you had left him alone for a little while, he might have stayed longer. You see?"

Jim nodded, and for a moment or two was silent. Then, with a smile —"I 'spect you'll get a siprise, Doody, when we go to see Mrs. Sammy afterwards."

"What sort of surprise, old chap?"

Jim laughed and applied himself to his sandwich and milk.

. . . . . .

Mr. Girdwood approached his home even more slowly than his aged limbs required. He was in a sorry plight of mind. Not for a moment did he

blame Jim Crow, but he did wish that the boy had not repeated his stories to Mr. Nevis. It was not that Mr. Nevis had laughed at his stories, though that was bad enough; but Mr. Girdwood was uneasy lest Mr. Nevis might sooner or later object to his son's companionship with a person who had lately become almost a stranger to the truth. Moreover, for the last week Elizabeth, alarmed at his suddenly developed powers of imagination, had been urging him to drop his African adventures altogether and to entertain "the laddie" with tales having at least some foundation in fact. Unfortunately such efforts had been but coldly received by Jim, who continued to demand the aforesaid adventures, which, truth to tell, the old man enjoyed hugely in the hour of their recital, being carried away, so to speak, on the wings of his own inventions, though afterwards he became oppressed with the dread of his sister learning how far he had gone on the downward way. He knew that, so far, only the merest fragments of his "adventures" had been retailed to her. But even so she had taken fright. What would happen were a single "complete story" to reach her ears he dared not contemplate.

"'Tis the big fool ye are, Samuel Girdwood," he said to himself, "talkin' to James Crow about makin' her flesh creep. Now he'll be tellin' her about the hedgehog, for sure — an' 'tis natural

enough for him to want to see it creepin', poor lad. But he'll not see nothin'—an' then he'll be blamin' me for deceivin' him, an' Elizabeth'll be blamin' me for the same as well as for the falsehoods about the hedgehog. . . . Oh, 'tis a fine mess ye've got yersel' into, Samuel Girdwood!"

An astonished Miss Girdwood opened the cottage door.

"I thought ye wasna comin' home," she began. Then anxiously—"What's ado, Samuel? Are ye sick?"

He shook his head. "Let me in, an' hold yer tongue!" A minute later he was in his armchair. "Na, na. Tak' yer own denner, woman. I've had all I want. I'm not hungry."

But she set a basin of soup on the table at his elbow. "Jist leave it, if ye dinna want it. Was ye feelin' cold on the shore? I hope yer rheumatis ——"

"Eat yer denner, an' never mind me. . . . James Crow'll maybe be here the day," he announced abruptly after a longish silence.

"Well, well," she said, pleasure shining through her perplexity. "I was feart you an' him had cast out," she went on with a faint laugh. "I wondered, when I seen ye comin' up the road ——"

"James Crow's maybe comin' to see yer flesh creep," he said, and groaned.

"What?" The spoon fell from her fingers.

His explanation and confession, which included the Adventure of the Hedgehog, occupied considerable time. The soup was cold when Mr. Girdwood sank back in his chair with another groan.

To his amazement she did not upbraid him. But there was a solemn silence during which she looked puzzled and perhaps a little sad.

"'Tis the worst of all my stories, Elizabeth," he said at last, apologetically. "'Tis the fullest wi' falsehoods of them all. That's how I — I didna want ye to hear about it."

Of a sudden she laughed. "Oh, Samuel," she cried, "I wish I had seen ye cuffin' its ears!"

Mr. Girdwood immediately looked offended.

"'Twas you that started me at the stories, anyway," he muttered.

She was grave again. "But surely I tried to stop ye goin' over far, Samuel."

"'Tis likely that Eve said something the same to Adam — after he had ett his bit o' the apple."

She accepted the remark without showing resentment. "I was thinkin' about yer stories all the mornin', Samuel," she said gently, "an' I got the notion that the tellin' o' them wasna maybe so bad a sin after all. Think o' the folks that spends their lifes writin' story-books! Ye're nothin' to them, Samuel, are ye? An' I've seen plenty story-books

in the Manse. So I decided to say never a word more to ye about tellin' James Crow stories, excep' that I hope ye'll not get into the habit when James Crow's not there. So, Samuel dearie ——"

Alas! How speedily does our repentance evaporate when we find we are to escape a scolding after all. There was quite an arrogant snap in Samuel's voice as he interrupted her with —

"That's not the p'int, woman, that's not the p'int!"

"An' what's the p'int?" she mildly inquired.

"The p'int's jist this, that ye canna mak' ye flesh creep for James Crow. That's the p'int!"

"Mercy on us! Did ye tell the laddie he would see it creepin'?"

"He expec's to see it, anyway — ay, an' yer nose movin'——"

"My nose movin'! Aw, Samuel ——"

"I — I tried to save ye, woman." (Oh, Mr. Girdwood!)

"My nose movin'! . . . An' he's goin' to tell me about yer hedgehog to mak' my flesh creep. Aw, the wee man! — he'll be that disap-p'inted!"

"Ay; for ye canna move yer nose an inch," said Mr. Girdwood, as if he could move his an ell. "An' he'll be blamin' me for deceivin' him, for I doubt he's set his heart on seein' it creep."

"Look, Samuel," said Miss Girdwood suddenly.

"That's not movin' yer nose; that's jist makin' a face. Like as not, James Crow'll wash his hands o' me after this."

Miss Girdwood sighed helplessly. "'Tis a terrible thing to disapp'int a little one," she murmured.

"'Tis all that," said Samuel, and groaned.

Next moment he started as, with a sharp cry, his sister rose and crossed the kitchen floor.

"Are they comin'?" he asked anxiously.

"Whisht, Samuel. Dinna speak."

The old woman was peering into the small mirror over the sink.

A minute passed, and then she emitted a gay little cackle.

"'Tis better'n nothin'," she whispered; "an' maybe James Crow'll be satisfied ——"

"What d'ye mean, Elizabeth?"

"Oh, Samuel," she said, half laughing, half sobbing, "d'ye not mind when I was a lassie? . . . I was feart I had forgot the way — but I can do it yet — an' I'm sure 'tis fifty year since I done it last ——"

"Do what, woman?"

"Move my ears, Samuel, move my ears!"

. . . . . .

It turned out to be one of the most entertaining half-hours of Jim's life.

He was simply and frankly delighted.

So was Miss Girdwood.

So also might have been Mr. Girdwood, had he not become jealous of his sister's accomplishment.

"BUT I don't want to be a sausage," the little girl protested; "I want to be a princess."

"Well, Daisy, you shall be a princess after you've been a sausage for ten years," said Jim patiently. "Doody, tell her the story again."

They were in the Magic Wood once more, and the boy was keenly desirous of acting the fairy tale which his father had invented, more or less, a few evenings ago. In extenuation of its absurdity may be mentioned the fact that at its first recital the teller had been harassed by certain worldly cares, while the listener had previously been wearying for his absent mother.

"I think you might tell it yourself," said Nevis, who was sitting a little way off, barely within earshot, making a water-colour sketch.

"Ay, tell it yersel', James Crow," put in Mr. Girdwood. He had arrived quite unexpectedly a few minutes ago, and was now enjoying a pipe of the artist's tobacco. "'Tis a long time since I heard ye tell a story."

"Yes," said Daisy, seating herself on the grass

with her doll. "Tell it yourself, Jim Crow. But I want to be a princess."

The requests were so sincere that Jim did not become self-conscious.

"I'll tell you," he said, and solemnly he held up his right forefinger. "Listen! Pay great intention. Mr. Sammy, don't laugh with your whiskers!"

Mr. Girdwood checked his grin and murmured an apology.

"Now I'll begin. Daisy, don't speak that silly way to your doll."

"I was putting her to sleep. . . . She's sleeping now."

"Well — once upon a time there was a little girl, and her doody was a king. He was a nice kind doody, 'cept when he hadn't enough pennies. He used to tell the little girl lovely stories about fairies. I suspose he would have told her about gnomes and pixies and elfs and Mr. Fun-Owl, if he had known about them. But, you see, he didn't. *So* one day the little girl came running to his throne and asked him to tell her a fairy tale. But the king hadn't enough pennies that day, and he was fearful cross. He said: 'Snuff and tonsense!'— please don't make fun-noises, Mr. Sammy — he said: 'Snuff and tonsense! I'm not going to tell you any more fairy tales, 'cause you're too old, and, 'sides, there

aren't any fairies!' And whenever he said that, a fairy bounced into the room out of nowhere. And it was a wicked fairy! And the wicked fairy said: 'Mr. King, did I hear you say there wasn't any fairies?' And the king got angrier than ever, and he said: 'Of course! Fairies are just snuff and tonsense!'——"

"Maybe," Mr. Girdwood ventured gently, "ye'll be meanin' 'stuff and nonsense,' James Crow."

"No, I don't. Doody says 'snuff and tonsense!' Please keep very quiet, Mr. Sammy."

Mr. Girdwood apologized once more, adding, "'Tis a fine story, to be sure."

"Yes, it is," agreed Jim heartily. "Wait till you hear it. . . . When the king said that, the wicked fairy got very angry too, and waved her wand, and cried, 'Look at your little girl, Mr. King!' And the king looked, and lo! and behold! his little girl was turned into a sausage. And she rolled on the floor, 'cause she couldn't stand."

"A sassige!" murmured Mr. Girdwood.

"Why couldn't she stand?" inquired Daisy.

"Sausages have no feet; they've got always to lie down or roll about. . . . And then the wicked fairy went away. But before she went away she said: 'Mr. King, your little girl will be a sausage till a handsome prince kisses her.' Then the king was in a fearful state, and sent soldiers and

p'licemen to catch the wicked fairy. But they couldn't find her anywhere. And then the doctor came, but *he* couldn't do anything, 'cause a sausage can't put out its tongue and you can't feel its pulse. So the doctor shook his head and said — Doody, what did the doctor say?"

"What doctor?" Nevis had become absorbed in his work.

"The doctor that came to the little sausage girl."

"Ah," said Nevis, "he just said: 'Avoid bow-wows and pussy-cats — one guinea — good-morning'— and went away."

"Yes," Jim resumed, "that's what he said. And the king was in a fearful state, and so was the queen. Everybody was in a fearful state, 'cept the little sausage girl ——"

"Why wasn't she in a fearful state?" Daisy inquired.

"'Cause she was a sausage. Sausages don't know anything," Jim explained, a trifle impatiently.

"About what size would she be, James Crow?" Mr. Girdwood respectfully asked.

"Doody, what size was she?"

"About four inches and three quarters."

"She was about four inches and three quarters, Mr. Sammy, and she had a little tweaky thing at each end. For, you see, she was really turned into a sausage."

"'Tis a grand story, for sure," murmured the old man, realizing that his African Adventures had not been so extravagant after all.

"And what happened next?" said Daisy.

"You have a dreadful bad rememory, Daisy. You couldn't have been listening the last time, when Doody told it. Listen now!" Jim held up a small but impressive forefinger. "Are you listening? Are you paying great intention?"

"Yes, Jim," she said meekly.

"Well, I'll tell you what happened next. The king sent for all the wise old doodies in the land, and all the wise old doodies came. And some of them had magic. Then the king said: 'If you don't turn this sausage into my little girl in three days, you'll get your heads cut off.' So the wise old doodies tried very, very hard for three days, but they couldn't turn the sausage into a little girl — they couldn't even turn it into a baby. And they went to the king and said they were awful sorry they couldn't do anything, but it was the first time they had ever found anything too difficult for them, and they hoped the king wouldn't cut off their heads, 'cause their heads were so full of wiseness, and they didn't really know what they would do without them.

"So the king thought for a long time and said: 'Very well, I shan't cut off your heads; I'll just cut

off your bodies. Good-morning.' And they said — Doody, what did they say?"

"Who?"

"The old doodies — when the king said he would just cut off their bodies."

"Oh, they merely said: 'Thank you very much, your good gracious majesty; fare thee pump'— and passed out."

"Yes; that's what they said, and 'fare thee pump' means 'good-bye,' Mr. Sammy."

"And what happened next?" Daisy inquired.

"I'm going to tell you. But before it happened the king and queen were in a fearful state. The king was so sorry he had been cross, and the queen was so sorry she had made him cross with spending too many pennies; and she said it was all *her* fault, but the king said it was all *his*. And then they kissed each other and said it was all the dressmaker's fault. And they sent people to the dressmaker to dress her in one of her own dresses; and when she was dressed she couldn't walk, and she couldn't sit down, and when she fell she couldn't get up. And so *she* had to roll about like a sausage, too. And the queen said she could whistle for her 'candalous old account. And ever since the dressmaker has been trying to learn to whistle; but she can't do it, and Doody thinks she never will, 'cause

she hasn't the face. So she just rolls about and eats pins."

"Preserve us!" ejaculated Mr. Girdwood.

"Hush!" said Jim, forefinger up again. "And so the poor king and queen didn't know what to do about their little sausage girl. You see, *she* couldn't do anything. She couldn't eat, and she couldn't go to school or have music lessons, and she couldn't play any games. She couldn't do anything at all."

"Had she any clothes?" This from Daisy.

"No; 'cause, you see, the queen didn't know which end to put them on at; and, 'sides, the things would slip off as soon as they was put on. So the king and queen bought a beautiful little meat-safe all painted green and a dozen — Doody, a dozen what?"

"Muffin dishes," replied Nevis, who happened to be listening at the moment.

"A dozen beautiful muffin-dishes — that was it. And the little sausage-girl lived in the meat-safe and got a clean plate to lie on every two hours, with fresh parsley all round her ——"

"It must have been awful cold," said Daisy.

"She pifered it cold. Once, when it was winter, the nurse gave her a hot dish, and she — she prespired awful — didn't she, Doody?"

"You might leave that bit out, Jim Crow," said Nevis.

"Why, Doody?"

"To oblige me. It isn't so nice as I thought it was."

"Very well," said Jim agreeably. "And so," he resumed, "the nurse got beans, and very nearly got her head cut off, too, and the king and queen hated the sight of gravy ever after. And every day they brought handsome princes to the meat-safe, and opened the door, and let them look at the sausage. But none of the handsome princes ever wanted to kiss it, 'cause, you see, princes don't care for sausages. They think sausages are — Doody, what do they think sausages are?"

"Vulgar. But just tell the story in your own words, old Crow."

"So I do, but sometimes I forget. . . . And so the king and queen were very mis'rable, for they thought their little girl would have to be a sausage always and always. And the handsome princes just sniffed and went away. What comes next, Doody?"

"And ten long years went slowly past," said Nevis solemnly.

"Didn't she grow any bigger?" inquired Daisy, wide of eye.

"'Course not! Sausages don't grow! And ten

long years went slowly past," Jim quoted, and looked to his father for guidance.

"Now," said Nevis, "you tell how on fine days ——"

"Oh, yes, I remember now, Doody. . . . Listen! On fine days the king and queen took her out to get some fresh air. She couldn't walk, you know; but she could roll splendidly. And there was a lovely smooth, green hill near the palace, and they carried her up to the top and she rolled down to the bottom. But before they took her out of the palace, they always fired guns and rockets and banged gongs and blew whistles and trumpets, and all the people round about had to keep their bow-wows and pussy-cats locked up in their houses."

"Deed, ay!" said Mr. Girdwood, with a chuckle; "the dogs an' cats would ha' made short work o' a sassige!"

"But it's nothing to laugh at, Mr. Sammy," Jim returned reprovingly. "Please pay great intention, 'cause I'm coming to *the* exciting part. Well, one day — one fine day — the king and queen carried the little sausage girl to the top of the hill. And the king cried: 'One, two, three and away!'— and the little sausage girl began to roll down. And she rolled and she rolled and she rolled; and the queen clapped her hands and cried: 'Faster, darling, faster!' And the king and queen laughed, 'cause

their little sausage girl looked *so* happy when she was rolling. But all at once they stopped laughing, for what did they see coming up the hill "— Jim's finger went up and his gaze grew very grave —" what *did* they see, but a great, big, huge, brown bow-wow! And then the queen cried, 'Help! fire! robbers!' and the king cried: 'Bad dog! Go home, sir!' But the bow-wow only said 'Bowf!' and ran to meet the little sausage girl. And the little sausage girl rolled to meet the bow-wow. And the king and queen began to run, but the king tripped on his watch-chain, and the queen's dress was too tight, and they both fell and rolled and rolled and rolled. And the king cried: 'Good dog! Poor fellow! Biscuits, biscuits!' and the queen cried 'Rats and mice!'— but the bow-wow said nothing but 'Bowf!' and ran to meet the little sausage girl. And the little sausage girl rolled to meet the bow-wow; and she rolled far faster than the king and queen. What next, Doody?"

"Then the king and queen bumped ——"

"Oh, yes!— The king and queen bumped together with their heads, and stopped rolling and sat up and rubbed their heads. And then they saw their little sausage girl in the bow-wow's paws. And they cried 'Cæsar, Tiger, Pompom, Fido!' and all sorts of names, but the bow-wow said nothing but 'Bowf!' and put down his nose to the little

sausage girl. And lo! and behold! the little sausage girl jumped out of her skin and became a beautiful princess with golden hair, and the brown bow-wow jumped out of *his* skin and became a handsome prince, and they were married and lived happy ever after. And that's all the story. *Now* let's play at it."

"THE PORTRAIT IS FINISHED"

MR. GIRDWOOD'S portrait was finished at last, and the old man had come to view it. He sat on the chair placed for him by Nevis, who stood behind him. He held Jim's hand. He smiled and made clicking sounds with his tongue, but uttered no word. It was a good portrait: better, perhaps, than the artist realised then; yet it was also a good picture, if only for the retrospection in the old eyes and the hint of wistfulness at the old mouth.

It was Jim who broke the silence, giving the ancient hand a little shake as if to rouse the owner to speech.

"Mr. Sammy, doesn't Doody paint splendid whiskers?"

"To be sure, James Crow, to be sure," Mr. Girdwood slowly and gravely replied, and returned to his gazing and clicking.

"And look at the smoke coming out of the chimney," the boy continued. "Smoke's fearful difficult to paint, Mr. Sammy. And see the pipe in your hand; Doody put it in afterwards — for a siprise. And he put the newspaper on the seat for

a siprise, too. You like having it there, Mr. Sammy — don't you?"

Nevis interposed. "I think, Jim Crow, Mr. Girdwood would take a smoke now. He'll tell you what he likes and doesn't like about the portrait presently. You might fetch my tobacco pouch. I must have left it in the garden."

"All right, Doody; I'll fetch it." Half-way to the door Jim halted and returned. "Doody, I want to whisper."

"What is it, old chap?" said Nevis, bending down.

"Don't let Mr. Sammy say nothing till I come back."

Nevis nodded reassuringly, and the boy ran off. Mr. Girdwood continued to click contentedly. Nevis watched him with a faint smile, then suddenly with keen interest. The pose of the old head and shoulders. . . . Jim's sketching-block was lying on the table. Picking it up Nevis hastily pencilled a rough impression — a mere memorandum, as it were. "I wonder," he said to himself, "why I never tried this sort of thing before."

Then Jim reappeared with the pouch.

"Better have a smoke, Mr. Girdwood," said the artist. "Hand him the tobacco, Jim."

"Smoke, Mr. Sammy," said Jim encouragingly.

"Thank ye, James Crow, thank ye." Mr. Gird-

wood took the pouch, but made no move to get out his pipe.

Several minutes went past. From regarding his aged friend with curiosity Jim fell to eyeing him with perplexity. Presently he took a glance at his father. Nevis was gazing at the old man with (it seemed to his son) a worried look.

Jim went softly from Mr. Girdwood's side and slipped his hand into his father's. It was as if he had said: "Never mind, Doody. *We* know it's good."

Nevis seated himself on the sofa and drew the boy between his knees. "Mr. Girdwood is a critic just now," he said in an undertone, smiling, "and we must never disturb critics, you know."

"I see, Doody," said Jim, not quite comprehending the words, but reassured by the smile. "Do crit — critics always tick like clocks?" he whispered.

"Not always, Jim Crow. But you never know when they'll strike. Look here! Do you know who that is?" Nevis exhibited the rough sketch he had done in the boy's absence.

"A fun-doody," was the prompt reply. "Did you do it for me with your eyes shut?"

Nevis laughed and pocketed the sketch.

"I think," remarked his son, "I could do a funnier one."

"Try," said Nevis, handing him block and pencil, and for a little while Jim forgot about critics.

At last Nevis, who was eager to get back to a canvas he had been engaged on in the garden prior to the old man's arrival, said in his mildest voice —

"Mr. Girdwood, I'm sending your portrait to Glasgow to-morrow, as I'm anxious to have a friend's opinion of it."

Mr. Girdwood appeared to waken up.

"Aw," he said, and scratched his head. "But, sir, yer frien' has never seen *me*. Excuse me for sayin' it, but how can ——?"

"Of course my friend can't tell whether it's a good likeness or not, but he knows good painting from bad."

"Aw," said Mr. Girdwood again. "Ye'll excuse me, but — but d'ye think ye'll maybe get a hunderd pound for the picture?"

Nevis laughed. "Well, I have my doubts," he returned good-humouredly. "As I told you before, portrait painting is hardly in my line."

"Aw," said Mr. Girdwood once more.

"I 'spect Doody will get a hundred pounds," Jim put in.

"I was going to say," the artist continued, "that you might like Miss Girdwood to see it before I pack it up. If she cares to come up ——"

"Na," said Mr. Girdwood firmly.

"You think she wouldn't like it?" asked Nevis, taken aback.

"Mrs. Sammy would love to see it," said Jim, half puzzled, half indignant. "She's been wearying to see it. She told me."

"I dare say she would like fine to see it, James Crow," Mr. Girdwood replied, the least thing stiffly. "But 'twill be better for her not to see it."

"I don't think that's very nice," said Jim.

At this little reproof Mr. Girdwood looked distressed, but said nothing.

"What do you think of the portrait yourself?" Nevis inquired, endeavouring to conceal his annoyance.

"If ye please, sir, I'm just in the midst o' lookin' at it," the old man replied in a curiously pathetic tone.

The artist's irritation departed.

"Come along, Jim," he said briskly. "We'll go out to the garden, and leave Mr. Girdwood to examine his portrait in peace. Fill your pipe, Mr. Girdwood, and take as long as you like. There's no hurry. When you've had enough of the portrait you'll find us outside."

"Thank ye, thank ye," the other murmured, and Jim went with his father, but not quite willingly.

"Do you think Mr. Sammy has got a pain?" the boy inquired the moment the door was shut.

"Possibly his rheumatism is bothering him to-day. Come along, and let me see the new house you've built for Miss Mousie in the garden."

"It's not finished yet, Doody. The drains aren't made yet."

"But surely Miss Mousie won't like living in the house before the drainage is right."

"Oh, yes; she pifers it. So does Mr. Froggie."

"I'm glad to hear it. By the way, what has come over Daisy this morning?"

Jim squeezed his father's hand in a confidential fashion. "I told her not to come till the afternoon, 'cause, you see, I thought *you* would be wanting to play with me this morning."

"Oh," said Nevis, glancing at the unfinished work on his easel.

"Come and help me to make drains," urged Jim, pointing to a wondrous erection of sticks, stones and soil in a corner of the garden.

"Do you think I can afford the time to make drains this morning, old chap? You see, I don't get any pennies for making drains, and you know we want to make as many pennies as we can before mother comes home."

"I think mother would like you to make drains too — just for a little while, Doody," the boy said softly.

"I shouldn't wonder," yielded Nevis. "All right, I'm at your service for half-an-hour."

"Come on, then!" cried Jim delightedly, and added: "If you would like to be excited, we can have an earthquake afterwards."

"But what would Miss Mousie say to that?"

"Oh, she simply loves earthquakes. So does Mr. Froggie. Let's run, Doody!"

Presently they were very busy indeed.

"You must show Mr. Sammy this wonderful house," Nevis remarked when the drains, consisting of disused lemonade bottles and jelly jars were — in Jim's opinion — well and truly laid.

"I 'spect he'll like it. I'm going to build one in his garden some day. Shall I call him to come now?"

"No, no; leave him alone a little while longer."

"All right, Doody. But you're not going to paint yet?"

"Not just yet. We'll take a walk round and see the flowers growing."

"Yes! . . . D'you know, Doody, I think I know why Mr. Sammy was cross!"

"Why, Jim Crow?"

"'Cause he doesn't want the picture to go away."

"Perhaps you're right. But, you remember, he didn't want Mrs. Sammy to see it."

"I suspose he didn't want her to be sorry too.

But p'r'aps not; p'r'aps he was afraid she would want a picture of herself."

Nevis smiled. "Then you think he likes his portrait?"

Jim's face was grave. "He'd better!" he said distinctly.

"Loyal Jim Crow! . . . Well, if he really does like it, don't you think we ought to tell him about the water-colour copy of his portrait for himself?"

"But then it won't be a siprise," objected Jim, who was a great believer in surprises.

"Still, though his picture isn't quite ready, he would be surprised to be told he was going to get it."

Jim nodded. "I'll go in and tell him now."

"No; wait till we're quite sure that he does like the portrait," said Nevis. "Would you mind if I did a little work now?"

"No. I'll come and stay beside you."

"Don't you want to do anything?"

"No. Just stay beside you. . . . Doody."

"Yes?"

"If you was to make a fearful heap of pennies, would it make mother come home soon?"

Nevis selected a brush. "I'm afraid all the pennies in the world wouldn't do that, old Crow," he said gently. "Because, you understand, it's the be-

ing away with Aunt Margaret that is making mother well and strong. Pennies have nothing to do with that. But we must have patience. She'll be home in two months now."

"How long is two months?"

"Sixty days."

"How many days is sixty days?"

"You'll learn all that when you go to school," said Nevis, squeezing a tube of cobalt.

Jim sighed. "I don't think pennies are much good after all, Doody."

"Not always. But supposing we got a fearful heap of pennies, Jim Crow ——"

"What, Doody?"

"Why, you and I could get on board a big steamer and sail away to meet mother and bring her home."

"Oh! . . . wouldn't my savings help?"

Just then Mr. Girdwood came slowly from the house. His gait and appearance suggested profound dejection.

"Shall I tell him now?" whispered Jim.

"Not yet." Nevis waved his brush. "Come away and sit down, Mr. Girdwood. I don't want you to talk about the picture unless you feel disposed; but I do want you to tell me what I'm to call it. Would you prefer 'Samuel Girdwood —

Oldest Inhabitant,' or simply 'The Oldest Inhabitant'?"

Mr. Girdwood seated himself on the grassy bank near by and bowed his head. "'Tis a fine picture," he murmured.

"But what about the title?"

"'Tis a great honour — a great honour, to be sure," said the old man sorrowfully.

"You would like your name in the title, then?"

Mr. Girdwood sighed. "'Twould be a fine thing to ha' my name away out in the world yonder — a great honour, surely."

"Very well, thank you. The portrait is called 'Samuel Girdwood — Oldest Inhabitant.'"

"Thank ye, thank ye."

"And if I get a hundred pounds for it, I'll let you know."

"Thank ye, thank ye. . . . But I doubt none o' the folk in Clure Bay'd believe me — unless I was to show them yer letter, sir."

"You would be welcome to show them my letter," said Nevis pleasantly. "I only hope I may have reason to write it."

"*I'll* write you a Froggie letter, Mr. Sammy," said Jim kindly.

"Thank ye, James Crow. But I was meanin', sir, that none o' the folk would believe *my* portrait

was worth a hunderd pound, unless I could prove it."

"I quite understand, Mr. Girdwood, though I think you are too modest. Now, tell me, haven't you changed your mind about letting your sister see the portrait before it goes to Glasgow?"

Mr. Girdwood shook his head. "'Twill be best for her not to see it. But"— he went on rather hurriedly —"I'm terrible obliged to ye, sir, for pentin' it. 'Tis a fine pictur', to be sure." He cleared his throat. "I noticed ye had mended the bit pane that was cracked in the kitchen window. 'Tis wonderful, an' I'm terrible obliged — terrible obliged. I knowed everything in the picture —'cept the bit pane." He groaned and relapsed into gloomy silence.

Nevis nodded to his son and then at the bent figure.

Jim got up eagerly and laid a hand on Mr. Girdwood's arm.

"Do *you* know, Mr. Sammy, Doody has *nearly* finished another picture with water-colours, and it's the same as your portrait, and it's for your very own self. Doody was going to give you it for a siprise for being so kind to me, but p'r'aps it's a siprise to hear about it. Is it?"

It was.

At last —"'Tis far too kind ye are — you, James

Crow, an' yer doody — far too kind — far too kind. An' Elizabeth'll be that proud."

And a little later —" Maybe, after all, 'twouldna hurt Elizabeth to see the one ye're sendin' away. I'll fetch her to see it, sir, afore ye pack it up, if ye please, sir. Maybe I'll fetch two or three o' the neighbours likewise. 'Tis a great honour, to be sure." He rose in haste. " I'll best away an' tell Elizabeth to get hersel' dressed."

They watched him depart with astonishing lightness of step.

" I'm awfully hungry, Doody," said Jim.

" We must put that right at once," said Nevis, getting up. " I hope Mr. Sammy doesn't bring along the whole population this afternoon."

Mr. Girdwood did not go quite so far as that. He allowed the babies, a few mothers, and a man with a broken leg to stay at home.

THE DEPARTURE OF DAISY

"I'M going away to-morrow."

Daisy sitting on the grass, her doll Eva in one arm and Miss Busted Tewken in the other, made the announcement to the seat of Jim's little white pants.

Jim was extremely busy. Miss Mousie and Mr. Froggie were expecting some children shortly — per Dr. Goose — and it had become necessary to add a storey to the garden residence. During the morning hours Daisy had been a willing assistant, and Jim had been too polite to inform her that she knocked down more than she built up; but he had been relieved when she had departed to her aunt's for dinner. She had no head for building, and, moreover, she had hurt his feelings by declining to see in an old broken bicycle lamp, which he greatly prized, a handsome gas stove for Miss Mousie's kitchen. Now that she had unexpectedly returned, he hoped she would not want to help in any way; and while his little grudge against her was as good as forgotten, he continued to labour earnestly and

industriously as if to show her that he desired to be independent in his task.

"I'm going away to-morrow, Jim Crow," she said again.

"Oh, are you, Daisy?" His attention was all on a fragment of slate in his left hand.

"Yes; I'm going home. Auntie had a letter at dinner-time. I'm going with the first train to-morrow morning."

"Oh, are you?" Jim began to scrape the slate with a palette-knife recently borrowed from his father, with the absent-minded permission of the latter. "I'm afraid I shan't have Miss Mousie's house ready for you to see."

"I've got a new little sister," said Daisy. "I'm going home to see her."

"Are you? I haven't got the roof finished yet, and then I've got to make the bath-room. It's going to be a splendid bath-room, with a water bath for Miss Mousie and a mud one for Mr. Froggie. Miss Mousie's is to be very long 'cause of her tail, and Mr. Froggie's is to be very short 'cause he has no legs."

There was a short pause while Jim fitted the slate in position.

"My new little sister," said Daisy, "is very, very beautiful, and she is so good; she hardly ever cries.

She is going to have the loveliest fair hair — like Eva's."

"Miss Mousie's children are going to have brown hair. . . . Did Dr. Goose bring your new little sister?" The inquiry was made with a faint increase of interest.

"Of course not!" Daisy returned indignantly. "Dr. Tobin brought her."

"Miss Mousie pifers Dr. Goose. So does Mr. Froggie. So do I," said Jim equably, and proceeded to select another fragment of slate.

"Dr. Tobin brought my new little sister from away up in the skies."

"Has he wings like Dr. Goose?"

"I don't believe there's any Dr. Goose!" cried Daisy.

Jim was not disturbed. "You believe awful few things," he said placidly; "I suspose you can't help it."

"But *you've* never seen Dr. Goose."

"That's 'cause he's un — unvisible. *You've* never seen Dr. Toby flying about in the skies — have you?"

"N — no," sighed Daisy reluctantly. "But his name isn't Toby," she added, as though that made a difference; "it's Tobin."

"Toby is much nicer."

"It isn't!"

Jim gave her a brief glance. "What makes you so cross?" he mildly asked. "Have you got a pain?"

"You're a rude thing!" murmured Daisy, and blushed behind Miss Busted Tewken.

Possibly Jim missed the remark. He had returned to his housebuilding, and for some minutes there was silence.

Then—"My new little sister is very healthy," Daisy observed. "The nurse says she never saw a finer, healthier child. I hope mummy will call her Gladys."

"Why? 'Cause she's glad?"

"No, of course not. Gladys is a lovely name. I wish I had been called Gladys."

"I like Daisy better," said Jim carelessly.

"Do you really, Jim Crow?"

"Yes; but you're not very like a daisy."

There was another silence.

"Would you like me to help you?" she inquired.

Jim pretended not to hear.

Daisy sighed. "I wish my new little sister had been a little boy," she said in a far away voice.

"Do you? You should ask the doctor to change her."

"He couldn't do that!"

"Dr. Goose could. He often changes babies for Miss Mousie. But he nearly always brings what

she orders. She's having three of each sort this time."

"I don't believe ——" she began, and stopped short. "But I don't think mummy would want to change. Perhaps I shan't either, when I get home."

"Perhaps you won't," he agreed. "Now the roof is nearly finished. Afterwards I'll let you make some mud for Mr. Froggie's bath.— You'll like doing that — won't you, Daisy?"

"Yes, thank you. But perhaps there won't be time. I've got to go home soon."

"Oh, well, it doesn't matter."

After a pause —"I'm going away with the *first* train to-morrow," she said.

"Are you?"

"And I'm just awful glad! I hate this place!"

"I like it. Why do you hate it, Daisy?"

"I — I don't know, but I hate it."

"That's like me and pea-soup. I don't know why, but I hate it — I simply loase it! Do you like pea-soup?"

In a breaking voice she said: "I'm afraid I can never marry you."

"Never mind, Daisy. It doesn't matter," he returned kindly.

"But — but you once said you would marry me."

"But I said I would marry Mrs. Sammy first —

so it doesn't matter in the least — it really doesn't."

Daisy made one more effort.

"Don't you wish you had a little sister?"

"Yes," he replied, putting the last slate in its place.

"Perhaps you would like me for a little sister."

Jim tapped the slate in a professional manner. "I think I'd pifer a small brother," he said at last.

Whereupon Miss Daisy sobbed aloud.

Jim was regarding her with utter bewilderment when his father came from the house bearing a treat — a dish of ripe pears — for the children.

Failing to get any explanation from his son, Nevis applied soothing words to Daisy, who presently poured forth her griefs.

"He doesn't want to marry me — and he doesn't want me for his little sister — and he doesn't want me to help him —"

"Doody, I said she could make mud for Mr. Froggie's bath."

"— and I'm going away to-morrow — and I came to say good-bye — and I brought Miss B — Busted Tewken for Jim to say good-bye to — and I didn't want to make mud ——"

"But, Doody, she said ——"

"Hush, Jim! I'm afraid you've been unkind to Daisy," said Nevis, a trifle sternly.

"Oh, but he didn't mean it, he didn't mean it," she cried at once.

"Did you not mean it?" Nevis demanded of his son.

"'Course not!" replied Jim promptly. "And I don't know what she's crying for. She's awful stupid, Doody."

"Jim!" his father said warningly.

"I'm not stupid!" wailed Daisy, with a fresh flow of tears. "I'm not stupid, Jim. Say I'm not."

"Well, you're not," he admitted, softening at her distress.

"Then say you're sorry," said Nevis.

"But I'm not. . . . But I'll give her a kiss, if she likes, and lend her my hanky."

"Do you wish him to give you a kiss, my dear?" asked Nevis.

"Yes, please — and his hanky, too," she whispered.

The hanky was rather earthy, but Daisy made no objections. Then Jim knelt down on the grass and kissed her.

"I think I'm sorry, Doody," he remarked. "But I don't know what for. . . . What a nice smell you've got, Daisy. Have you been taking your auntie's perfume again?"

"It was for Eva," she said in an unsteady voice.

"And I put some on Miss Busted Tewken, too. Smell her!"

After the contact with his old fluffy friend Jim looked grave.

"Do you think Miss Busted Tewken wants to go away from here?" he asked.

"I promise to be very kind to her, Jim Crow," she replied. "*I* don't want to go away now — except to see mummy and daddy and the little new sister."

Jim made no response, but continued to gaze at Miss Busted Tewken until Nevis interposed with the question —

"Well, who says a pear?"

. . . . . .

Nevis found an opportunity of privately admonishing his son to the effect that as it was Daisy's last visit he ought to be specially kind to her and do everything to please her.

"All right, Doody," said Jim.

And ere long he permitted her to build chimneys on the Mousie-Froggie residence, and only kept his mouth very tightly shut and his hands clenched when, thanks to their deplorable construction, the chimneys fell and wrecked most of his day's work.

Daisy was regretful enough, but blamed the mishap on the silly stones and offered to build them up again, but Jim pretended not to hear, and turned

away lest she should see his face. To some extent she retrieved her worth in his opinion by discovering, a little later, a delightful patch of bluish clay — a substance the boy had been long and eagerly seeking; but he would have esteemed her still more had she taken part in the manipulation of the clay into objects of use and ornament for the aforesaid residence.

However, on the whole, the afternoon passed happily enough. Daisy stayed to tea, and would have stayed much longer had not her aunt appeared to take her away.

"It seems cruel to part children when they are so happy together," remarked Miss Mingay to Nevis. "They are just like sweethearts," she added, with a sentimental smile. "I hope the parting won't break their little hearts."

Nevis, who had looked after the children together five times for once that Miss Mingay had troubled herself about them, echoed the hope the least thing dryly.

"It is such a pity," the lady went on, "that your little boy has no little playmate. Does he know any little boys at home?"

"Oh, yes; but when they are not available, it is wonderful how he endures his parents."

"Ah," she murmured, "I have always been a great believer in children mixing as much as pos-

sible with other children and not seeing too much of their parents."

Nevis smiled without replying.

Presently Miss Mingay commanded Daisy to make her farewells, and after ten minutes or so Daisy, satisfied that she had inspected every one of Jim's possessions, consented to go.

At the door Nevis kissed her and slipped a piece of silver into her hand.

"Good-bye, little girl," he said tenderly.

"Aren't you going to kiss Jim?" inquired Miss Mingay of her niece, observing that the boy was gazing solemnly at the latter.

"Jim!" said his father.

Daisy approached boldly, but her lip trembled.

"Kiss Eva first, Jim Crow," she said.

"No, thank you. But I'll kiss you ——"

He kissed her once.

"— and Miss Busted Tewken."

He kissed *her* twice.

Then he clutched his father's hand, while Daisy, guided by her aunt, went weeping away.

While Jim, a little later, was being put to bed, he suddenly threw his arms round his father's neck.

"Oh, Doody, it's *so* nice to be alone. I don't want nobody but you — and Muzzer."

Nevis held his son close. "Oh, Jim Crow," he said to himself, "if there was only the slightest possibility of your saying that — a few years hence!"

MR. GIRDWOOD WINS A PRIZE

"I BEST gang up an' tell him," said Mr. Girdwood suddenly, turning from the kitchen window. "I'm sayin', I best gang up an' tell Mr. Nevis."

"Tell him what?" said Miss Girdwood, the least thing impatiently.

"Tell him about that man that's been pentin' the castel since nine o'clock." And Mr. Girdwood took his bonnet from its nail.

"Mr. Nevis isna heedin' if a score o' men was pentin' the castel. He couldna stop them, anyway."

"A' the same, I best gang up an' tell him."

"Ye best bide where ye are, Samuel. Ye've been like a hen on a het girdle since breakfast-time. Mr. Nevis'll never be in the house on a fine day like this. Ye dinna ken where to find him."

"He'll be in the Magic Wood. An' if he's not there, he'll be on the shore. I best gang up an' tell him."

"Maybe he's not wantin' ye." She regretted the words immediately. For on this occasion Mr. Gird-

wood did not rudely order his sister to "clay up." Quite humbly he said —

"Maybe ye're right, Elizabeth." He sighed and replaced his bonnet on the nail, and went slowly to his seat by the fireside. "'Tis most likely ye're right."

Miss Girdwood paused in her task of scrubbing the dresser, and regarded her brother with perplexity.

"Is there anything wrong wi' ye, Samuel?" she asked at last. "Are ye sick?"

For an instant an angry retort seemed inevitable. Then, "Na, there's nothin' wrong wi' me," he said quietly.

Her perplexity increased. "'Tis a fine day," she said. "Are ye not for the garden?"

He got up, saying, "Ay, I'll sit in the garden," and went out in a listless fashion.

Miss Girdwood resumed her scrubbing, but halted at the end of a couple of minutes. "What's ado wi' him?" she asked herself. Presently she stepped over to the door.

"Samuel," she said softly, "I — I wasna meanin' to be cross wi' ye."

"'Twas no matter," he returned; "'twas no matter at all, Elizabeth. Never heed about me."

This humility was too much for the old woman.

"But I doubt there's something wrong wi' ye, Samuel."

He took out his pipe, looked at it, shook his head, and replaced it in his pocket.

"An' I didna mean for to keep ye from goin' to see Mr. Nevis, if yer heart was set on it," she continued. "Maybe the walk would be good for ye."

Unseen by her Mr. Girdwood clenched his fists. "I best bide where I am," he murmured, and groaned.

She regarded him in a stupefied fashion. "Samuel, dearie," she said at last, "I canna understand ye."

Mr. Girdwood, looking as if he would burst, held his peace.

"Samuel, dearie," she ventured again, "I'm vexed I said Mr. Nevis wouldna maybe want ye, for he's aye gled to see ye, an' so is James Crow. Will ye not tak' a walk ——"

Mr. Girdwood hoisted a fist high in air. "Woman," he began in a terrible voice. Then the fist fell weakly, and once more he groaned and gently sighed. "Never heed about me, Elizabeth, never heed about me. Ye asked me to bide here, an' I'm goin' to bide here. I — I — prefer bidin' here. I'm sayin' I prefer bidin' here to — to please

ye. So ye can gang back to yer work in the house."

"But — but ——"

Mr. Girdwood's hands opened, then gripped the edge of the bench whereon he sat. "For any favour," he said in a strained and piteous voice, "gang into the house an' let me be."

"But ——"

"Away, away! Leave me to my — my brood-in's."

"Oh, Samuel, I doubt — I doubt there's something wrong wi' ye. Would ye try to swallow a ——"

Mr. Girdwood held on to the seat as though some tremendous force threatened to draw him into space. "Elizabeth," he said hoarsely, "for mercy's sake let me be!"

Miss Girdwood looked altogether distracted. She opened her mouth, closed it, took a step back from the door, returned and whispered brokenly —

"Samuel, dearie, will ye cry if ye want me?"

"Ay," he replied shortly. "But gang!"

She went in reluctantly and closed the door.

Slowly Mr. Girdwood's grip on the bench relaxed. He lay back against the wall. He wiped his brow. He drew several long breaths. He folded his hands. And almost devoutly he muttered the words —

"The Lord kens I deserve the prize, an' I wish it was to-morrow."

It was late in September, but the still afternoon was warm and balmy; the scents of the garden were heavy and soothing. Presently the old shaggy head drooped, the grey beard lay flat on the shabby vest. Mr. Girdwood drowsed.

A few minutes later Miss Girdwood peeped stealthily from the kitchen window. Her anxious countenance cleared somewhat at the sight of the placid slumberer. "Maybe he was jist a wee bit wearit," she said to herself, "but I didna like him bein' that soft-spoken an' ready to please. 'Twasna nateral."

. . . . . .

Nearly an hour passed. Several times the old woman peeped out, but saw nothing to alarm her; and on the last occasion she smiled, for she perceived Jim coming across the meadow. "'Twill likely be all right now," she murmured, and withdrew hopeful.

At the opening of the little gate Mr. Girdwood started and rubbed his eyes.

"'Tis James Crow!" he exclaimed in pleased surprise. "I didna expec' to see ye the day, James Crow.— But where's yer Doody?"

"He's coming too — with your portrait — but he met another artist doody in the field, and they

talked, so I just came along myself. I suspose you've been having a small nap, Mr. Sammy. You look very sleepy."

"Aw, jist for about three minutes."

"Had you any fun-dreams?"

Mr. Girdwood shook his head. He didn't feel equal then to inventing any "fun-dreams" which, by the way, had of late taken the place of African Adventures.

"I did my best for to dream them," he said, "but I couldna manage it. Maybe I wasna sleepin' sound enough. But I was terrible tired."

Jim looked disappointed. "What made you tired, Mr. Sammy?"

"Strivin' to please ye, James Crow. But we'll not speak about it till the time's up." Mr. Girdwood sighed. "The time's not up till the morn, ye mind." Then he brightened. "So yer Doody's bringin' the portrait. 'Tis terrible kind o' him, an' 'tis a great honour — a great honour."

"I think it is," Jim assented frankly. "But I've got the prize in my pocket, and I'm going to give it to you now — if you deserve it. Do you deserve it, Mr. Sammy?" The question was put with much solemnity of voice and countenance.

"The Lord kens," sighed Mr. Girdwood, "I've did my best. 'Twas terrible severe on me, but I've

never spoke a cross word to her since I got out my bed at nine this mornin'."

"That was rather late," said Jim.

"'Twas all that, James Crow, but, ye see, it made the day shorter."

"I see. . . . And you never spoke a cross word since then?"

"Never oncet."

"Nor called her stupid?"

"Never oncet."

"Nor told her to *clay up,* Mr. Sammy?"

"'Twas a great wonder I didna, my lad." Mr. Girdwood's tone was faintly touched with asperity.

"Nor roared at her till she thought you was going to bite her nose off?" inquired Jim, with more interest than ever.

"James Crow," the old man declared, not without emotion, "'tis the voice o' a mouse I've been speakin' wi' the day — the voice o' a mouse!" A happy thought struck him, and he added, "Even the voice o' yer frien', Miss Mousie — exceedin' soft an' kind — not that I can say I ever heard her speakin'."

"*I* have," said Jim, highly delighted by the reference to his favourite. "I've heard her speaking to Mr. Froggie. Sometimes she speaks to me, too. But you've got to listen fearful hard."

Mr. Girdwood nodded. "Same time, James Crow," he remarked, "'twas terrible severe on me."

"I think," said Jim, tugging at something in his pocket, "I think, Mr. Sammy, you deserve the prize."

Mr. Girdwood looked modestly gratified. "'Tis for you to say, James Crow, 'tis for you to say. But the Lord kens ——"

"I'm going to give you one of my froggies — Mr. Froggie, Jenior. He has got one leg. Of course I couldn't give you Mr. Froggie, Sunior, 'cause he's married to Miss Mousie, and, 'sides, I have a great infection for him. You didn't 'spect I would give you Mr. Froggie, Sunior — did you, Mr. Sammy?"

"'Deed, I — I never expected a frog at all!" said Mr. Girdwood, truthfully enough. "But d'ye not mean Junior an' Senior?"

"Doody says Jenior and Sunior. Here is Mr. Froggie, Jenior. Please take great care of him, 'cause I 'spect he'll miss me very much. I'll miss him. He gets a water bath every day and a mud one on Saturdays."

It was not without reluctance that Jim laid the xylonite object on the palm of his ancient friend.

"Aw, I'll tak' great care o' him, ye can count on that," said the recipient of the prize gratefully. "An' 'tis terrible kind o' ye, James Crow ——"

"And 'tis a great honour, Mr. Sammy."

"To be sure, to be sure! I'm real proud o' receivin' Mr. Frog, Junior — I mean Jenior, James Crow — real proud! But"— the speaker's voice sank to a confidential whisper —"ye — ye'll not be for tellin' Elizabeth what I got the prize for."

The boy did not appear to comprehend. He asked several questions.

"'Twill be best for her not to know," said Mr. Girdwood, rather at a loss. "An' 'twill be a fine secret for you an' me."

The latter argument appealed. "All right, Mr. Sammy," said Jim. "I'll not tell her. But I 'spect she'll wonder lots."

"'Tis woman's business to wonder — I mean for to say, 'twill do her no harm to wonder. Same time, would ye mind if I said 'twas a present 'stead o' a prize, James Crow?"

Jim thought for a few moments. "It's a present, too, Mr. Sammy, 'cause, you see, you wasn't nice to Mrs. Sammy for a *whole* day."

"The Lord preserve us!" murmured the old man.

"So you can tell her it's a present. Here's Doody coming with your portrait!"

. . . . . .

The hanging of the picture in the parlour was a ceremony of the briefest, for Mr. Girdwood had

driven the nail for it more than three weeks ago, to be precise on the day of its being promised to him. On the contrary, the admiration which followed the hanging was of such long duration that the artist became extremely embarrassed and his son not a little impatient. While remembering his promise to the prize-winner, Jim was yet anxious to have some conversation with the prize-winner's sister, but it was not until she retired to the kitchen to make tea — she would have been sorely hurt had her guests refused hospitality then, and the table was already laid for them — that the boy found his opportunity. He joined her in the kitchen, and after a little while said —

"I suppose you've been very extra happy to-day, Mrs. Sammy."

"'Tis a great day, to be sure," she replied, measuring the tea from the caddy. "Samuel an' me are terrible proud o' the picture. Sich kindness I never heard o'."

"But you've been very extra happy without the picture," said Jim after a pause.

She set the pot on the hob ready for the boiling water. She sighed.

"Samuel wasna hissel' the day, dearie, but maybe he'll soon be better."

Jim was too puzzled for speech. He stared at her.

"Ye see, dearie," she continued, with another sigh, "Samuel's gettin' old, an' I was a wee bit anxious about him the day, for he bided in his bed till after nine, an' then he —— But we'll not speak ——"

There was a heavy step at the door and the voice of Mr. Girdwood exclaimed crossly —

"Aw, woman, for any favour clay up!"

"Mr. Sammy!" cried Jim.

"Oh, me! I couldna help it, James Crow," said the old man in dire confusion, and retired with all the haste in his power.

Jim turned to Miss Girdwood, and was astonished to encounter her smile.

"'Tis all right, dearie, 'tis all right," she whispered. "He's hissel' again, an' I'm terrible gled. But ye'll not tell him I was sayin' he wasna hissel' the day — will ye not?"

Poor Jim Crow was fairly lost in the mystery of it all, and eyed the old woman in silence.

"Ye'll not tell him I was sayin' he wasna hissel' — will ye not?" she pleaded.

"Very well, I'll not, Mrs. Sammy," he promised at last, much to her satisfaction, if not to his own. But he determined to lay the whole matter before his father whenever they should be alone.

On quitting the cottage, however, they encountered the artist to whom Nevis had spoken earlier

in the afternoon, and when he left them at the door of their lodgings Jim was sleepy enough to have forgotten his determination for the time being, at any rate. A minute later he would have forgotten it, however alert his little brain.

For on the table in the sitting-room lay a letter, which Nevis snatched up and tore open. And presently Jim, having picked up the envelope from the floor, heard his father saying in rather a queer voice —

"Old Crow, this is good news."

"But it's not from Muzzer, Doody," said the boy, who sometimes forgot his grown-up pronunciations towards bed-time.

"No; it's not from Mother, but it means ——" He broke off, seated himself on the crazy easy-chair and drew the boy to his knee. "Do you know, Jim Crow, that you're a perfect little brick?"

"Why, Doody?"

"Because you made me paint old Sammy's portrait." He cleared his throat, put his arm round his son, and continued: "This is a letter from the man I sent the portrait to. He writes to say that he thinks it very good, and that a lot of other people think it very good, and that some of them have been wanting to buy it, and that he has sold it to one of them for — for two hundred and fifty guineas, Jim Crow!"

"How much is that, Doody? More than all my savings?"

"It's a great deal of money — for us to get for a picture. But the best of it is that the man says I've found myself, and I must go on painting more old doodies. . . . And I'd never have thought of it but for you ——"

"And Mr. Sammy."

"No; I'd never have done it for him, my boy. And now, d'you know what you and I are going to do?"

"Write to Muzzer."

"No; we're going to cable to her — send her a wire, you know; and we're going to *go* to her. We're going to get on board a big steamer and sail away to a place called Capetown, and there we shall meet her on her voyage home, and we shall all come home together ——"

"Oh, Doody! *Now?* Shall I pack Miss Mousie and Mr. Froggie?"

"I think we shall leave here the day after to-morrow. We'll do our packing to-morrow. It will be a busy day, so you must have a good sleep."

But they sat for an hour or so longer, and at the last Nevis carried his boy to bed. When he had tucked him in finally, and was leaving the room softly, a small drowsy voice said, "Doody, please."

"What is it, Jim Crow?" asked Nevis, returning. "Aren't you very happy?"

"Yes, Doody. But — if you have any of the pennies left, will you buy me a fun-owl — like Mr. Sammy's?"

THE following day was a busy one for Nevis, but he found time to send a note to the old people informing them of his sudden change of plans, and bidding them to five o'clock tea. Jim insisted on enclosing a "Froggie letter," explaining, in hieroglyphics, that he also was very busy indeed.

"I suspose they'll be sorry we're going away," the boy remarked, and his father nodded absently.

"But they'll be fearful glad to come to tea. I hope Mr. Sammy has been having some more fun-dreams. He'll be fearful excited to hear we're going to Africa!" Jim had been questioning his father concerning the journey since 5:30 A. M. "Do you think we shall have some adventures, Doody?"

"I shouldn't wonder, Jim Crow."

"I shouldn't wonder, either, Doody. Miss Mousie is *so* excited about it! She didn't sleep a wink all night."

"That's most unfortunate. But we must get on with our packing."

"Yes, we must, Doody," agreed Jim, who was naturally in a high state of happy enthusiasm.

And down in the cottage, half-an-hour later, the old people sat regarding each other in dismay.

"But he said they was goin' to bide in the Bay till the end o' October," Mr. Girdwood was murmuring for the third time.

"Ay, Samuel," she returned, fingering the note — Mr. Girdwood would not let the "Froggie letter" out of his possession —"ay, Samuel. But ye see he didna ken he would be goin' abroad to meet his wife. 'Tisna as if he had tooken a scunner at the place." With an effort at cheerfulness she added, "'Tis likely they'll come back again some day, Samuel."

Mr. Girdwood groaned and shook his head.

"'Tis a judgment on me for the falsehoods," he said.

"Havers, man!" she said gently.

"Can ye prove 'tis not a judgment?" he demanded.

"Aw, Samuel, dearie, is James Crow not leavin' me, too? An' how can it be a judgment on me that never told him a falsehood?"

"Ye egged me on — at the beginnin', anyway. Ye canna deny that."

After a pause —"But James Crow'll be terrible

gled to get quick to his mother," she ventured. "Ye wouldna grudge ——"

He wagged his head. "I tell ye 'tis a judgment," he said stubbornly. "An' I've been gettin' ready a place in the garden for his Miss Mousie's new house. He was comin' the day to start on the buildin'. I've got some real cement for him, an' Macfarlane was goin' to gi' me a score o' the best bricks. An' I was to help him."

"'Tis a great pity, surely, but, Samuel, dearie, the cement an' the bricks'll keep till he comes back ——"

"He'll never come back. I tell ye, James Crow'll never come back. An' if he does come back, he'll not be the same James Crow. He'll ha' forgot his queer bit toys, an' he'll not be heedin' about stories an' dreams, an' he'll be done wi' the Magic Wood, an'——"

"Oh, Samuel, dearie, 'twill be a lang while afore he's as big as that. I'm thinkin' he'll aye be the same James Crow to you an' me. An' if we canna tell for sure what he'll be, we — we ken what he's been."

Miss Girdwood arose, smiled encouragingly at her brother and went over to the window. For some minutes she gazed at the sunny meadow — the meadow that had been the same to her for fifty

years — until two months ago. She would never look upon it again, summer or winter, without a vision of a small, sturdy, white-clad figure crossing its acres. She wiped her eyes with her apron, furtively, remained for a minute longer, and then turned a brave countenance to the old man.

"I best be gettin' yer things ready for the tea-party, Samuel," she said, as she left the kitchen.

Mr. Girdwood said nothing, nor did he raise his eyes from the "Froggie letter."

But almost immediately she returned.

"Samuel, here a minute."

"What's ado?" he asked moodily.

"Come ben to the parlour."

He followed her slowly, unwillingly.

She pointed to the stuffed owl.

"Would ye not be thinkin' o' givin' it to James Crow?" she said softly.

His face brightened a shade — and gloomed again.

"'Tis your owl, Elizabeth."

"'Tis yours now, Samuel."

Mr. Girdwood considered. "Ye'll not be tellin' him 'twas a present from yersel'?"

"'Twill be a present from you, Samuel — jist you."

Mr. Girdwood nodded, stepped forward and possessed himself of the bird. "'Tis a pity ye've not

tooken better care o' it," he remarked critically. "'Tis shabby-like."

"Tak' it into the kitchen, an' I'll get ye something to dust it wi' an' put a bit gloss on its feathers. James Crow'll be fine an' pleased, ye'll see."

Mr. Girdwood bore the bird to the kitchen. "Haste ye wi' the things for cleanin' it," he called quite briskly. And for the next two hours he appeared almost cheerful.

. . . . . .

The tea-party was a much less melancholy affair than might have been expected. The old people's depression was not proof against the happy atmosphere created by Jim and his father; along with their shyness it vanished speedily. And then Nevis, guessing what the news would mean to the old man, told him of the sale of the picture.

"My! But 'twas quick work!" exclaimed Mr. Girdwood. "Ye'll excuse me, sir, but I hope ye didna let it gang over cheap. I — I was hopin' ye would maybe get a hunderd pound, sir," he added wistfully.

Nevis could not resist telling him the price.

It was almost too much for Mr. Girdwood. For nearly a minute he sat speechless, stunned. Then he sat up in his chair, and a smile dawned and broadened, and his whole being seemed to swell with gratification and importance.

And he banged his fist on the table, narrowly missing his cup and saucer.

"Elizabeth!" he roared, "did ye hear that? Mr. Nevis has gotten twa hunderd an' fifty guineas for a picture o' *me!*"

"Ay, ay, Samuel," she said softly. "'Tis a great honour to you, to be sure."

"'Tis a great honour to you to be my sister!" he returned so fiercely that Jim was on the point of reminding him of the prize of the previous day.

Nevis, however, changed the subject by saying pleasantly that he hoped Mr. Girdwood would favour him with more sittings in the spring; he was anxious to paint a fireside portrait.

At this the old man's cup of satisfaction brimmed over. Countenance and voice alike softened as he turned to his sister.

"Ye was right, Elizabeth," he murmured, "an' the Lord is terrible good to us."

. . . . . .

After tea they passed to the garden.

Mr. Girdwood, with many badly suppressed chuckles, led Jim to a certain bush, parted the leaves, and bade him peep in.

And behold, there was the stuffed owl!

It was some little time ere the boy's delight permitted him to return coherent thanks.

"Is it from *you*, Mr. Sammy?" he asked at last.

Somehow the "ay" stuck in Mr. Girdwood's throat. He coughed. "'Tis from us both," he said, not without difficulty, and added, with a supreme effort, "'Twas her notion, James Crow."

Jim flew across the garden and embraced the old woman.

"But 'twas Samuel's ——" she began.

"Aw, clay up, Elizabeth!" cried Mr. Girdwood.

Later Mr. Girdwood enticed Jim, with the promise of a "fun-dream," to the other end of the garden.

"But I'm goin' to tell ye a true secret first," he said rather nervously. "A story's jist a story, an' maybe it doesna matter how much truth's in it, but I've got to draw the line, James Crow, when it comes to — to sheer deceit." He paused and made a gesture in Miss Girdwood's direction. He cleared his throat, hesitated, sighed, and solemnly whispered —

"She's three year older'n me."

"Is she?" said Jim vaguely.

"I'm sayin' she's three years older'n me. *She's the oldest inhabitant.*"

"I see," said Jim, cuddling his owl and wondering what all the solemnity was about. "And you're the oldest doody, Mr. Sammy. Now tell me the true secret."

That Mr. Girdwood was more annoyed than re-

lieved by his indifferent reception of his tremendous confession is highly probable, yet almost immediately he plunged into the recital of a "fun-dream" which easily surpassed all his previous efforts in the direction of fiction — so far so that the conclusion found his listener regarding him with more doubt than admiration. Happily, however, ere any cross-questioning could take place, a telegram arrived for Nevis. It was from one of the great shipping offices, and while informing Nevis that the required passages had been booked, it turned the boy's fancy to thoughts of ships and conversation thereon.

Later Miss Girdwood plucked at her brother's sleeve. "'Tis time we was goin', Samuel."

Jim looked up at her. "I'm not going to pack Mr. Fun-Owl, Mrs. Sammy. I'm going to carry him all the way to Africa. I 'spect he'll be glad to get back to Africa. I'm glad Mr. Sammy hadn't to eat him — aren't you?"

"Surely, dearie. I doubt an owl'd be poor eatin'. I'm thinkin' Samuel couldna ha' ett it anyway."

Jim turned to Mr. Girdwood. "Did you never eat an owl, Mr. Sammy? You once told me——"

"Ay," said Mr. Girdwood firmly, "I've ett hunderds in my time."

"You see, Mrs. Sammy, you don't know very much about Mr. Sammy's adventures."

"Nor about his feastings," interposed Nevis. "Come, Jim Crow, we'll just go to the gate with our friends, and then you must get off to bed."

Mr. Girdwood rose from the seat with obvious reluctance.

"I'll ha' some rare stories for ye when ye come back, James Crow," he said.

"I 'spect you will, Mr. Sammy. I'm going to have some adventures, too; and I'm going to ask all the people in Africa about you, and tell them how brave you were."

"Aw," Mr. Girdwood murmured doubtfully, "I — I never done anything worth the speakin' about. An'— an' Africa's a big place," he added, a trifle more confidently; "ye'll not likely see anybody that kent me."

"That's truth, anyway," remarked Miss Girdwood the least thing dryly. But she patted her brother's arm.

"I'm going to tell Mother all about you — about you both," said Jim. "And you'll see her when we come back in the Spring."

"In the Spring," murmured Mr. Girdwood.

"In the Spring," his sister echoed.

And now they were come to the gate.

About nine o'clock the following morning a wagonette was being driven smartly along the high-road. In it Nevis sat with his arm round his boy, who embraced Mr. Fun-Owl. Jim looked radiantly happy, and perhaps his father's gravity was only of the moment.

"There they are!" said Nevis, as the wagonette turned a bend of the road. "Wave to them, Jim Crow. We owe them a good deal, don't we?"

"We do, Doody," Jim agreed, with an affectionate glance at his owl which he was now holding aloft.

At the foot of the green slope Mr. and Miss Girdwood stood by the little rickety gate. They waved a table-cloth between them; they waved it earnestly, faithfully, until the wagonette passed from their view. Then, somehow, they both let go, and it fell at their feet unnoticed.

They stood gazing at the empty road until with one accord came their whispers —

"In the Spring."

It's an old heart that cannot look forward.

THE END