JOHN OF DAUNT

ETHEL TURNER

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FAIR INES
THE APPLE OF HAPPINESS
THE FLOWER O' THE PINE
PORTS AND HAPPY HAVENS

"'Wrong d-d-d-dog,' he stuttered in explanation, and looked to where an innocent, if savage, brown retriever was glaring at him from a safe distance." (Chapter X.)

JOHN OF DAUNT

BY

ETHEL TURNER

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Author of "Seven Little Australians," etc., etc.

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JOHN OF DAUNT

CHAPTER I.

THE DESCENT.

"Oh, 'tis a parlous boy
Bold, quick, ingenious, forward, capable."
—*Richard III.*

DAISY, now down on all-fours while she rubbed linoleum cream into the hall floor, now sitting on her heels for respite and to replenish the moisture on her cloth, caught a glimpse of pink high above her head. It was very familiar pink, but the glimpse being taken in through her eye-corners only, hardly reached her brain. She tried with an arm sweep to remove the marks of feet just beneath the telephone, but the cloth was dry again and there is no time before breakfast to be prodigal with elbow-grease alone. She sat up and reached for the tin of cream once more.

And now she saw nothing in the world but pink. Pink coming down, down, down from the dizzy heights above her, slowly at first, but gaining in speed at every moment, pink turning a curve, coming down a straight slant, pink faster and still more furiously fast until, just as she clutched her heart in terror and made ready to scream piercingly, it was sitting on a heap of mats and rugs she had flung down after shaking them.

"You wicked boy you," she gasped.

The small figure in the pink pyjamas laughed, but he was more than a little pale himself now and continued to sit still while he recovered his breath and his intrepidity.

"Knew I could," he remarked at last.

"Gertrud!" called Daisy, still too fluttered to get up on her feet, and yet impelled to share the shock even though with no one better than her fellow-servant, and a German at that.

The girl, Gertrud, came into sight from the still further flight of stairs that led to the basement where she was engaged in preparing breakfast. She came with a ponderous step,

but she came, for Daisy's tone of voice was not to be denied.

"Right from the top—down the banisters," said Daisy, pointing graphically up the two flights and using a circling motion with her hand that left no doubt of what she wanted to convey even in the slow mind of Gertrud.

"Himmel!" said Gertrud phlegmatically, "It is in the making of boys. He has the sort of things done before this on many times and not be killed."

"My word, Gert, you ought to have seen me," said the boy, instantly so encouraged he leaped up, recovered. "My word, it is a rush; just like greased lightning at the end."

"By the providence of the saints I'd left the rugs in that heap," said Daisy, "or he'd have been lying there now dashed to pieces."

"Well you are a giddy goat," said the young man. "You don't think I'd have done it, do you, if the rugs hadn't been there? I was just coming down the plain way when I noticed the heap and thought it was a good chance to try. I've never done more than the last bit before."

"And I'll take care you don't again," said Daisy, "second the doctor gets down I up and tells him. Hope he gives you what for. It's what you want, bad, and it's what you don't get, and if your Pa wants to save your life before you kill yourself he'd better begin at once."

Ian gnawed his knuckle a moment.

"Let him have his brekker first, Dais," he said, a suing note in his voice.

"Not I," said Daisy. "Only I'm late, I'd go up and tell before he starts to shave."

"Go on, Dais, there's a duck. He hardly ever gets time to eat all his chop before the telephone or door bell goes." The boy was plainly anxious.

"You should think of things like that before you do things," said Daisy inexorably. "I shouldn't be doing my duty as a woman not to tell the first second I see him. Why, if I didn't, who's to say you wouldn't be at the same thing again in an hour?"

"Oh, go and take a running jump," said the boy, suddenly sick of the subject.

"And I tells your Ma that, so there,"

said Daisy with asperity. "I heard her telling you only yesterday how rude it was. She'll make you say, 'I beg your pardon, Daisy.'"

"I beg your pardon, Daisy," said Ian, "I oughtn't to have said it, 'cause you're so fat you couldn't if you tried."

Gertrud smiled broadly and turned to descend to the consideration of porridge and eggs once more.

"*This*," said Daisy, "comes of decent Australians letting their children be brought up in a house with a Hun. It's not you, I blame, my boy, for your manners; it's them as has had the minding of you."

Ian blinked sweetly at this sudden diversion of wrath from his own head: Gertrud's shoulders were broad, he recollected, besides she really was a Hun, though mother said no, she was only a poor German.

"Tell you, Dais," he said in his heartiest and most affectionate manner, "I'll do the rest of your floor for you if you won't split about the banisters."

Daisy was stout; there was no doubt about

the matter, and rubbing floors was the work she most disliked in the world.

"Under the cabinet and the hall-stand, and a real good polish?" she bargained.

"You said yourself I could beat you at it," said Ian, seeking to clinch the matter by taking the polishing cloth from her.

But Daisy decided not to be vanquished this time too easily. She held on to the cloth.

"And the surround in the c'sulting room," she said firmly.

"Oh, I say, that's coming it too strong," grumbled Ian. "Last time it was only this floor."

"Coming down two flights is a lot worse than going out on the milk-cart in your pyjamas. Now what's it to be? Is your Pa to have his breakfast in peace or have I got to tell?"

"He's not my Pa," said Ian irritably, "he's my father. I'm always telling you, Daisy."

"Last place I was in they always called their father Pa," said Daisy, "and real little ladies and gentlemen *they* was. I think father and dad sounds real common: But

I can't waste no more time. Is it yes or no ? "

" Oh, give's hold," groaned Ian, and seized the cloth.

Daisy rose to her feet, picked up the tin, a big cloth and a little cloth, and handed them to him. She looked at him where he stood, pink-trousered legs apart, surveying the task before him with deep disgust ; real affection came into her eyes.

If ever she married—which was the divine but far-off event to which her whole nature moved—and had a little son, she hoped he would be just like this adorable, chubby eight-year-old, with his dark, close-cropped, little bullet head, and his dark, soft, impish, angel eyes.

" Give us a kiss," she said yearningly.

He kissed her absent-mindedly ; he was abstrusely calculating the length of time his job would take.

" Littlejohn ! " she murmured, holding him to her.

He struggled energetically out of her embrace.

"Ian's my name, Daisy," he said.

"Your Ma says Littlejohn sometimes," said Daisy.

Ian sighed.

How could one convey it to a person like Daisy that that was just the reason the name was not for every one's use?

"Ian's my name," he repeated irritably.

Daisy sighed.

How could one convey it to a person like Ian that a woman with no little boy of her own simply must use a more affectionate diminutive to an eight-year-old than "Ian," stern Scotch variant of John?

"Well you needn't go under the bookcases and desk much in the c'sulting room, darling," she said, melting with the kiss, "your Pa never notices."

"Father," said Ian, still irritated.

"Father," said Daisy, accepting the correction graciously.

Then she went down to the basement to enjoy the early cup of cocoa and the hot buttered toast that would be ready there to stay her until breakfast time; Hun or not,

Gertrud at least had the knack of making things extremely comfortable in the kitchen.

The little pink figure polished vigorously and faithfully at the floor for ten minutes at least. Then a happy respite came.

The telephone bell rang.

Daisy's voice, a little thick with cocoa, came up the stairs.

"See who that is, ducky."

"Hullo," said Ian, who already had the receiver in his hand.

"Have I got to come?" groaned Daisy.

"No, it's only Bill," said Ian with a look of infinite content.

Daisy went back to her toast and cocoa, equally content.

"Hello," said Bill. Bill, christened Conrad Middleton, but always known to his best friend as Bill; Bill, also eight, but not sturdy, not impish-eyed; Bill, with a lion's heart in a sickly little body. Bill, who lived in the bottom house of this tall suburban terrace, while his chum Ian—or Jo to him—lived in the top one.

"Hullo," returned Ian reassuringly

"I say, Jo, what are you going to wear to-day?" said Bill.

Ian pondered the matter a moment, standing on one leg.

"Grey suit," he said at last.

"Grey stockings?" asked Con.

"Y-yes," said Ian, rapidly deciding against navy, to which his thoughts had first inclined.

"With the red tops or the white?" pursued Con anxiously.

"Red," said Ian with much decision.

"And what tie?"

"Allies'," said Ian.

"Would Belgian do?" said Con, "my Allies' is spoiled. One of the kids went and took it for a doll's sash."

"No. Get it back from her. It's got to be Allies. D'ye hear, Bill. Oh, dash!"

"Hullo, hullo, are you there, Jo. What's that noise? Don't ring off."

Ian's voice went along the line, shaken with sudden laughter.

"I fell down just then, that's all," he said. "I've made the floor too jolly slippery. I always do it better than she does."

"Hullo, hullo. What d'ye mean, Jo?"

"Tell you when I see you, Bill. Mind you come down after brekker?"

"Got a rotten throat. They'll watch that I don't."

"All right. I'll come up," said Ian. "Dry up now, Bill, I've got another floor to rub."

"Eh, what?"

"Dry up."

Ian rang off and hurried into the consulting-room with his sticky cloths tucked under his arm and his tin of cream held in his hands.

What a blessing it was his father never looked under the desk and the bookcases, it must be time he was going to his bath; yes, high in the air he could hear Dee's voice shouting above the shower; she always tried to shout the shower down.

It was his turn next; of course he bathed himself now he had turned eight, but still his mother had a way of coming in to see if his ears were clean.

He must hurry.

CHAPTER II.

CONSIDERING A FATHER.

AS he polished, Ian considered his father, perhaps more definitely than ever before. There were a lot of things he liked deeply about his father.

For instance, there was the way he banged up his roll-top desk. The desk itself was essentially that of a man and a father; not in the very least like the womanish affair in the drawing-room where his mother wrote her letters; it was full of heavy secrets; doubtless it was full of diseases or cures for diseases; measles and bronchitis and differia, taken away from patients and safely boxed-up, were, doubtless, in many of the pigeon holes. It was even quite possible that the bones of dead men were stored in this desk. They were harboured openly in a glass case behind

one of the cabinets; and a head grinned down at you fleshlessly from a shelf in the corner cupboard that was not even kept locked, so it was not difficult to conjecture that pretty frightful things were concealed in this roll-top desk that was invariably safely banged down every time his father left the house.

Conrad Middleton often hid his head under the bedclothes in a nightsweat of deadly fear at the thought of the things in this room, and more especially at the conjectures—Ian's conjectures—about the things in this desk! But Ian distinctly gloated over them. He considered that they immensely added to his prestige; only one other boy that he knew had the advantage over him in these matters, and that was little Field, the butcher's son.

Ian liked the big, worn place on the carpet near the desk; it showed what great, heavy, stamping feet his father had; the carpet near the drawing-room desk never became worn like this. Another thing the boy liked deeply about this room was its assorted smells.

Downstairs, still further downstairs than

this floor, was one set of smells,—bacon frying, cabbage cooking, coffee boiling over on the gas stove and slightly burning,—an exquisite smell, this last. And upstairs, still further upstairs than that floor, was yet another set of smells,—the freesias in the drawing-room that sometimes kept quite still and sometimes flung out a wave of sweetness; the sandal-wood box on a table, the pink sofa-cushion in which the feathers had gone musty.

And in the big bedroom one's nose was often kept pleasantly busy: the pale green soap gave out delicious whiffs: Dee's violet powder pleased—Dee was still such a "bit of a kid" that she was still dusted over with powder just as Gertrud dusted the apple dumplings; and on the dressing-table you could pull out one silver-topped cork and sample the smell marked 4711 Favorita, and another, and see what La Rose Jacqueminot was like.

But in this consulting-room were stirring and fatherly scents like iodoform, or carbolic acid, and Ian used to sniff them with the deepest appreciation.

He had his tongue out now as he worked;

his little arm ached, but he was doing the job faithfully. He put a high polish, after all, on the stretches under the desk and under the bookcases; if his father did, by chance, stoop down and look, well, he shouldn't feel ashamed of the shine of hidden places.

Various aspects of his father, all of which he liked, passed before him as he worked.

He liked the aspect of him driving the motor-car in thick traffic and saving people's lives by just not running over them when it seemed an absolute certainty that they were lost.

He liked the aspect of him coming in on the crest of a breaker when they went surf bathing; punching the old leather ball on the balcony; holding Dee by her heels to see if her eyes would drop out; rushing round to the garage in the back yard and spilling petrol into the tank and getting the car out and away in three minutes at the hest of a panting, ragged boy at the door who said his mother was dying; going out at night to the theatre, or a dance, with mother —rare occasions these—clad in that smooth,

black suit of his, and that smooth, black overcoat, and that fascinating hat that shut up on springs.

But of all the aspects of his father there were none the little boy so deeply liked as the one of him out on the front balcony in his Turkish-towelling dressing-gown, cleaning his boots.

He was so human and jolly then; he got so dirty—he even—not often, of course, because when you have little boys you have to remember you have little boys—he even "said words" occasionally if the lid didn't come off the blacking-tin easily, or if he put on the big pair of canvas gloves back to front.

The little boy did the fourth side of the monotonous green linoleum in violent haste. The thought was not to be borne any longer that he was missing all the getting-up fun on the balcony. He ran to the top of the basement steps and pitched the cloths and the empty tin right down to the kitchen door.

"There's your silly old things, Daisy," he shouted. Then he was rushing up the stairs once more with all his might, even if not quite so rapidly as he had rushed down.

CHAPTER III.

THE HOUSE.

THE house was like the narrow addition-sum they give you when you pass out of the kindergarten into the primary class. There were two rooms on each story, and there were four stories; two and two and two and two it rose from its foundation to its roof.

In the basement was the kitchen, where Daisy and Gertrud ably sustained the causes of the Triple Entente and the Alliance and drank cocoa in the peaceable intervals. Also in the basement was the eating-room of the family.

The architect had never intended this to be so when he drew his plans; he had put the customary "drawing-room and dining-room connected by folding doors" upon the

next story, and in the drawing-room made an alcove expressly for a grand piano, and a bay window expressly for dusty palms, while in the dining-room he had allowed a recess capable of receiving a truly British sideboard weighing about a ton.

But he had never taken it into his consideration that among his terrace tenants he might have a doctor who would "live at his job."

The "drawing-room and dining-room connected by folding doors" in this particular house had perforce to become waiting-room and consulting-room; the roll-top desk, with the diseases and bones in it, occupied the side that was to have been sacred to a grand piano, and in the bay window, instead of an elongated palm-stand, stood a revolving bookcase full of such light literature as Mott's Archives of Neurology or Cunningham's Textbook of Anatomy.

Similarly, in the intended dining-room you could see no one ever sat or dined, although indeed a modest sideboard lurked in the great recess, there being nowhere else in the home to put it.

The long table had its quota of guests daily, to be sure, but they were an atrabilious lot who fed morosely with one eye on the back numbers of the magazines scattered on the cloth, and kept the other one on the door waiting for the maid's signal that was to call them to the front room.

That is why the family dining-room was downstairs, next to the kitchen.

It was papered in blues and whites, and it really tried to put a good face on matters and to be Dutch, and artistic, and so on. It had nice bits of brass about, and it hung heavy blue curtains, stencilled with tulips, between itself and any contact with the plebeian kitchen that lurked so close at hand. But the light only came into it from the yard, and was still further choked by a wall of the garage, so any cheerfulness had to be bought with a lighted gas even in the morning hours.

The family ate in it and escaped from it at the earliest possible moment.

Above the waiting-room was the drawing-room, and a very good drawing-room it was

too; a doctor with only a so-so practice must have a good drawing-room. The carpet was just as rich and expensive as was needful; the chairs just as frail and uncomfortable; here were the palms and aspidistras on their unsteady, elongated stands, even though there was no bay window in this room in which to put them; vases abounded, both of the silver and china variety. The piano, lacking an alcove, stood across a corner, its back to the room, richly caparisoned in a Japanese kakemono, worked in pale blue and silver cord. It was a very old-fashioned piano, bought cheaply at a sale, but the casual caller, who only saw the splendid blue and silver back of it, never knew of the past-date fretwork and silk of the front hidden from sight.

Regiments lurked here, undisturbed sometimes for days together; the carvings of the legs could absorb an entire body of Scotch Highlanders; a force of Zulus, spears in hand, could occupy an impregnable position in the brass candle-sconces, while two whole boxes of kneeling fusiliers might be disposed in the fretwork behind the music-holder.

Care, however, had to be given to disposals in this last position. At the left-hand bottom corner the green silk was worn away into a hole, and General Gordon and a drummer boy had been lost down it. The lowest E in the bass testified to the fact that they were not lost but merely gone behind, and Ian felt he could still get into communication with them by striking that now muffled note. But he much desired to hold them in his fingers once more, and was always asking when the piano-tuner was coming again.

Over the consulting-room came the large bedroom.

In Ian's opinion there was no more splendidly beautiful thing in the world than the bedstead that stood there. A pale pink satin eiderdown was spread over it nowadays, unquestionably pleasant to feel and look at, even though it had to be respected. The days were past, long past, fully a month past, when there had been a shabby green eider-quilt, into which you could take a header without fear of rebuke. But his mother had been ill about a month ago, and had

stayed in bed dull and dispirited for days, and his father had come flying upstairs one morning with his motor-goggles still on, and in his arms a huge parcel that he had brought home in the back of the car. He had torn the paper off, and hurriedly smothered his wife over with the rose-pink loveliness, and hurriedly kissed her.

"Bottle of tonic; take between meals," he said. "Must go. Man in a fit, Daisy says. Jerdan; do you know the name?"

"Bottom of street, toyshop, just come. Yes, looks apoplectic," she had answered. "How lovely of you, Steve! But you shouldn't. Why, you wouldn't get yourself a new suit! Oh, how lovely! Just my colour."

But it was not the hangings and the quilt that appealed to Ian as passionately as the mother-of-pearl bedstead itself that had been his mother's wedding present from her mother.

In the spindles of it and inlaid on its posts he had rediscovered bits of the sunrise, and of dew, of spray with the sun on it, of rainbow ends.

Over the left-hand end of the foot-rail a scarf of lace or silk was always carefully placed when his maternal grandmother was expected; or else a hastily snatched up towel from the washstand was hung there. For here was a spindle shamelessly broken open and ruined and exposed. Ian, at six, had picked up a fact or two at kindergarten about pearl and mother-of-pearl, and had gone to discover, with the tin-opener and a hammer, whether oysters were imbedded here too.

But even after two years the sight of the ruin on the beautiful thing saddened him whenever he noticed it. Fortunately, this was not often.

The bedroom opened on to a glassed-in verandah where all the glorious sunshine of the crowded suburban street came to flood itself on winter mornings.

Here, behind the thin muslin curtains that hung on the glass, much of the real life of the family passed.

Here, in a corner, stood the cupboard that held the blacking-brushes; here hung Dee's

swing. In that chintz-covered box there were at least thirteen dolls and all the infinite necessities of modern dolls ; here was a large Teddy-bear with one side of it gone bald with frequent huggings ; here was the celluloid platypus without which the morning bath would not have been the morning bath.

Here were any of Ian's regiments that were not on active service about the piano, or occupying strongly fortified positions on the staircases. You never walked freely on the linoleum here until you had ascertained that there were no companies drawn up upon the squares of it, no red-cross ambulance waggon standing by awaiting a call, not even a scarred and solitary sentry defending an outpost.

Here was the white elephant of the family, the gigantic rocking-horse presented to Ian when he was two days old by a patient who held his father in liveliest gratitude for restoration to health.

Owing to the dimensions of the dear great beast there was no room left for the children's beds to stand at ease on the floor, so fatherly

ingenuity had devised ship's bunks against the wall side of the balcony, and fat little Dee slept soundly in the lower one, while Ian happily climbed a ladder to his heights and fell to sleep, sharing with birds the exulting confidence that comes from being right off the ground of the earth.

The top story of the house resolved itself into two attics, in one of which Germany and Australia lay now uneasily along opposite walls; and in the other were piled the overflowings of the family, the travelling-trunks, the cradle, the perambulator, the past season's clothes, the unnecessary necessities that must have storage. Here, too, was a little bench and a hammer and wood and nails, carefully calculated to act as a lightning conductor for Ian's pent-up energies, and occasionally succeeding in doing so.

But it was getting-up time, and the balcony was the present scene of operations. Ian returned to it, glad-eyed, ready for anything.

CHAPTER IV.

GETTING DRESSED.

"The common sin of babyhood objecting to be dressed,
If you leave it to accumulate at compound interest,
For anything you know may represent, if you're alive,
A burglary or murder at the age of thirty-five."

—GILBERT.

THE sunshiny place was in all the customary chaos of the hour.

The chintz box had disgorged its contents and the thirteen dolls sat about the lower bunk, quite ready for the day's fray. Dee, three-year-old edition of Ian, but rounder, chubbier; Dee, with the imp in her eyes existent, but more often, as became her tenderer years, subordinated by the angel, sat on the edge of her bunk solemnly eating the morning biscuit that kept her body and soul together until breakfast time.

She had had her chill winter's bath as her

"'When you say wicked words,' said the little boy."

reddened cheeks testified and her soft, dark hair was still bunched tightly up from it. She had reached the petticoat stage of her toilet and had one sock and one shoe on when the pangs of appetite had set in and caused an interlude. So she sat on the edge of her bunk now and munched silently, the half-bald Teddy bear, Boodle yclept, with biscuit crumbs also on his mouth, seated beside her. Together they absorbed and enjoyed in silence the doings of the father and the mother and Ian.

Mrs. Daunt was clad in a kimona of exquisite rose-pink silk; she had been simply compelled to buy it to match the eiderdown. No one with rich masses of crinkly dark-brown hair could have risen up from beneath that eiderdown of rose-pink and put on any old Japanese kimona for the brushing and combing process of those masses.

She sat on the step now between bedroom and sunny balcony, brushing vigorously, and the gleam of the rose-pink, and the glint of sun enmeshed in the dark curtain of hair made Dee's biscuit taste better and forced Ian to whistle.

She was a tall young woman, this Mrs. Daunt, as slender at thirty as she had been ten years before, when the doctor bore her off almost by force, so unwilling were the detaining hands, from a home of wealth and spaciousness to this crowded suburban street and the narrow house that rose therein, two and two and two and two.

When her eyes smiled mischievously at you from between the black curl of their lashes you thought you knew from where the children derived those disturbing expressions of theirs.

Dr. Daunt was still in his towelling dressing-gown of brown and white stripe, that made him look akin to the familiar zebra in the picture book, and to the friendly verandah roofs of the shops opposite. He, too, was beyond the average height and had the same warm, dark colouring as his wife—her sister used to say they had chosen each other to match, both being of artistic inclination; like hers, his eyes were dark; like her, he had a dark, vigorous growth of hair, but his was cropped down till it felt more than a little

like the blacking-brush to Dee's tenderly exploring fingers.

He was hastily polishing up his boots.

"Dad," said Ian, in his challenging voice, "Mr. Middleton doesn't clean his own boots."

"That's no concern of mine, my son," answered the doctor. "I hope you didn't find it necessary to tell him you considered he was committing a crime by not blacking them."

"Yes, I did," said Ian stoutly; "I told him you thought women oughtn't to clean men's boots, an' if you haven't got a man servant you've just got to do it yourself. Well, they haven't. There's only Bella and Jane to do their work, and both of them are women."

"Oh, my son Ian, Ian, my son!" groaned the Doctor.

"You did say it, Dad," Ian said indignantly, "I'm not making up. When I asked you why you made yourself so dirty, that's what you said."

"But I didn't tell you to go and repeat it

to other people, you young prig," stormed his father.

"You didn't tell me not to," maintained Ian stubbornly.

"I'm always telling you not to talk in other people's houses about the things that go on here, isn't that so?" said his father.

"Yes," said Ian, his lip quivering at the wrath in his father's tone.

"Well, what do you mean by it, then?" demanded the Doctor.

Things struggled to express themselves in the boy's mind, things like, "Con's father, being Con's father, ought to do everything just right too, and if you, my father, think it is just right to black your own boots, however dirty you get, then it is right, and Con's father's got to be shown it is right." However, the sentiments would not arrange themselves in words.

"I—don't know," was all he said, and his voice sounded sulky.

"I say, Dinky," said the Doctor, turning vexed eyes on his wife's curtained head, "can't you stop this young reprobate's

mouth ? This won't do, you know, it won't do at any price."

"Lots of things I don't tell a word of, Dad," said Ian, his lip quivering more than ever, and simply forced into a position of defence.

"What sort of things, eh ? Things that wouldn't matter twopence if you did, I suppose," said his father.

"No," said Ian, "other things. Not even to Con." A wave of exceeding admiration for his own stern repression washed over him and made his lip quiver more than ever.

His father searched his face.

"What sort of other things, eh ? Out with it, my man."

"When you say 'Confound,'" said the little boy, now fairly sobbing, "I never tell—never."

"Dinky," said the Doctor, weakly, "I think I'll go to my bath. Some things are too much for me."

The curtain of dark hair shook a little; an eye gleamed through it.

"You're a good little chap, old son," said the Doctor, his voice under control again.

"Yes, we've always got to make the best of our own, haven't we? But I respect Mr. Middleton very much, and he, doubtless, has as good reasons for not cleaning his own boots as I have for cleaning mine. Anyway, he doesn't want a small boy to teach him his duty. What would you think if Con came along and told me what I had to do?"

"He'd better try it," said Ian, the imp at once struggling through his tears.

"Well, I'll be late. Dinky, I say, how can a man get dressed in time with this sort of thing going on?" The Doctor dropped the blacking-brush and plunged into his bedroom. "Where's my shaving water? Can't you make that woman, Daisy, understand I must and will have my shaving water by half-past seven? Gertrud always did. Oh, confound!"

Ian gave him a look of most brotherly love and understanding.

"Go and have your bath, you young beggar," said his father, pulled up short again. But Ian stood on his hands a full minute or two first and balanced his pink-

clad legs in the air; a surcharge of emotion before breakfast is a thing to be got rid of as soon as possible.

"What hands!" cried his mother, seeing them spread on the linoleum in front of her. "What on earth have you been doing, boy?"

Ian had to look at them attentively to remember; then the oiliness of them and the lint sticking to them from the polishing cloth recalled past matters.

"Oh, just messing about," he said, and craftily restored himself to a position where hands were not so noticeable.

"But what with?" demanded his mother, the innocent expression he assumed instantly rousing suspicion in her.

"Oh, Dinky, for heaven's sake!" shouted her husband. "Do you know it's twenty to eight? Let him go to his bath, or he'll be in when I want it. Clear out of this at once, you little beggar."

"Yes, Dad," said Ian affectionately, "I'm going this minute, Dad." He departed in promptest obedience.

The Doctor shaved, he had his bath, he lost his collar-stud—and found it, with the united strength of the family—and was on the eve of plunging downstairs to breakfast when he heard a sort of triangular duel going on on the balcony between his wife and his two children.

Mrs. Daunt's hair was up; the rose-pink kimona had given place to a white blouse and the serge skirt that better befitted the active-moving mistress of a narrow house. Ian was dressed in strict accordance with his agreement with Con: grey suit, grey stockings turned down with red, Allies' tie. Dee's hair hung brushed and shining to her waist; both her socks were on, both her shoes. But she was still in her petticoat and the *casus belli* was a clean blue frock that she had deliberately trampled on.

"Hate blue f'ocks," she announced. "Want pink."

"But you have no pink, darling," urged the mother. "Come, don't be naughty, we shall be late for breakfast. Quick, let me button the blue one."

"Hate blue f'ocks," repeated Dee, and stamped.

"Oh, Dee—how can you be so tiresome—listen, there's Daddie ready to go down. Now, quick, do you hear me?" Mrs. Daunt picked up the offending garment and tried to slip it over the child's head.

But Dee spoiled the manœuvre by sitting suddenly down on the ground and moving her shoulders rapidly about.

"Oh, Dee! to be naughty like this, and before breakfast," cried Mrs. Daunt helplessly.

Ian came to the rescue; he, too, knew how long a fit of Dee's obstinacy could last.

"Hi, you little silly," he said, "scrambled eggs, and honey, downstairs; have it on, quick."

"Pink f'ock," said Dee, looking at him steadily.

"Dee, we shall go down and leave you in a minute all by yourself," threatened her mother.

Dee heaved one shoulder, opened her mouth, screwed up her eyes.

"There, there—well, we won't if you'll be

good and have your frock on," said her mother desperately.

She knew she was not handling the matter as a real disciplinarian should, but then she did so love her husband to have his breakfast and his start to the day quite free from any of these tiresome, unaccountable contests, which from time to time arose between herself and her really sweet and generally tractable daughter.

" Oh, don't begin to cry, Dee," she implored. " Listen, Daddie's going down."

Dee looked through her eyelashes a second ; she, too, knew that it was peace at any price while her father was about, and her price was a pink frock.

" Pink f'ock," she said relentlessly, beginning to squeeze her eyes up again.

" Hi, hi, you little donkey—hi, I'm going down to eat your breakfast," said Ian, taking a threatening step towards the door.

Dee emitted a gentle roar.

But now her father was upon the scene.

" What's all this ? " he said, looking at the three.

Dee decided to suppress her sobs.

"She doesn't seem to want her blue frock on, that's all," said Mrs. Daunt, and quite half excusingly.

"Dee!" said her father in a tone of surprise.

"Pink f'ock," said Dee, but in a weakening tone.

"Why do you want a pink frock?" he asked.

How could three years old explain the fact that her eyes were still so ravished by the utter beauty of her mother's rose-pink kimona that all other colours seemed suddenly too hateful to be worn? She merely said again, and this time with heaving breast and streaming eyes, "Pink f'ock, Daddie."

"Dee," said her father gravely, "did mother tell you to put on this blue frock?"

Dee clung convulsively to one of his legs.

"Put it on, dear."

"Well, Daddie button it, not Muvvie," bargained the child, suddenly shifting her ground and picking it up.

He buttoned it patiently, and she looked through her eyelashes again at her mother.

"Now kiss mother," he ordered, "and say you are sorry."

"Solly," said Dee, and held up a wet but perfectly cheerful face to her mother, whom she knew quite well was beaten in this conflict.

She went downstairs in her father's arms.

"You don't half know how to deal with the little beggars, Dinky," he said in French as he went.

Mrs. Daunt laughed; there was really nothing else left for her to do.

CHAPTER V.

GERTRUD.

"The worst of me is known and I can say that I am better than the fame I bear."—SCHILLER.

BREAKFAST was late, but that was the fault of the war.

Five years before Dr. Daunt had been so intensely worried at the sight of his wife's continual struggles with Australian domestics that he had set about seeking a drastic remedy, after the manner of a man who is always too impatient to brook any half-measures.

During his medical course he had done a year's research work at the University of Cologne, and he had pleasant recollections of the house where, with sixteen other students, he had lodged during that time.

Work, domestic work, on an unusually

large scale, seemed to him to be conducted there with an absolute lack of friction or effort on the part of the mistress of the house. Oak floors were waxed and polished until you could barely keep your footing, furniture, and brass and silver were rubbed until they made mirrors for you at every turn ; perpetual and elaborate meals appeared on the table at the very minute needed ; one's washing and ironing and mending and darning were marvellously performed.

The harassed benedict had turned his eyes from Australia, where household troubles seemed ceaseless, to these German experiences, and he decided that there was nothing left for him to do but make a bold effort to obtain one, or more, of the thick-set, hard-working young Maries, or Louisas, or Gretchens, or Elizabeths, with which every German house seemed to overflow.

He wrote to his one-time landlady, begging her assistance in finding such for him and offering passage money and a pound a week for wages.

The landlady replied that her only difficulty

had been not to send forty-five such young women, so brilliant seemed the prospect to many a German girl bowed under a heavy yoke of house servitude for which she received a mere pittance of a wage.

And so there arrived one morning at the quay in Sydney, at the wharf of the Nordeutscher Lloyd, whose name will soon be less than a memory, Gertrud, flat-footed, high-cheekboned, high-coloured, Gertrud, with quiet blue eyes and light, abundant hair; Gertrud with one small tin box, one large bundle sewed up in a rug, one large umbrella and just four phrases of English:

"Dank you," and "Vas ist der brice," and "Scuse, vich ist der vay?" and "Scuse, ist not it der dinner-time yet?"

In five years she had added the English language to her accomplishments, while Mrs. Daunt had only too thankfully abandoned her few such painful phrases as "Ist das Fruhstuck fertig?" and "Wollen sie gutigst bringen ein stuck gerostetes brot" for the familiar "Is breakfast ready," and "please bring a slice of toast."

In five years Gertrud had banked two hundred pounds of her wages, become naturalised and quite ceased to wear five petticoats and two aprons at a time.

She had the narrow house in the suburban terrace in immaculate condition; its furniture shone Teutonically, its glass and silver reflected the light, its socks and stockings and table linen were darned in a fashion calculated to make happy-go-lucky Australia shudder with silent sympathy.

Mrs. Daunt told her callers, with bated breath, how the girl had only failed by two marks in an examination that, had she passed, would have made her third darner in the household of the Grand-Duke of Schleswig-Holstein. To qualify for this position she had darned industriously fully four hours a day for three years, and would have been able to fill in, quite undetected, a rosebud on the ducal damask whenever the Grand-Duke so far forgot himself as to cut his bread on the cloth.

"But I could not the thorns so well as the other girl do," Gertrud had added mourn-

fully, when recounting her failure to her Australian mistress. "Thorns they are what you call uneasy things to darn. However, it did make for the best, though I did cry mooch at the losing of it; I am now here, and she who did pass, her eyesight it has broke down."

"And what about the unfortunate Grand-Duke of Schleswig-Holstein?" Mrs. Daunt had asked. "Who will darn the thorns on the rose-stems of his best cloths now?"

"Ach, that is nosing," said Gertrud contemptuously, "twenty more ozzer girls ready her blace to dake."

"And you are not sorry you came to Australia, Gertrud?"

Mrs. Daunt liked occasionally to reassure herself that this girl who had torn herself up by the roots from her fatherland, and come twelve thousand miles to polish floors and make comfort for strangers, was not filled with unhappiness at the step.

"Ach, nein," said Gertrud. "Shermany, it iss a ferry gut country if you are ferry rich but zere are too many of us ferry poor and ve

do haf too hard to vork and ve do haf too little money and too mooch to bear. It iss not too good to be voman in Shermany."

Mrs. Daunt looked at the short, work-thickened figure, at the strong face with the repression of centuries stamped upon it, and felt like a butterfly talking to a draught-horse.

"It seems better to you to be a woman in Australia?" she asked.

"Ach, ya, it iss ferry well here," Gertrud conceded, unwillingly. Her training made her despise the inefficient, independent women with whom she came into contact in this new country, but she could not help envying them their outlook and emancipation.

She flung a glance to where, face downwards on the floor of the balcony, Ian was sprawled manipulating his troops.

"The boy out zere," she said, "in Shermany, he would his seven brudders by now haf."

"Oh, Gertrud!" said Mrs. Daunt weakly.

"Ja, it iss hard," Gertrud allowed, "but der Kaiser, he must his armies haf."

That was before the war.

When it broke out and Australia, despite its distance, began to rock in the wash of the waves of it, the narrow house in Trafalgar Terrace was faced with its own problem of aliens.

It began a week after England declared war.

A second maid had always been kept by the Daunts to assist Gertrud, but she was a movable feast after the manner of the restless Australian, while Gertrud was a fixed observance.

If the movable feast happened to be a fair cook and laundress, then Gertrud became nursery-housemaid and mender of torn garments, answerer of telephone, opener of door, usherer in of patients.

Clad in her black dress, with a large mob-cap on her head and a large white muslin apron on, she lent a reassuring air to the establishment in her last-named capacity, and so careful was she of messages, so strict about the precedence of patients in the waiting-room, so helpful in cases of emergency, that the Doctor suffered considerably when-

ever his wife was forced to put her into command of the kitchen and give him a flighty young person as doormaid.

But when the war broke out matters in the basement and attic of No. 1, Trafalgar Terrace, became highly complicated.

The cook, an inefficient and undependable person, at once practically demanded of Mrs. Daunt the instant dismissal of Gertrud.

She swept from her mind all the occasions on which the German had helped her drag a dinner from disgrace and send it into the dining-room fit to be seen; she ignored all the times that Gertrud had spent her evenings ironing Dee's white muslin frocks, which work belonged to herself, Anna, but was disliked. The first advance of the Germans in France sent her hot-foot upstairs from the kitchen. Gertrud must be got rid of.

"But what would become of her, Anna?" asked Mrs. Daunt.

Anna expressed herself frankly as being absolutely indifferent upon this point. The main thing was that she should be got rid of.

"You see we invited her here ourselves,

brought her here," said Mrs. Daunt. "We can't turn her out in the streets for what is certainly not her fault, and she has made no friends, as you know."

Anna was heard to commit herself to a statement that the streets were too good for her; she ought to be clapped straight into gaol.

"But why should Australia be put to the expense of keeping her when she can keep herself by working?" asked Mrs. Daunt.

But Anna would hear no arguments, and as her mistress refused to afford her the spectacle of Gertrud turned out box and bundle into the streets, she herself packed up and departed in high dudgeon.

For a week matters progressed peaceably; no one had yet been found to fill Anna's place, but Gertrud was well able to discharge the work of two servants, and seemed to rather enjoy having the house to herself. She was, it seemed, taking the European convulsion with much philosophy. But then the weather in the basement changed without warning.

The Doctor, who had been giving his services at the suburb's newly-formed drill

and rifle club, rang up one very wet evening to say a squad of men who had come over from a distant suburb to demonstrate had missed its train, and was soaking wet. Could Dinky manage hot coffee for them in the waiting-room to fill up the interval till the next train went ?

Dinky rose to the occasion.

She mustered thirty cups and saucers in the waiting-room ; she ran down to the kitchen, where Gertrud was sitting knitting great, grey stockings for herself against the coming winter.

She set her to making big jugs of coffee, and to opening tins of condensed milk, while she herself cut piles of sandwiches, opened tins of biscuits, and set out all the delicate cakes that were standing in readiness for her own day " at home " on the morrow.

" There they are ! " she cried as the bell rang. " Run, Gertrud, and let them in, and I will be pouring the coffee into the jugs."

Gertrud went upstairs to the door. When she returned Mrs. Daunt had the coffee ready and was tossing off her apron.

"Bring it up as quickly as possible, please, Gertrud," she said, and ran up herself to welcome her guests.

The thirty wet arrivals sat round and about the long table that had been hastily swept clear of magazines, and they looked expectantly at the cups and they sniffed the fragrance of good coffee, real, German-made coffee, that filled the house, but that came no closer even after five minutes' waiting.

Mrs. Daunt, at an impatient glance from her husband, went downstairs at last to investigate, and found Gertrud standing with her arms folded in the middle of the kitchen.

In the sink, a wet mass, were all the sandwiches and cakes and biscuits, their state of moisture being due to the coffee which had, every drop of it, been poured over them.

"Gertrud!" gasped Mrs. Daunt. When temporarily bereft of the powers of language, we most of us have just sufficient strength left to clutch at a name.

"Nein," said Gertrud, "I vill not help to drink and feed men who go to fight my

country." She sat down on a chair and folded her arms more tightly than ever.

Dr. Daunt bore off his thirty wet guests to a not far distant tea-room where coffee, if not of German make, restored their circulation and made them see the humour of the episode. But he let himself into his narrow house again with a grim face. This came of trying to be magnanimous; a German plainly was a German, and must be treated as a German. He must go and settle the matter now.

He found Mrs. Daunt a little pale, but quite composed, waiting for him in the kitchen.

Gertrud, it seemed, had run amuck in his absence; for five minutes the stolid, thick-set, respectful person had run clean amuck.

She had charged at the saucepan-stand that stood, tall sentinel beside the gas-stove, and she had thrown the aluminium saucepans that were ranged there, one by one, into a corner.

She had followed them by their lids, which stood on another shelf by themselves.

"What did you do?" the Doctor asked his

wife, and whistling, surveyed the strange heap of familiar articles.

"Didn't do anything," said Mrs. Daunt, "just stood there in the doorway and watched her."

"By Jove, Dinky—she might have hurt you. I oughtn't to have gone out. You should have gone away." The Doctor looked greatly disturbed.

"You don't imagine I'd let a German think I was afraid of her, do you?" quoth Dinky in fine scorn.

"And then what did she do?"

"Flung up her arms and rushed upstairs. I ran after her then, I can tell you, for I thought she might be going to hurt the children, but she rushed on right up to her room and locked herself in. And she burst out crying at the top of her voice. She's crying still."

"Poor devil!"

"Yes, yes."

"Let her sleep it off. And us too. George! Dinky, I'm tired. Let's get to bed. I'm bound to be called out to-night. Let's get to bed. I'll grapple with the Hun in the morning.

But what on earth is going to happen to-morrow ? "

" Oh, I'll manage," said Mrs. Daunt, " don't you worry. I'll sweep your rooms, and Ian can answer the door, and then I'll rush round to a registry and drag some one back, if I have to promise them two pounds a week."

The Doctor, called out at four o'clock to help new life into the world, had not returned at eight, so Dinky had to grapple with the Hun alone.

She ran down at seven o'clock to the basement to perform brush and duster service and to wonder how on earth one set about preparing an entire breakfast for an entire family, single-handed.

The aluminium saucepans were ranged one over the other in decreasing sizes from the bottom of the stand to the top. The lids hung one after the other in a long, peaceable row. Breakfast was set as usual in the blue and white dining-room. Ian's porridge simmered away in one little saucepan on the gas-stove. The Doctor's zwieback was growing crisp in the oven. Dee's special " cat jumped

over the moon" bowl stood on the table awaiting its bread and milk ; the eggs and the bacon lay ready for the auspicious moment of cooking.

"Ach, I am sorry," said the woman, and made a tossing motion with her arms. Her face was swollen with weeping.

"Yes, I think you should be, Gertrud," said Mrs. Daunt quietly.

"Shall you haf to get rid of me ?" The woman had caught the phrase from Anna, who had used it often in her hearing.

"Why, Gertrud, I must, you know. What else could I do ?" said Mrs. Daunt.

"But I vas joost mad a minute, and there vill be no more. Ach, you not get rid of me !"

"I will get you a place with people of your own nation, Gertrud," said Mrs. Daunt. "I could not have you here, feeling to us as you did last night. I will ring up and see if Mrs. Schwarz will take you to-day."

"Ach nein." Gertrud almost screamed. "I vould not vork for Shermans. Shermans vork Shermans to death. I vork for you."

"No, Gertrud," said Mrs. Daunt steadily,

"I don't any longer want you to work for me."

"Ach ja," insisted Gertrud, "I vas joost mad a minute, no more. Ze baker, he said I vas Sherman, and ze butcher he says, hoch der Kaiser, vhen he for the orders comes. And vhen I go out I am fraidened to speak 'cause I am in English country and zey look at me. And vhen I come in I am in English house and ze schmall boy is killing Shermans on ze staircase all ze day. An' all ze time I stay quite still, quite quiet and schpeak not. But I get mad in ze head a minute when I see zose men that vant to fight my Kaiser come in to drink my coffee zat I hav made."

"Poor devil!" said the Doctor again, when the story was recounted to him.

"Yes," said Mrs. Daunt, "I am often sorry for you, Gertrud. I know it must be very hard. If there had been a chance to get you back to your own country we should have taken it. But there wasn't. And now you must go to Mrs. Schwarz."

"Ach, nein," wept Gertrud, "you not get rid of me. If now in zis strange land to

anuzzer strange house I haf to go I jump straight in ze sea and not go. Ze Doctor now I know, and ze baby and you, and ze schmall boy who is not so bad, an' I stay here now till ze var iss ofer."

And no attempts, not even the Doctor's, had been able to dislodge her.

They had been forced to overlook the outbreak and keep her with them, feeling in a way responsible for her since she had given them five years of faithful service, and since it was they who had uprooted her.

"But keep her down in the basement," the Doctor had said; "it would be as much as my practice is worth to have her opening the door just now. And get me some one to run my part of the show. And quick and lively, Dinky, dear."

So Daisy had come to Number One, Trafalgar Terrace. Her references were not of the best, and she was slipshod, unless continually looked after, and she was untruthful and without principle, as Master Ian had speedily discovered. But she was the only housemaid at the registry offices who

did not at once turn Mrs. Daunt down for having a German under her roof.

Daisy took life calmly as persons of adipose deposit not infrequently do.

"S'long as she doesn't want to let bombs off from the sausage machine I don't mind where she was born," said Daisy comfortably.

The reason the war was to blame, this particular morning, for making breakfast late, was because Daisy was late in setting the table, just as she was always late for everything.

But she might not be discharged on that account, because where else might be found so unprejudiced a person?

CHAPTER VI.

BACON AND NEWS OF THE DAY.

THE reason that Daisy was late in setting her table was, that she had stopped to read in the just-arrived morning papers all the frightful details of the sinking of a great passenger steamer.

Furthermore, she had stopped to ascertain pointedly from Gertrud what her opinion *now* was of her old Kaiser.

And Gertrud had stopped to give that opinion.

Mrs. Daunt had taken Daisy aside weeks before and had strictly forbidden her to mention international subjects to Gertrud.

She had also taken Gertrud aside and laid the same embargo upon her with respect to Daisy.

The result was they always carefully closed

the kitchen door before they mentioned such matters to each other.

And they impressed it upon Ian, who took an unholy delight in these conflicts, that it was a point of honour with him not to mention such matters upstairs.

But on this particular morning it certainly delayed breakfast.

There were a certain number of patients already in the waiting-room, for the Doctor's morning hours at home were half-past eight to half-past ten, and an early arrival meant precedence, unless an appointment had been made.

He filled in the time while he awaited a summons to the breakfast-table by seeing two or three of these.

Dee, also at a loose end while she awaited "the cow jumped over the moon" and its contents; Dee also filled in her time by seeing a few of the patients. Why not? Her father had pointedly closed the consulting-room door in her face; her mother had gone to speed breakfast; nor Gertrud, nor Daisy, nor even Ian were "keeping an eye on her."

"'No,' she said firmly, 'I might catch your 'zeezes.'"

Dee put a rosy, inquiring little face into the waiting-room door.

"Why, you dear little girl—you bonny little thing, come and say good morning!" cried an elderly lady who was sitting by the table.

The child came in, cautiously.

There was a workman there with a finger to be strapped up; a dressmaker to have her eyes looked at; a schoolgirl for stitches to be taken out of a hockey injury; an elderly lady and a business man or two. They were weary of looking at each other and anxious to get on their way to town and to their business; the soft-faced little child made a not unwelcome diversion.

"Come here, my dear," said the elderly lady, pleasantly; she was a grandmother and quite aware of her irresistible way with small children. Already her fingers were fumbling in her handbag for one of the tiny dolls that generally dwelt there.

Dee felt the charm—realised that the fingers were fumbling for something quite fascinating.

"I can't," she said, stopping dead with a prodigious sigh.

"Why can't you?" said the lady, amused. "Have you no legs?"

The child looked round the table at the waiting people.

"Some of you might kiss me," she said, shaking her head sorrowfully.

"And why not?" said the grandmother. "I should like to very much indeed."

But her father's word was real law to Dee.

"No," she said firmly, "I might catch your 'zeezes." She sighed again and slipped away to find something, somewhere, to make up for the fascination of the lady with the handbag. Diseases were really very vexatious drawbacks to interesting people.

But at last breakfast was ready.

"How's de war, Daddie?" said Dee, settling into her high chair at her father's elbow and superintending him as he unfolded the morning paper.

"Quite well, thank you, Miss Daunt," he replied.

"Zat's right," said Dee heartily, and addressed herself without more ado to the always pleasant task of working through con-

siderable deposits of bread and milk to bring the beloved cow and the moon and the little dog to light.

Occasionally, Dr. and Mrs. Daunt exchanged words about the gigantic disaster over the papers in which they were both absorbed; once or twice they spoke in French, deeming the discussion of such frightful things not food for their babes. Ian looked on restlessly. He had listened to the most minute and gruesome of the details when they were being discussed by Daisy and the milkman, and it was vexatious that his thirst for still more should be interfered with. He finished his porridge gloomily. He took the top off his egg without pretending anything—not even that it was the head of the enemy.

"Father," he said at last.

"My son," said the Doctor.

Ian respected the morning paper as a rule, and let it be read in peace, but really there had to be exceptions.

"Father, Daisy says Mr. Schwarz's name is down on the slate to be here at ten o'clock," he said, challengingly.

" Um, yes," said his father. " Dinky, this is pretty beastly coffee. Try another brand."

" Father,"—the boy's eyes were excited— " couldn't you poisonous gas him or something ? I could help. I'd hold his feet while you tied them ! "

Dr. Daunt hastily tried to explain to the mind of eight years old the reason that war with the soldiers did not mean war with civilians, and that people must be made well by doctors whatever their nationality. Ian thought the arguments very poor.

" He might have a bomb in his pocket and let it off in your room when you start to cure him," he said.

The Doctor professed himself willing to take the risk and retired behind his paper again.

" Daddie," said Dee.

" My daughter."

" Bake, Daddie," said Dee.

The Doctor gravely cut a tiny strip of bacon from the piece he had just taken on his own plate, and he laid it on the clean plate near him upon which Mary, Mary, quite

contrary, watered silver bells and cockle-shells and columbines all in a row.

"Sanks, darling," said Dee.

The Doctor went back to his paper.

"Daddie!" said Dee.

There was pained surprise in her tone. He looked at her inquiringly.

"You forgetted Boodle, Daddie," said the child.

He cut another strip, a smaller one still, and laid it carefully on the nose of Boodle, who was, of course, squeezed up in his daughter's high chair partaking of everything.

He apologised handsomely for the omission and offered the dear beast a drink from his coffee-cup as a means of amends. The dear beast took it, and Dee dried its mouth on her feeder with great satisfaction.

"Father," said Ian restlessly

"Hello, hello."

"Well, couldn't you get him out to the garage to look at something, and then sun'ly shut the door and intern him fast. I'd help. I can push like anything."

But the Doctor was really deep in a leader.

"H'sh, darling," said Mrs. Daunt. "Poor Daddie has to go in a minute."

Ian h'shed, with unhappy eyes.

When the Doctor laid down his paper and took up the appointment slate, whereon the unspeakable Mr. Schwarz lurked in the midst of perfectly innocent persons, he cast an eye towards his son.

"Don't go up to the Middletons to-day, Ian, old chap," he said. "I don't like Con's throat too well."

"Oh, I say, Dad!"

"Yes, I'm sorry. I'll be going in to look at him on my rounds, and if it's nothing I'll tell you at lunch and you shall go this afternoon."

"But I want to see if he knows about the big ship being sunk," said Ian feverishly.

"I'm sorry, old chap. When the patients have all gone perhaps mother will let you ring him up."

"But Dad——"

"Silence, Ian."

"Dad! If we tied somefink round his mouth so he couldn't breaf on me." In

strenuous moments Ian's "th's" became very nearly allied to those of Dee.

"Did you hear me tell you to be silent, sir?"

"Yes—but, Dad——"

"Ian—go and stand quite still on that chair for ten minutes—till the clock strikes nine."

"Yes, Daddie."

The boy plunged at the chair, scrambled up and stood there with his hands behind him, the tears running down his face, the unmanly, miserable tears that he so despised and yet that would come in terrible moments like these.

Dee hovered round his feet, stroking them lovingly.

"Poor!" she said. "Oh, poor! He's good now, Daddie—kite good."

But the Doctor had to brush past her and go, two stairs at a time, up to the patients who were fast growing in number.

It was not until ten o'clock that he had a moment to think of his family again, and then a vision of the eager little boy blindly fighting

tears on a chair came back to him with a rush. For Mr. Heinrich Schwarz was in the chair opposite to him ponderously setting out all the symptoms of heavy indigestion, and as the Doctor listened to, and looked at, and a little pondered, the alien, his eye was suddenly caught by a gleam of metal.

The sixth battalion of Hussars, with fixed bayonets, occupied the corner of the revolving bookcase that was right at the elbow of the " patient's " chair.

Half hidden by a sheet of paper, and yet in a strong situation on the desk at his own elbow, stood Nelson, Wellington, General Gordon, and the scarred chief of the Zulus.

The little boy had watched for a moment while his father was seeing a patient out of the front door, and had slipped in to safely fortify the position before the enemy could arrive.

CHAPTER VII.

NUMBER SEVEN, TRAFALGAR TERRACE.

"HELLO, that you, John of Daunt? I thought it was a German cannon-ball," said Mr. Middleton, just stepping nimbly off his doorstep in time to avoid being collided with by the violent inrush of his son's friend of friends.

Ian was too excited even to remove his cap, a point so tremendously insisted upon by his mother that he rarely forgot it.

He just stood there, as a little dog stands with its tongue hanging out and its breath coming quickly.

"And how are you this morning, John of Daunt?" Mr. Middleton pursued genially. "And how much mischief have you managed thus early in the day? And how much have you got on the cards to be accomplished before you go to bed?"

Ian answered these pleasantries with a hurried smile, and looked anxiously at the house.

"No," said Mr. Middleton, "Con can wait. Suppose you give me the pleasure of your company for five minutes or so. Suppose you walk down to the tram with me, as Con can't. It won't keep you long."

Ian sighed, but was forced to comply. Fathers were fathers after all. He turned and walked side by side with the burly parent of his friend.

The burly parent regarded him enviously. This young dare-devil, whose exploits he knew better than most, was exactly the manner of son he would have ordered for himself if sons could have been ordered from approved models. He liked the set of the young head, the fire of the young eyes, the stinging colour in the young face; he liked the "cheek" of the little beggar, who was never afraid of him, as Con was nearly always afraid.

That small boy whom he had left behind him shut up in a bedroom with flannel round his neck, that small boy, Con, the only son

vouchsafed to him amid a quiverful of five daughters, filled him with but a fretful fondness. He was such a weakly, easily intimidated little fellow, he was so obedient, so anxious to please, so conscientious—such a weak replica of two or three of the little girls, that his father hailed Con's companionship for him with heartiest favour, and would hear none of the misgivings about it to which his wife was prone.

"If I gave you a shilling, John of Daunt," he said as they walked along, "how ill could you make yourself with it?"

Ian's eyes sparkled; money was the most pressing need of the moment.

"Are you having me?" he said, doubting such dazzling fortune. His own money-box, just forced open with the tin-opener (his thumb was still bleeding from it) had only yielded twopence, and it was unlikely that Con's held much more, since crackers had just begun to be displayed ready for Eight-Hour Day in the toyshop of the man who was subject to fits.

"No," said Mr. Middleton, "my intentions are perfectly honest. I merely ask because I

desire information. How ill can a boy make himself for a shilling ? "

" Oh, I shouldn't eat it all myself," said Ian comfortingly.

" N-n-no. That's just what I was afraid of," agreed Mr. Middleton. " You see, you've got the digestion of an emu, but Con hasn't. Last shilling I gave you we were up all night with Con and had to ring up for your father."

" Oh, that time ! " said Ian, recollecting with an effort ; " yes, we're not going to get water-melon at that shop again. I got a pain too that time."

" Oh, you did, did you ? I shouldn't have expected it," said Mr. Middleton. " But, after all, it doesn't matter so much you getting a pain with your father so handy. When Con gets a water-melon pain it's a different matter. It costs me ten-and-six."

" The med'sin's the same," said Ian, shuddering suddenly at the remembrance. Then he headed Mr. Middleton firmly back to the point at issue.

" Are you having me—about the shilling ? " he said.

"If you'll pass me your word as a gentleman that it shan't be water-melon," said Mr. Middleton.

"They've gone out," said Ian succinctly.

"But what about green peaches," said Mr. Middleton warily. "They are in, doubtless, and I've an uncomfortable recollection of green peaches once costing me a guinea, without counting the chemist."

"Oh, those!" said Ian. "We didn't buy those, Mr. Middleton. I just got them off a tree in the next door yard."

"Cigarettes, also, I have an objection to—for Con," said Mr. Middleton. "Those last laid him out rather badly."

"They made me pretty sick, too," confessed Ian magnanimously. "I won't get cigarettes with it, Mr. Middleton, true's faith."

"Well, here you are, and here's my tram." The burly gentleman disbursed the shilling, nodded to the glad-eyed boy, and was gone.

Ian went bursting back again along the street, bursting into the gate of No. 7 again, bursting in through the kitchen and up the steps from the basement, and up the stairs to

the dining-room, used in this house for the purpose for which it was architecturally designed.

He thought he knew, from long knowledge of the family, precisely what the occupations of each individual member of it would be at this hour—a little after half-past nine.

Mrs. Middleton would be still in bed; she was a semi-invalid and never rose until midday; as soon as she heard him she would call him into her room and to her bedside and admonish him about all the things he was not to let Con do on any account. And he would stand beside her and count the flowers on her flowered dressing-jacket, and count the buttons on it and wonder if they were real oyster pearl or made-up pearl, and count the bottles of medicine on the table, and promise with great assurance.

Two little girls would be playing shop on the front balcony with scales and weights and kitchen stores; he despised these little girls, they were so like each other and so inadventurous and so beyond him in the school they all attended when it was not, as it was to-day, closed for the holidays.

The next two little girls in the family he took no notice of whatever. They were perfectly uninteresting persons with long, light plaits that he did not even have a temptation to pull. They were about twelve and fourteen years of age and were in the upper part of the school he attended.

With the next girl, Barbara, he was passionately in love. She was eighteen, and did her hair up for afternoons, though she found it such a difficult matter yet that she usually came to breakfast with it hanging down her back.

She generally seemed to have a chocolate-box in her hand when Ian was about, and she always held it out to him with an invitation to "take one." When he took one, timidly—she was the only person in the world with whom he was really timid—she used to laugh and show her gleaming teeth—he idolised her teeth—and tell him to take more. Upon which he would take two and back away hastily; he could not bear to think of depriving her of more. His mode of procedure with the chocolates themselves was always

the same ; he ate the first one from beginning to end ; the second he sucked half-way through, then wrapped it carefully up in its silver paper again and put it away to treasure in his pocket. His mother used to remove the tokens each week and patiently sponge the little pockets clean again.

When he put his head into the dining-room this particular morning Barbara was the only member of the family present.

She was explaining sorrowfully to her dearest friend, who, in a black velvet foraging cap and her new winter furs, had just come to call for her to go shopping, that she had to stay at home and look after Con, who seemed on the verge of another of his illnesses. No, she must not be tempted out, even though Minter & Co. had the sweetest of waist-belts at one-and-elevenpence which would all assuredly have gone by Monday. Her mother was too ill to get up at all ; Amy and Ida had gone to play in a basketball match ; Effie and Noela had to be kept happy and kept away from Con, who, though up and dressed, was in isolation in his bedroom.

"But you have two servants," grumbled the dearest friend; "surely they can keep an eye on the children? It is not as if they were babies."

"But the Doctor is coming to Con," explained Barbara. "I'll have to be here to see what he says, and get the boy to bed again if he has to go. He really is the unluckiest youngster. He's been crying his eyes out just now because they've rung up from the Daunts to say his chum can't come up to-day."

"Well, all I can say is, I'm glad my little brothers are big brothers," said the dearest friend, sighing in disgust. "I did want you to come. However, I won't catch this tram, I'll wait till the next, and you can help me look over these patterns of *crêpe de chine*. There's a lovely apricot one, only I'd have to get new shoes to match. You've got time enough for that, haven't you, or have you to go and sit on top of Con to keep him safe?"

"Oh, no," said Barbara, "no, I've just made him a cup of paste, and he's sticking postage stamps in his album. He'll be all

right for an hour or two. He always is all right as long as that little demon Ian isn't here to lead him into mischief."

At this point that little demon Ian, who had been standing, *perdu*, in the doorway, withdrew again unnoticed.

He had not gone right into the room when he discovered it was in possession of the enemy. The dearest friend was always the enemy to the two small boys; they spoke of her as "The Silly Rabbit" between themselves, both of them sternly disapproving of the way she laughed, the high heels upon which she tottered, and the millinery she affected!

Ian had merely stood contemptuously absorbing the soldier-cap on her head and looking occasionally, with wistfulness, at Barbara's gloriously loose gold hair.

But at the reference to himself he withdrew hastily, much stung.

However, he knew now, without asking, where to find Con.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF CON AND THE DACHSHUND.

"No important vices and no inclination to commit robbery on a large scale."—MARK TWAIN.

CON was laboriously pasting away, perfectly happy.

He had forgotten that he was uselessly clad in his grey suit, grey stockings with the tops turned down with red, and his Allies' tie, even though he had had enough scolding to make him remember the fact, having been caught by his father at the telephone, lightly attired in his pyjamas, what time he inquired of Ian the requisite details for the costume of the day.

He had forgotten this fact; he had forgotten, too, the unbearable curiosity from which he had suffered about his friend's references to slippery floors and the cleaning of them.

He had even mercifully forgotten that the Doctor was coming to see him, and would, without a doubt, stick a silver spoon down his throat and give him that throttling, choking sensation he so intolerably dreaded.

He had even forgotten that his head felt heavy and his hands hot, and that he had to keep his mouth open and his tongue well to one side, to breathe with any comfort at all.

The tears on his face were almost smeared dry, almost obliterated with paste.

He was intensely happy.

Amy and Ida also collected stamps and had the most elaborate albums and a most stupendous knowledge of geography. They talked in low, weighty tones to each other as they sorted and stuck in—they used gummed-paper hinges for their albums, despising paste; they talked of pfenniges and francs, and centimos, and reis and pesos; they spoke familiarly of the Lombard-Venetian states, and Shanghai, of Bosnia and Herzegovina, of Zanzibar and the Seychelles, and whether stamps of these places should go under the headings of the Niger Coast, Oil Rivers, or be

placed on the South African page. They sometimes spent an entire hour trying to settle between themselves just upon which one of the hundreds of little squares in their albums one of the hundreds of stamps in their possession should go.

Con, however, held steadily on to his own system, although he took interest in theirs, and, when they settled down to their albums, generally stood by to be ready to receive any stamps that they were discarding.

He intensely liked his own system.

He kept ladies on one page—queens or symbolic figures, it was all one to him—kings and dukes and chiefs on another. One he gave up to steamships, one to trains—the exuberance of the United States of America in this respect gave him great pleasure. On another—perhaps the best loved of all—he kept his birds and his animals. The giraffe, eating the palm-tree of Nyassa, the galloping camel of the Soudan, the half-cent Newfoundland dog and two-cent swimming fish, the Siberian elephant, even his own country's past issue of kangaroo and emu afforded

him passionate delight. To have squandered them here, there, and everywhere in his album would have been inconceivable to him.

This morning Barbara had almost overflooded his heart with happiness by presenting him with some stamps that had just come to her "from the war."

"I enclose some Egyptian and Algerian stamps," one of her faithful warrior friends had written to her from the Dardanelles. "I remember how that little beggar Con used to be always coming into your drawing-room hounding at me to look at his album when I wished him anywhere in the world but in your drawing-room."

"That little beggar Con" was pasting them in at the present moment as if they were holy things, with the watermark of the archangels Michael and Gabriel distinct upon them.

Into him rushed Ian, Ian, grey-suited, grey-stockinged, and gird about the neck with an Allies' tie.

Con fell off his chair, he knocked the cup of liquid paste over with his arm; the horrid

stuff went all over the "stamps from the war"; he did not care a button.

"Hullo," he said.

"Hullo," said Ian.

There was a great matter to be told, a matter of immensest importance; it had to be told to its uttermost detail and yet with not one superfluous word. Do little boys in moments like this simply rub noses and make the thing accomplished?

It is easier for us to trace over the ground of the great matter, the matter of immensest importance, and leave the method of the communication of it to Con, imagined.

At half-past ten Mr. Schwarz had come, Mr. Heinrich Friedrich Schwarz, one time a citizen of the unspeakable Fatherland, now naturalised inhabitant of civilised Australia and a martyr to indigestion—"And serve him jolly well right," Daisy would have concluded.

Mr. Schwarz had come and had been through the usual routine of patients. He had stood on the mat and rung the bell; he had been ushered into the hall by Daisy

and had put his large umbrella in the umbrella-stand, hung his large overcoat on the hall-stand and carried his large felt hat with him into the waiting-room firmly upon his head.

The presence of ladies there did not serve to remove it; he had indigestion, and no one with indigestion could be expected to observe the amenities of life; besides, they were only Australians.

He turned over the pages of journals lying on the table, *The Town and Country Journal, The Bulletin, The Sydney Mail.* He closed them bitterly. He had an album at home in which he pasted, carefully, as Con did postage stamps, all the cartoons and insulting remarks he came across about the Kaiser; the collection would be valuable when "Der Tag" arrived. But this morning even that zest failed him, so profound was his indigestion.

Then he was beckoned by Daisy to go to the consulting-room—not in his proper turn—Daisy had carefully attended to that, as he had noticed with silent fury—and to the consulting-room he went with sulky dignity.

We have finished with Mr. Heinrich Friedrich Schwarz.

"Ian!" said Daisy, going down to the basement and through the back door and out into the yard, where the boy was prowling about his father's car that a mechanic had just brought back cleaned and ready from the big garage not far away. "Ian! where are you?" She called him Master Ian in the presence of his parents or visitors.

"What?" said Ian, alert instantly at the excitement in her voice.

"Come and look what that brute of a German has had the impudence to bring with him and tie to our railings," said Daisy.

Ian shot himself into the house again and to the kitchen window that commanded the view of the railings.

Tied to it, and with a preposterously long tongue hanging loosely out, was a dachshund of the most pronounced type.

Its body seemed a yard, at least, in length, and looked like a live, distorted cylinder supported on ridiculously inadequate and crooked legs. Its pendulous ears

drooped down to its shoulders, hiding its keen, intelligent eyes.

It was the first time in his life that Ian had seen this breed of dog; there have to be first times with everything.

He gazed at it in utter silence.

"Yes," said Daisy, "you may well look. That's the kind of dog Germings keep."

"It iss a ferry gut dog indeed," said Gertrud warmly. "Look at its tail, ach, it iss a beaudiful dog, Master Ian—you mustn't listen to her."

But Ian did listen, and greedily.

"That dog," said Daisy, "ought to be shot and poisoned and interned. Don't know what the police are thinking of to let them be taken walking in the same street as human beings. Look at its tail, Gertrud says. Yes, look at it; it's wagging, isn't it?"

It was wagging. No one could deny the fact.

"Do you know why it's wagging?" said Daisy, addressing herself to Ian.

Ian had the orthodox theories as to the reason dogs wagged their tails, but so

awful was Daisy's tone, he did not venture to mention them.

Instead he said "Why?" in a subdued tone.

"That dog's tail's wagging because it knows about the sinking of the big ship," said Daisy; "it's just standing there gloating."

Now this was serious, deeply serious. Ian breathed hard and his colour went and came.

"Fiddle-de-doodle," said Gertrud, and thought she had so fine and expressive an English idiom in the phrase that she continued washing up with an unruffled demeanour.

"That dog," said Daisy, "do you know the only thing it will eat? Liver of geese torn out alive. I'm not having you."

"Torn out alive!" repeated Ian, more and more stunned.

"It's as true as death. Ask any one. They call it patty de foo. I've read all about it," said Daisy. "Do you think he'd look at the good chop Gertrud throwed him? He just turned his lip over and sneered. I seed him."

It was absolutely true; a perfectly good chop lay untouched at the hound's feet.

Ian's chest rose and fell.

"Tied on to our railings!" continued Daisy; "and when he unties it and takes it along again d'you know what he teaches it to do?"

"No," muttered Ian, pale and prepared for anything.

"To bite little girls' legs who only wear socks," said Daisy.

Ian clenched and unclenched his hands. Dee was in socks still.

His mother came into the kitchen to give some orders, Dee at her heels.

"Yes'm—I thought it was the Doctor's bell, m'm," said Daisy. "I was just going, only Master Ian 'ere he stopped me." She plunged at the basement stairs.

"Mother," said Ian in a voice that he just kept free from its intense emotion, "look at that dog."

"Um," said his mother. "You might egg and breadcrumb the cutlets, Gertrud, and be sure to serve sliced lemon with them."

"Tied to our railings, Mother!" said Ian

"Yes, darling, I suppose he thought it would run away if he didn't," said Mrs. Daunt. "And what about the puddings, Gertrud?"

"Mother," said Ian desperately, "have you looked at it? It—it isn't just a plain dog."

The tone of voice caught the mother's attention a moment. She really looked at the dog.

"Well, I think it is—a very plain dog," she said, laughing. "I never did like them."

"What's ze matter wif the doggie," Dee inquired, peering out at it. "Poor old doggie, untie him up, Inie."

"I think Ian considers its legs are too short," said Mrs. Daunt.

Dee examined the animal critically.

"Zey reach yite down to the gwound, Inie," she said.

"Mother," said Ian, "that dog. Mother—look here. That dog, Mother——"

"Darling," said Mrs. Daunt, "don't interrupt me. Gertrud is waiting for the orders, and everything is behind-hand. I have to

go out in half an hour, and there are a thousand things to do."

Ian interrupted no more. He stood stock still in the window, gazing at the dog.

And this was the matter, the matter of immensest importance, that as soon as ever might be, he rushed to tell Con.

Con was in possession now of the whole thing to its minutest detail; so graphic was the communication that the boy could have drawn you the animal almost to scale; its legs, its tail, the length and the frightful crookedness of its round body, its hanging ears; he would even not have left out from the picture the chop lying sneered at on the ground. He could have written, if any one had lent a hand with the spelling, a breathless and heart-stirring account of the unspeakable habits and customs of the beast.

That Ian proposed at once to rid the earth of the offender followed as a matter of course.

That Ian also proposed to enlist his own aid in the matter was also a matter of course.

Con stood glowing, gazing at his friend admiringly and expectantly, but quite silent.

The bolder brain was planning the execution of the matter; it was his part to stand by and follow.

"Come on," said Ian at last, "we must start. Your Mother's door's shut, so that's all right. The Silly Rabbit's in the dining-room, so that's all right; the door's nearly shut, and we can slip past. No one else is about, they're washing up. I looked. Come on."

Con came on.

"H'sh," said Barbara once, "I'm sure that's Con coughing."

"Well," said the dear friend impatiently, "you don't have to go every time he coughs, do you?"

"No, of course not," said Barbara, "I only thought——" She went back willingly enough to the fascination of patterns of *crêpe de chine*.

Out in the street, well round the corner, consideration came to considerate little Con.

"I say, Jo," he said nervously, "we're forgetting my froat, aren't we?" He touched the flannel bandage apologetically.

Ian bent his eyes upon him critically a

whole moment. He considered him from head to foot.

"Take it off," he said as a result of the thought, "then no one will be able to tell."

Con hesitated one second.

"Oh, shake it up, Bill," Ian said impatiently.

Con obediently unwound the bandage and stuffed it into his pocket.

No convulsion of nature happened; not even the face of the sun was darkened.

There were two small boys, of about an age and nearly a size, walking along a busy street, blind to the busy street. They had their heads a little lowered and conversed earnestly.

Two small boys walking together and talking very low. Is there a commoner sight in all the world?

"'A pennyworth of poison, please,' Ian said politely."

CHAPTER IX.

"A PENNYWORTH OF POISON, PLEASE."

NOW it is not to be imagined that the matter is going to be as simple as it may seem at this particular point.

The dog was not any longer tied to the railings of No. 7, Trafalgar Terrace, and Ian was uncomfortably aware of this fact. While he had rushed upstairs from the kitchen and his callous mother, and had gone plunging about the different rooms, thought too hot to find anything at all to do, the dog had been quietly taken away.

Still, the affair now only needed the greater skill and daring.

The first thing was to find out where the animal lived, and moved and had its being, in the intervals between biting little girls' legs and being tied to railings.

A little meditative kicking at the kerbstone precipitated thought. Ian plunged into the Post Office, followed by the faithful Con.

He took off his cap to the postmaster in his best manner.

"Will you tell me where Mr. Schwarz the German lives, please?" he asked.

The postmaster knew and respected warmly the Doctor's only son. He got the directory down himself and ran the name down into the "S" columns and then, no difficult matter, into the "Sch" division.

"There's two of them," he said, "Hans Augustus Schwarz and Heinrich Friedrich Schwarz. Which do you want, sonnie?"

This was rather a blow. Daisy had mentioned no Christian names.

"He's got a dog," said Ian after a moment's searching of the question as to whether he was in any way betraying himself.

"With short legs," supplemented Con eagerly, "and its body is——"

Ian trod on his foot so heavily that he became silent at once.

"Dogs are pretty common belongings,"

smiled the postmaster. " I've got a dog myself."

" Give me both their addresses," Ian said after mature deliberation, and the kindly postmaster wrote " ' Drachenfels,' Wattle Street," and " ' Ehrenbreitenstein,' Park Avenue," down on a slip of paper.

The boys went on their way again.

At the chemist's Ian stopped and began his low whispering to Con again. You would have imagined them two nice little boys wondering over the green and red fluid in the great bottles.

" We've got to poison him first," Ian told his lieutenant.

" Right O ! " said Con cheerfully.

They went into the shop.

" A pennyworth of poison, please," Ian said politely.

" Of what variety, sir ? " replied the chemist's assistant, also politely.

" Very deadly," said Ian, deeply in earnest, and pondering heavily whether a pennyworth would be sufficient or whether he should have ordered two pennyworth.

The assistant searched his face just one second, but decided that it was far too young and chubby and innocent for any mischief.

"What's it for?" he asked. "Rats?"

Ian nearly thanked him for the kind assistance. "We've got an awful lot," he said. "They even eat the potatoes."

"Whose boy are you?"

"Dr. Daunt's."

"Oh, well, that's all right, of course. You'd better have 'Rough on Rats.' But it's sixpence, sonnie, we don't sell pennyworths."

This was another blow; still, it had to be met with fortitude. Ian disbursed half of the shilling with which Mr. Middleton had presented him, and received the package. But the thought gnawed, "What if it would only poison rats and not distorted German dogs?"

The chemist's assistant, however, seemed there expressly to forward his plans.

"Mind you don't leave any of it lying about where your dog or cat can get it," he said, "or there won't be any dog or cat."

"Thank you very much," said Ian, beaming at him and hurrying away.

It seemed an endless business.

They stopped at a grocer's, and the whispering outside the shop-window began again. You would have thought them two nice little boys longing for the raisins and dates in the window.

"When he's poisoned, Bill," said Ian, "we've got to drown him. We shall want a potato bag to carry his body in."

"Right O!" said Con cheerily. "They're sure to sell them here."

Empty potato bags were not as cheap as one might have thought, remembering how worthless they look lying in the yard after the potatoes have been removed from them.

The grocer estimated the value of one at sixpence, which was clearly impossible, seeing eightpence was the entire capital left, and there were other demands to be satisfied.

Ian protested hotly.

"Sixpence! For a dirty old bag! Come off!" he said. "You ought to be glad to give them away."

"That so?" said the grocer, who had the honour of his customer's acquaintance. "I

don't know my business, it's clear. I only give them away for sixpence."

"Tuppence," said Ian. "I'll go to tuppence, but no more."

"Sixpence," said the grocer.

"Tuppence," said Ian. It seemed like a deadlock.

"Tell you," said Ian, "I'll fight you for it."

He had fought the grocer before this in their own backyard when he was delivering goods, the rules of the combat being that the grocer fought with one of his hands and arms and Ian with two. The boy plainly had an urgent need for the bag, and the grocer had been a boy himself when twopence was twopence.

"Done," he said. "Twopence down now, and fourpence more when I knock you out on Saturday. We'll get Miss Daisy to umpire for us."

So now the confederates had a potato bag, a box of poison, and a capital of sixpence.

But the next step was one that furrowed Ian's young brow with care.

How in the world did one obtain the liver of a goose torn out alive?

It were useless to think of offering the proposed victim deadly poison neat. It must be prepared with a skilful hand and placed upon something the victim had a partiality for, in a similar way that Gertrud used toasted cheese when she was trying to reduce the number of rats.

The liver of a goose must be obtained without delay.

Ian bethought himself of his friend, little Field, the butcher's son, and in a few minutes the two of them were hovering among the hanging carcases of John James Field, "Family Butcher and Small Goods Delivered Daily."

Ian did not want five pounds of silverside of the round, or a scrag end of mutton or even sixpennyworth of sausages after the manner of most small boys who entered the establishment. He merely wanted Jimmie.

The butcher recognised, as did every one in the suburb, the well-known Damon and Pythias, and was glad that Jimmie should be wanted by them. He sent his son to an expensive school for the express purpose of providing him with nice friends.

"Jimmie!" he shouted.

But as Jimmie did not appear, and as a respected customer did, he pointed the way to the back yard and said benignly that Jimmie was sure to be somewhere about the sheds.

The boys went in search of him.

Now Jimmie heartily disliked butchery, but had a passion for horses. The reason he was in the yard was that the great meat-cart had just been backed into it and the great horses that knew him so well were being fed.

"Hullo," said Ian.

"'Ullo," said Con.

"'Lo," responded Jimmie, heartily glad to see them. He came forward and did his duties as host very creditably. He gave the name and pedigree and age of the horses, the distance they covered from the market every day; he pointed out the white star on the forehead of one and the white fore-foot of the other.

But Ian was plainly not listening, and was roaming about restlessly.

Jimmie was forced to various details of his

trade; yes, blood from the cart was run away down this drain; yes, refuse meat was put into those bins; yes, that heap of stuff in the cart was liver.

"Goose's liver?" asked Ian thirstily.

"Oh, no, just calves'! We don't have poultry."

Ian took him a little aside for the next question; he did not like it too well himself, but the urgency of his affair demanded it.

"Were the calves ever alive when——"

Jimmie looked quite upset himself, and explained the quick despatch of animals at the killing yards. Then he broke off a moment.

"What's the matter with Con?" he said.

Damon glanced at Pythias.

"He's sick," he said in disgust. "He doesn't like blood and things. Get him a glass of water."

Jimmie ran for one and succoured Con with much kindness, but Con looked past him very apologetically to Ian.

"I'm all right, Jo," he protested with a white little smile, "don't go without me, Jo."

They set off again, leaving Jim quite at a

loss to account for their sudden visit. He had suggested, even begged, to accompany them wherever it was they were bound, but Ian had steadily refused him.

He did not know that his schoolfellow had been sorely tempted to say yes and bid Con run home, just as a general about to attack a position, might discard a weak lieutenant in favour of one he knew well to be stronger and of infinitely more use.

But Con was Con, twined in with all the warm fibres of his being.

"Come on, you silly ass," he said, and started off again, Con, watery about the eyes, blue and white about the face, shaky about the legs, following happily behind.

The desired article was obtained, and was in a parcel in Ian's bursting pockets. A delicatessen shop suddenly offering itself as they went along, Ian had bethought himself of asking his question at the counter; he knew it was a "Germing" shop, since he had often been in it with Gertrud or Daisy.

"The liver of a goose?" It was plainly no roc's egg here; the woman produced an

article from a dish in a most everyday fashion.

"You'd better go and wait outside," Ian advised his friend, and Con retired thankfully.

Ian leaned over the counter and spoke in a low voice.

"Torn out alive, please," he said quietly but firmly.

But the woman had not much English; the weights and measures, and English money, ham, Frankfürt sausage, pickled cucumber, veal and ham pies, and so on, comprised her vocabulary, and her husband was absent. She merely shook her head, wrapped the little parcel up, and said "Sheekspence, dank you."

So they went on their way again, their preparations finished. Ian would have liked more assurance on his last point; he did not like to contemplate the beast "sneering" at what he was about to offer it. Still, one could not have everything.

They went on their way again, their preparations finished.

CHAPTER X.

THE DARK DOING.

WATTLE STREET and Park Avenue lay at opposite ends of the suburb, as Ian discovered when he attacked this part of the question. He decided to try Wattle Street first, and he went up and down long streets, Con keeping up as well as might be expected, seeing that his feet were still in their grey felt bedroom slippers, which fell off tiresomely at the heels.

"Drachenfels" was a stout, prosperous-looking house with an ornamental stone wall enclosing its front garden.

"Cellars under those walls," said Ian, "chock-full of bombs and things. Police took them away. See that tower place—that's where they sit to spy on our transports." Daisy's facility of invention was contagious.

Con looked properly impressed.

But there was no short-legged dog to be seen in the garden; there were merely two pleasant-looking girls playing tennis.

"They keep it in the back yard, of course," said Ian, and led the way down the nearest side street.

He clambered up on the fence to make a survey of the situation, and found Fate playing into his very hands. The kennel stood in the yard not five feet from the identical spot upon which he was perched.

He hung over the fence, head downwards, lower and lower. Con had to hold on to his heels to keep him from going over altogether; then he returned from his investigations. He had been able to see into the kennel through a crack, and the dog was within, assuredly within.

And now the dark work was done in the security of the deserted back lane. The morsel from the delicatessen shop was unwrapped and with Con's birthday-knife was heavily spread over with the deadly poison.

Nothing remained but to place the bait at

the kennel door, await the instantaneous death, put the body in the bag and make off with it.

The yard was absolutely deserted, though part of the tennis-court ran along the side of it, and a circumspective eye had to be kept upon the two players.

Ian swarmed up his fence again and stealthily lowered himself down the other side, keeping behind the bushes as much as possible. No Australian at the Dardanelles ever crept towards the Turks with a higher, faster-beating heart.

He crouched behind the kennel, and then with a very, very careful hand reached forward and laid the bait at the door of it ; the dog's paw came out instantly and dragged it in. The deed was done.

The next second a clamour arose as if the gates of Bedlam had been suddenly opened.

The two girls from the tennis court came flying wildly to the rescue, racquets in hand.

" He's savage. Don't you touch that dog—come away, quick," they shouted, seeing a small boy engaged in what appeared to be

mortal combat with their dog. "Run, run, he's on a chain, he can't come after you."

But the small boy made no effort to run; he seemed to be trying to get something out of the kennel, and the dog was fighting him for it. They were both tangled up with the chain. There seemed moments when they were both locked in each other's embrace. The wild, white face of another little boy sometimes appeared at the top of the fence and sometimes fell away; he seemed to be trying hard to get over and failing every time.

One girl hit the dog heavy blows with her racquet—the other dragged Ian away, but not before he had a messy-looking piece of substance safely in his hand.

"Wrong d-d-d-dog," he stuttered in explanation, and looked to where an innocent, if savage, brown retriever was glaring at him from a safe distance.

Not even was it the dwelling of a Hun. Hans Gustav Schwarz had sailed for Germany as soon as the war broke out, and "Drachenfels" had just become inhabited by staunch Australians who had a new

name, "The Gunyah," ready to replace the hateful-looking "Drachenfels," as soon as a carpenter could be found to bring a ladder and take it down.

But this Ian did not know; he merely stood there panting as fiercely as the dog itself. He hardly knew yet that he was hurt.

"D-D-D-didn't get even a l-l-lick," he said; "isn't pup-pup-poisoned a b-bit."

The girl who was not engaged in subduing the dog had time to let her eyes see what an unusually nice little boy this was who stood before her—such wildly excited eyes, such glowing cheeks, such a chubby, real "mother's" boy. She quite wanted to hug him, while she found out what had been happening. Then horror came into her eyes.

"Oh, his hand—oh, the wretch bit him. You poor darling! Oh, look at his hand."

And now Ian, and Con on the fence, and the elder girl, who was keeping the dog crouched down by the mere force of her threateningly uplifted racquet, looked at Ian's left hand and found it torn and bleeding.

"Now, don't be silly, Edith," commanded

the elder girl. "Take him into the house quickly and bathe it, and be putting boracic on till I come. There's no one at home but us, remember. I've got to fix this chain; it's nearly off the ring. I'll come in a few minutes. Do it like we learned at the First Aid class. Go with this girl, little boy, quickly."

But the little boy was standing very still. Two waves had washed over him. The first was one of passionate desire that Barbara could see how he was bleeding; the second one of passionate longing for his mother's arms.

But a third came, and washed away all trace of the other two; he must escape to safety—this was a German house, and he was in their yard trying to poison their dog; he must escape and reach home without an instant's delay.

Before the girls realised what was happening he was swarming back over the fence, dropping down the other side, saying in a hoarse voice, "Run, Bill, d'ye hear, run!"

By the time the younger girl had flown to the back gate and opened it, there were just

the heels of two little boys vanishing out of sight.

"Run," said Ian.

They ran down a street and up a street bumping into people and into lamp-posts, terror at their heels.

"Here's a tram—they can't catch us in a tram," gasped Ian, still the general. "I've got twopence. Quick!"

"It's started," said Con, hanging back in terror.

"Come on, jump on, quick, quick!" Ian leaped at the tram himself, felt Con stumble, put out a hand and dragged at him—dragged him up the step, sank with him in a heap, quite safely, on the platform.

The tram was quite upset. More than one mother who had trembled for them came and began to scold energetically, more than one man said this sort of thing would have to be stopped, and demanded that the guard get the names of the young rascals and sheet the crime home to them and their neglectful parents.

Only one man took it calmly. When he

had ascertained that no damage was done he picked up his paper again.

"It's the way we took Gabe Tepeh after all," he said, and paid no more attention to the event.

The white-faced little boy started to minister to the one who was warmer-coloured though also somewhat pale; he took a flannel bandage out of his pocket and tried to wind it round his friend's bleeding hand, and now the hubbub among the ladies became more pronounced; all of them wanted to help at the same moment. Such a perfect darling of a boy!

But a policeman, who was also a traveller in the car, took charge of matters at this point.

"I know him," he said. "Let him alone. His old man will soon fix him up, he's a doctor. I'll see them both home."

The boys resigned themselves luxuriously to his care—even leaned against him, their heads comfortably against his arm when he came and sat between them for the rest of the journey.

CHAPTER XI.

SURGERY.

"A man of pleasure is a man of pains."
Young's Night Thoughts.

NOW everything was going along admirably, admirably.

The Doctor was at home, the place where a doctor far too seldom is, when an accident befalls one of his own family.

Mrs. Daunt was out, the place where all mothers ought to be, for their own peace of mind, at all events, when their little sons are bleeding.

She was hunting that little son all up and down the suburb, but not in an unbearably agitated state of mind. Her anxiety was mainly vicarious.

There was no doubt about it Con ought not to be out in the open air, and the agitation

in the Middleton household was a thing to be realised with much sympathy and contrition.

For there was also no doubt about it, Con would not have been out in the open air had it not been for John of Daunt. Mrs. Daunt recognised guiltily, when she was carried tragically up by Barbara to Con's room to witness its absolute emptiness, that, left to himself, that small boy would still be painstakingly pasting in his postage stamps, or at the most have passed on to the harmless occupation of sorting his cigarette cards.

So she was covering the ground of the west side of the suburb with a long, even-swinging step, a tall and youthful-looking figure in a cherry-coloured sports coat, hastily donned, and a little black velvet hat from beneath the shadow of which her eyes shot eagle glances down back lanes and around tram sheds and motor garages and such likely haunts.

Both the Middleton maids were similarly employed about the eastern streets of the suburbs, while the long, light, agitated plaits of Amy and Ida, dragged away from basketball to help meet the situation, whisked in and

out of shops and the houses of friends in a perfectly distracting fashion.

Even Effie and Noela, strung up by the happenings to the point of looking positively almost excited, were stationed, one at the front door and one at the back, in a position to command at least all the terrace.

Even the " Silly Rabbit " had given up her shopping expedition and had gone, high heels, forage cap and all, to search the nearest piece of bushland.

But Barbara herself, weighed to the ground with her sense of heavy guilt in the matter of patterns of *crêpe de chine*, was forced to stay in the house and confine her feverish activities to the task of keeping her mother in total ignorance of the happening. However, the strain of the position was at last relieved.

Noela came bursting up to her where she hovered on the staircase.

" A pup-pup-pleeceman's got him," she stuttered, quite excited at last, yes, undoubtedly quite excited. To sedate little maidens of eight who never had moved and never could move one hair's-breadth from the

bounds prescribed by law, a policeman—at close quarters—is an agonising apparition.

Barbara went to the door, her knees almost giving under her ; visions of Con's limp form, drowned, burned, run over, danced before her, as her nerveless fingers fumbled with the catch of the door. And there he stood beside the "Arm of the Law" positively jaunty-looking. Grey suit—perhaps a little the worse for wear—grey stockings—they would need some darning—Allies' tie, twisted a bit crooked possibly ; flannel bandage gone altogether ; grey bedroom slippers—no, slipper ; he had lost one when he boarded that moving tram.

"Hullo, Barbie!" he said heartily in Ian's best manner, the one reserved by that young gentleman for the critical moment when his escapades were sheeted home and had to be squarely faced.

The policeman was very pleasant. The Doctor had given him half a sovereign for the recovery of his son, and there was no reason to suppose that the son still in hand was held less cheaply by his family, even though merely

as a specimen of a son he might not be so fine and engaging.

"Good morning, miss," said the policeman very pleasantly. "He's quite safe and sound, you see, even if he hasn't himself to blame for being so. And the other young chap, safe and sound too, or next door to it. The Doctor sent you this letter."

Barbara tore it open.

"DEAR MISS BARBARA," wrote the Doctor,—"Herewith your young scoundrel; I've looked him over, and he doesn't seem any the worse for his jaunt. Contrariwise. However, you might as well give him a hot tub and get him to bed, and I'll come round and see him again as soon as I've wiped the blood off my young scoundrel!"

"Oh," said the girl, immensely relieved, and smiled joyously at the policeman, and even at Con. "I don't think he's hurt after all, constable."

"Not his fault that he isn't," repeated the policeman—his meaning now quite evident. Barbara looked intensely nervous. One tipped

policemen, of course ; indeed, they were made for it, undoubtedly, but then, again, how much did one tip them ? Certainly not sixpence or a shilling, as one did on a station with a porter who relieved one of a suit-case. What was it that had passed that day so swiftly from her father's hand to the constable who had once brought Mrs. Middleton home in a cab, having found her half-fainting at the tram terminus ?

Oh, one could not stand weighing things in joyous moments such as these ! She took the housekeeping purse from the bag that hung from her waist, and recklessly took a sovereign into her fingers.

Then she became nervous again. One was generally sideways on with a porter when one tipped him, and his hand occurred naturally, but this constable was facing her, and Con and Noela and Effie were all eagerly looking on.

She grew so pink that the policeman became sorry for her.

" Well, good morning," he said, and turned —sideways on.

Yes, all was going along admirably.

Ian was sitting in readiness in his father's consulting-room, and his father was moving about and opening now this little drawer and now that.

The throbbing place would smart in a minute or two, doubtless, that boracic stuff always did, but then his father never hurt him much, and it would be rather nice to be bandaged comfortably up. Perhaps he would have his arm in a sling like the boy at school, and then he would go up to Con's, and Barbara would see him and perhaps feel sorry that she had spoken of him as a little demon to the "Silly Rabbit."

He surveyed the blood-stained flannel bandage with much interest. He would take it to school with him when he went back and show it to the boys. Unless he did so that boy Ralph would say that he himself had bled more when he cut his wrist with his new knife.

There had not been much conversation yet between himself and his father, and very few questions had been asked—yet—but they were on the best of terms, Ian knew; his father had called him "Old Man" and "Old

Chap " and had rubbed the back of his head in the friendliest fashion, after he had looked at the bitten place.

" Where was the brute, eh ? " said Dr. Daunt, moving about.

" Oh, it wasn't a brute, Dad," Ian replied earnestly. " Ever such a nice brown dog, it was ; not German a bit, Daddie."

" Then what made it go and bite you, eh ? " inquired his father.

" It didn't like being saved from eating poison," replied John of Daunt.

" And where was it, if I may ask—this dog that acts like a German and yet isn't one ? "

" Chained up in a yard, Daddie. You ought to have seen how the girl made him lie down with her racquet. Oh, he was *such* a nice dog, Daddie ! Only a bit savage."

" But I don't see, even now, old man, how a chained-up dog in some one's yard, a bit savage, even if very nice, got at *you*. Where were you ? "

" It was when I happened to be in their yard, Daddie," the boy began patiently.

And then the telephone bell rang and Daisy

came in and things began to go less admirably at once.

" Miss Middleton at the 'phone, sir," she said. " Says she won't keep you a minute."

" Just a jiffy, old chap," said the Doctor, and strode into the hall.

Daisy went across to Ian and tried to kiss him, real tears in her eyes at the sight of the red discarded flannel and the piece of reddened bandage put on temporarily after the first examination.

The boy fought manfully away from her arms. " Stop slobbering, Daisy, for goodness' sake," he said.

" Oh," said Daisy, fairly wringing her hands, " I says to Gertrud, I sez, he's nearly bleeding to death, I sez, but I didn't know it was as bad as this. My goodness. I never saw you look so white—oh, you won't faint, will you, ducky?"

Ian began to look a little alarmed for himself; there certainly was a good deal of blood on the flannel—perhaps he really was in a serious way.

" Oh, tell Daisy the Doctor doesn't think it was a mad dog, or she'll go mad herself with worry," the woman said hysterically.

Here was another point that had not yet occurred to Ian. Yes, now he came to think of it, he had heard stories from the boys at school about the bite of mad dogs. Jimmie Field had certainly held the opinion that in Australia dogs kept their sanity whatever the season, but there was no knowing what a lick of poison might do to the brain of an otherwise sound dog.

Ian looked at Daisy with his lips suddenly drooped right down. "Isn't Mother home yet, Daisy?" he faltered.

"No," said Daisy, "and well for her she isn't. What she'd do while he stitches you I daren't think. I feel all turned myself."

"Stitches me!" said Ian, his eyes dilating. "I'm not going to be stitched—I'm only going to be bandaged up or sticking plaster."

"No," said Daisy mournfully, and wiped her eyes, "I heard him telling the lady in the waiting-room that she'd have to wait a bit longer, 'cause his little boy had got hurt and he had to put some stitches in. Now don't be frightened, ducky! Shall Daisy stay in and hold your hand? It'll half kill her, but she'll do it willin' if you say the word."

Stitches!

At the telephone, Barbara, gravity in her tone as if the weight of nations was on her shoulders, was engaging the Doctor.

"After I've given him a very hot bath, Doctor, shall I put hot bottles to his feet?"

"If he permits it."

"And shall I rub his chest with turpentine?"

"Again, if he permits it, Miss Barbara. It won't do him any harm."

"Oh, Doctor! I thought it would do such a lot of good."

"So it will. So it will. To Miss Barbara at least. Rub half her worry away. Now I'll have to ring off; I've got a job on hand."

And so he had.

"Here, where are you going, John, my Giant-Killer?" he cried as his son suddenly shot himself through the consulting-room door and down the hall. "Don't go away, old son. I'm ready for you now."

But Ian's grey legs disappeared round the first bend in the staircase.

The Doctor followed him two steps at a

time. It was essential that there should be as little movement of the hand and wrist as possible. Ian fled before him.

"Ian!" said the Doctor amazed, "did you hear me? Stop. What are you doing—what do you mean?"

The boy flew into the large bedroom and dodged three times round the big bed—darted out on the balcony and looked for a minute as if he would dash over the rail into the street; bolted inside again by the drawing-room door, rushed behind the piano, saw it was useless as a refuge and rushed out again; dodged between his father's outstretched arms, escaped once more, rushed up the final flight of stairs and into the maids' room. Here he stood at bay a minute, realising that the end had come; a most abject little boy, with round, piteous eyes and panting chest and quivering lips; no sight at all for any father to face who had so wretched a task before him.

"Ian!"

But the quiet voice utterly failed in its usual effect. The boy had discovered just one place of refuge was left, and he made for it.

He crawled rapidly under the bed and had to be drawn out by one vigorously resisting leg—a leg that had so haughtily caparisoned itself only a few hours before in a grey stocking "turned down with red."

He lost control of himself altogether now; he kicked, he howled for his mother, he implored and clung.

The wildest ten minutes ensued; he found that his father was a terrible man, harder than iron; he would have no clinging any more than he would have kicking.

He learned a heart-chilling fact all in a moment—that men and boys must meet pain when it comes along absolutely without flinching and without a sound.

"But not stitches!" he said incredulously.

A wave of the new required courage was by this washing into him, and he was articulate again, even if disbelieving.

"Certainly, stitches," said his father with much decision.

"Not even say o-o-o-oh!" said the appalled child.

"Not even o-o-o-oh," said his father;

"'It was when I happened to be in their yard, Daddie,' the boy began patiently."

"You just hold on to the arm of the chair with your other hand, and you put your teeth together hard like a wounded soldier does. Now we're going down at once."

They went down side by side—not even hand in hand, iron father and iron boy.

The horrid work was done, the horrid, horrid work.

The little boy got up from the chair, a new respect for himself as well as a huge self-pity swelling his heart.

But he felt shy and estranged from his father; he did not know this hard, stern man who had been dealing with him. He tried to slink out of the room, for out in the hall he heard, at last, at last, his mother's voice.

And then he found himself suddenly gathered up in the big arms. He looked up and saw, most terrible thing of all, a tear in the eye of the hard, stern man.

"Little old son!"

"Daddie!"

"There. Now you can go to Mother for a cuddle, as you're only eight."

"Oh, you darling old Daddie!"

CHAPTER XII.

THEOLOGICAL.

"Yet sometimes, when the secret cup
Of still and serious thought went round,
It seemed as if he drank it up,
He felt with spirit so profound."

WORDSWORTH.

A MOST exquisite peace lay over everything.

The shops across the road were asleep in it, and the people walking to and fro were just the gentle figures in a dream.

The trams moved up and down no less happily and sweetly than the little birds that kept coming on to the telephone wires.

Some smoke from a factory far beyond the roofs of the shops had become detached and hung suspended in the air in unbelievably beautiful shapes.

Ian lay in his balcony bunk, exquisitely alone.

He was not quite undressed and given up to illness like the time when he had had measles; he had his stockings on—the grey ones still—and the pair of real long cricketing trousers that his grandmother had just given him replaced the grey knickerbockers which had had some ugly stains on them; but the top half of him wore a clean pink pyjama coat that still had the nice calm smell of the laundry basket of the week's clean clothes. His face felt very clean, too, and his hands. He smelt the latter occasionally from time to time with a luxurious languor. Perhaps if he were always washed with that delicately scented soap of his mother's he would always feel holy as he did at present.

His Mother—his heart was swollen with love for her. To lie in her arms as he had done for a few minutes had made him feel he never wanted to be any older—wanted to be always a very little boy able to cry when he liked and bury his head in her soft breast.

But he was glad when she smoothed the quilt over him and finished doing things for him and went away.

His heart was swollen with love for Dee, too, when she kept climbing up the ladder to him and with reckless love presenting him with thing after thing of her most cherished possessions. She even gave him Boodle. He felt almost like crying, she was such a tiny little thing and so fat and sweet.

But he was glad when he heard his mother taking her away and whispering to her that dear Ian must be kept quiet for a little time.

It was exquisite to be left absolutely alone, all but for Boodle—Boodle did not count. He just sat at the foot of the bunk with his head cocked a little to the side and that faithful, understanding look in the one eye that remained to him.

The factory cloud caught the boy's gently straying attention again. He realised that it was a made cloud and not a heavenly one, but it was really very well done—nearly as well done as God's clouds. After all, was God as clever as people made out ? Those bubbles, for instance, that Dee had blown yesterday and that had hung in the sunshine a second before they floated out over the tram-line—

He had not made them ; they had been made by Dee, who was nothing but a fat little girl aged three and a quarter, and yet none of the rainbows that He hung across the sky were really more beautiful. And if a factory could make, without really trying, a cloud like that, well, if it made a business of it and had to do fresh ones every day of the year as God had to, who could say how soon it would not catch God up ? It would find sunsets and sunrises hard to do, doubtless. God did these really splendidly, but then, of course, He could get hold of all the colours and as much of them as ever He wanted. He, Ian, had felt, only yesterday, that he could paint a sunset quite as beautiful as a real one, in his drawing-book, only the lemon-yellow cake in his paint-box was dried up and the orange chrome had to be used very sparingly, as there would be no chance of a new box until his grandmother gave him one on his birthday.

But God had no worries like that ; never had to wait to do things till a grandmother gave Him what He wanted. Had God a grandmother ? Every one had one—yes, both

his father and mother, questioned on this point, were unanimous; every one had a grandmother, though she was sometimes dead. But God's grandmother! How white her hair must be, what a terrible glitter there must be on her glasses—how awful must be her frown!

The little boy slipped uncomfortably away from any further thought of her; he went back to sunsets. Now if he, Ian, were God, he would make sunsets and sunrises to last all day, and not just the little time they did; it would be such an easy way of making the world beautiful all the time. Why, the water in the gutter across the way and the pools on the tram-line were exquisite things at five o'clock in the morning and at tea-time at night, but all the day between they were as ugly as possible.

Birds and flowers! Yes, He was very good at making things like those, but could He make a locomotive? The boy remembered that he had demanded an answer to this question only yesterday of his mother, but she had only answered uncertainly; it was very

baffling and vexatious altogether, the uncertain way in which grown-up people answered when you asked them questions about God. They professed intimate knowledge about Him on many points; they knew exactly the things He liked you to do and the things that made Him angry. Why, Daisy even told Dee that when she was naughty and refused to have her bib on, it made Him angry! And yet when you asked them something you really wanted to know about Him they gave you stupid answers.

"Could God make a loc'motive, Mother?" he had demanded.

"Of course He could, my dear," his mother had answered. "Don't you think the hand that makes mountains and seas could make anything it liked?"

This was no answer. Any one could make mountains and seas if they had enough material. Why, on the beach he, Ian, himself made mountain ranges and valleys and rivers and inland seas that were no whit inferior to real ones, only smaller. God had no worries over not being able to carry enough sand to

a certain place, and over having to be dragged away to catch the tram home when He was in the middle of making a mountain. But a locomotive!

Last week he had been travelling in a train with his family, and owing to a block in the lines, they had been delayed nearly an hour at a station. And Dee and his mother had remained patiently in the carriage, as was meet and right the womenfolk of families should do, but he and his father had stridden out to see to things at the end of the platform.

It was a strong bond, ever deepening, to find that his father loved and was interested in machinery as much as he himself. This particular day, with so much time to spare and such an eager face at his elbow, the Doctor explained some of the miracles of steam and of engines. He did more; he made friends with the engine-driver, and got an invitation into the cab, and let the boy touch and release the lever of the throttle valve that let the steam into the cylinders to put the engine in motion. The reverent little hand touched the wheel that operated

the link motion which sent the engine ahead or backward, touched the handbrakes and the control of the Westinghouse brake. To think that a touch on that tiny thing could bring a huge, throbbing, tearing train to a standstill!

The shining eyes, the quivering interest, made the engine-driver remember that he had once been a little boy of eight himself, when engines were infinitely more marvellous to him than any marvels of an alleged fairy-land. He took the boy down on to the lines, and, hotly assured by him that his suit did not matter a scrap, even down into the blow-pit. From there he had the unforgettable experience of looking up into the cylinders, and at the piston rods, the connecting rods, and those amazing things, the twin eccentrics, that the quadrant of the link motion started into action or made motionless.

"Could God make a loc'motive, Mother?" was the result days later, and the mother's answer failed completely of satisfaction.

"Well, why doesn't He, then?"

Mrs. Daunt was busy with the month's bills

and her cheque-book, and this was at least the nineteenth question on widely diverse subjects from her son in the space of an hour. Still, she made an attempt to answer. She said that she thought He left that sort of thing for the cleverness of man to do, and made the great things of nature Himself.

"Birds and flowers and clouds and things?" said Ian discontentedly.

"Y-yes."

"Well, I think making steam-engines would be a lot usefuller, Mother. If I were God I'd make one that would fly along a thousand miles an hour and not want lines and never collision or explode or anything. Oh, why doesn't He?"

Mrs. Daunt added the butcher, baker and eggman together and subtracted the ice-man, who had already been paid. Then she tried earnestly to explain Omnipotence.

But because she took rather a long time Ian fidgetted from one leg to the other; he believed in questions being answered in half a dozen illuminating words. "Yes, but——" he kept saying, "yes, Mother, but——"

He would not even allow her that flowers and insects were extraordinarily wonderful things to have made.

"Why, that pansy in your best hat, Mummie, is ever so much bigger and beautifuller colours than one of God's. And the beetle thing on Daisy's hat—its wings are *much* wonderfuller than any real beetles, and you can move them, too. She's going to give it to me when it's worn out."

"But they're not alive, little son; real flowers and real beetles are breathing and moving and thinking in their way, just as much as we are. The works in steam-engines are just like child's play compared with the wonderful works in a flower."

He was switched off on new lines, at all events.

"Mother, what do beetles think about?"

But as he lay to-day considering God after the manner of small boys who meditate Him infinitely more than the grown-ups dream, he recollected the unsatisfactoriness of his mother's replies about Deity and the steam-engine.

He was compelled to draw his own deductions. The reason that God did not make steam-engines Himself was that He of course had no steel and iron and things up there. But He must often long to be making them.

The factory cloud dissolved; there was that fly still buzzing on the window-pane.

Since Daisy had charge of the housemaid duties, and Gertrud was kept out of sight in the basement, cobwebs very often formed on the sliding-glass windows of the verandah. Both Dee and Ian preferred Daisy's ministrations in this respect, for they had a passion for cobwebs.

There was one now, opposite to Ian's bunk, spun across the extreme left-hand top corner of a large sheet of glass. Within it sat, very still, very, very still, a grey-black spider. The fly that buzzed was not like the ordinary fly that buzzes; it was slenderer in body, had lighter wings, longer and lighter feet; it was about the size of a March fly. Ian had given it some of his attention ever since he had been told to lie down in his bunk this morning and keep quiet.

There was all the glass on the verandah for it to buzz upon ; there was all the space of the particular sheet that it was on—the left-hand bottom corner, the right-hand top corner, the right-hand bottom corner, and the entire space of the middle. What possessed it that it should choose all the time the left-hand top corner where, sat so still, so very still, the grey-black figure that meant death to it ?

It went so close once or twice that the still figure moved, ran down to the edge of its web, but then—you almost felt you could hear it laugh victoriously—the fly flew to the middle of the pane and buzzed tantalisingly. They had been doing this ceaselessly for hours, it seemed to Ian ; all the time that he had been lying there, in fact, yet the spider never wearied of its watching, and the reckless fly still gaily played with its fate and defied the stronghold.

Once the fly buzzed with a new sound within its buzz—a sort of whirr, and Ian's attention was freshly arrested.

" You silly ass !" he shouted breathlessly, sitting up in his excitement. For it had gone

close once too often, and the still figure had come nearer to the edge of the web, where a thread of almost invisible net had at last entangled the feet of the prey. And now the spider was furiously active; it fastened a thread to a point hard by and began to run round and round its victim in circles of decreasing radius, winding it a little more safely with each circle.

"Serves you right, you jolly ass," said Ian.

But the time was not yet come; the lines broke, off flew the fly—so glad of the release that it circled about the bunk and even sat on the nose of the rocking-horse. The active grey-black figure retired to the corner of her web, grew still again, began to wait again.

And with all the street in which it might have exercised itself, with all the housetops and telephone wires on which it might have perched, that fly came back, after ten minutes or so, and began its buzzings on the identical pane and near the identical left-hand top corner again.

Ian fell to sleep, wearied of the struggle; he thought once of interfering himself by

throwing his pillow at the glass, but then he decided that it would not be fair to the spider, and left it to them to fight it out.

When he woke there were two figures in the web; the grey-black one comfortably, though no longer alertly, still again; the fly packed neatly in a corner with legs and wings trussed with gossamer silk closely to its motionless, slender body.

"Oh, Mother, why *are* flies such donkeys?" was his waking question, and he sighed impatiently because his mother was not ready instantly with an answer packed into six illuminating words.

CHAPTER XIII.

BLUEBELL'S BIRTHDAY PRESENT.

"A Robin Redbreast in a cage,
Puts all Heaven in a rage."

WILLIAM BLAKE.

IT was the birthday of the mother of Mrs. Daunt, which, however, did not make any one even Dee, attempt to refer to it as "Granny's birthday."

Dr. Daunt spoke of the event as "your mother's birthday." Dee called it "Bluebell's happy turns," and wanted to know how old she was.

But that was just the point; it was how old she was not that counted.

When "Dinky" insisted upon marrying at twenty, which was just the age at which she herself had insisted upon marrying Dinky's father, it made a grandmother of her in her

very early forties, and there seemed nowhere to lay the crying blame.

But when that lusty young man, Ian, found his tongue and began to call to her in the street or in shops, "Granny, Granny," she flatly refused the publicity of a position that excited so much comment.

There was a picture in one of the child's books of a girl named Bluebell, and because this girl was painted in a blue-flowered dress, and "Grannie" sometimes wore a blue-flowered dress, he pointed at it and cried "Grannie!" So it was not difficult to effect a transfer of name.

At fifty she was still "Bluebell," and though now she had five grandchildren in her unwilling quiver, she had never properly settled down to the post. She was still as slender and tall as Dinky herself, whom, of course, she never called by the Doctor's absurd little name of Dinky, but just Helen, as she had had her christened.

She was infinitely more engrossed in the cut of her tailored suits and the rest of her plumage than was Helen. Indeed, she was

grown really out of touch with that Helen because the latter in her narrow terrace house, and with her narrow means, could devote so little time to the engrossing subject of dress.

But in her second daughter, Diana, she had some one absolutely bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh in all matters that mattered.

Diana was one of those people one feels one ought to speak of with bated breath; she never made a mistake. She never bought the wrong hat to the right frock, the wrong cushion to the right chair, never even ordered the wrong soup with an otherwise right dinner.

When it came to her marrying, it never occurred to her to do as her elder sister Helen had done, rush off and be married to an impecunious young man for the totally inadequate reason that she was in love with him. She surveyed her suitors with deliberation in her lovely eyes, and finally chose, not the poorest, even though he was good to look upon, and not the richest, because he certainly was not good to look upon and was beyond the years she considered correct. But she chose one with a sufficiently spacious income and a

sufficiency of good looks and expectations and unimpeachable connections.

It was not to be expected that between herself and "Dinky," who went blundering along through married life just as she had done through her impetuous girlhood, there could exist any deep wells of understanding and liking, but they visited each other frequently and talked with interest about their children and servants and furniture, as sisters do.

Helen was on her way to Diana's this very afternoon, for "Bluebell" had chosen to make her home in Diana's spacious and well-ordered household since the death of her husband, and it was Bluebell's birthday.

They were going in the well-worn car that the Doctor could ill spare for the afternoon, but that Ian's wounded hand, and more especially Ian's birthday present for Bluebell, rendered absolutely necessary.

Mrs. Daunt leaned back when they were fairly started and surveyed her family with trouble on her brow.

She was going to a household where all the appointments were beyond praise and beyond

reproach, one in which to-day's birthday celebration would have its own etiquette and delicate observances, and she was conscious that she did not strike the right note herself.

She had intended to manage things for the event so beautifully, and now, after a tumultuous morning of hunting a lost son through the suburb, and helping to wash him free from blood, and seeing that he had an undisturbed sleep and a tempting little lunch, it was two o'clock, and there was no time for anything but to precipitate themselves and the presents into the car that was waiting. When you do not possess a chauffeur of your own and have to pay so much an hour for the services of one from the garage you never keep him waiting very long.

But the children's presents! Mrs. Daunt surveyed them with a worried glance.

Ian had chosen a savage-looking galah parrot and had it in a huge galvanised wire cage. Dee had a Teddy bear of brown plush of the very species and family as "Boodle," but smaller; also she had two coloured balloons.

Now, when it was Mrs. Daunt's own birthday or that of the Doctor, nothing seemed sweeter to either of them than that the children's gifts should be things entirely of their own choosing and redolent of their own personalities. They would have no coercion, not even a suggestion from a grown-up on the matter.

And presents chosen by the same method for "Grandpa and Grannie Daunt," the Doctor's parents, were always deeply appreciated by the recipients.

But Dinky was beginning to have some doubts whether it must be permitted to obtain any longer with Bluebell.

She had no trouble in divining what the gifts of Diana's children—three sedate little girls—would be. They would be the very latest things from the Arts and Crafts' Society: a handwoven basket filled with sweet lavender, doubtless, and an address book in grey suède leather, with a stencilled kookaburra on it, and a beaten-brass tray to hold pens. And they would be each wrapped up in the most appropriate way, the lavender, without a doubt, tied up in mauve tissue-paper with

purple ribbon and bearing a dainty card with "To" and "From" and "with loving greetings" already machine printed on it and just the words "Bluebell" and "Hilda" in childish writing.

Dinky had a hankering after these nice little observances herself; they appealed to some artistic spot in her that never got fair play.

But how could one tie a squawking, miserable parrot and its clumsy cage up in pale mauve tissue paper with purple ribbons?

How could one find a chaste brown box in which to enshrine a brown Teddy-bear for presentation?

Dee had even flatly refused to keep her gift in the tissue-paper in which it had been wrapped at the shop, saying that the paper made the "poor fing too hot." And she had pulled one of its eyes off to make it more exactly like to Boodle for dear Bluebell.

The parrot had plucked its own feathers out in sheer viciousness till it had really a hideous appearance; and it squawked incessantly.

And yet, and yet——

Bluebell, invited by Ian one day to "come on out in the bush and watch me shoot my catapult—not hit the birds, of course, only make them jump a bit," had shaken her head and refused.

"Don't you like going in the bush, Bluebell?"

Oh, yes, Bluebell liked the bush well enough.

"Don't you like watching the birds?"

Oh, yes, Bluebell liked birds very much, but she was growing too old, perhaps, to run about and scramble like a little boy. She had no notion of the wave of hot pity and love for her that washed over her grandson at her words; he merely stood fidgetting in front of her with his catapult, his little bullet head bent over it, and he shot away, shouting at the top of his voice the next second.

But when the question of her birthday came up he had not a doubt what he was going to buy. Since Bluebell could not go to the birds because she was no longer able to joyously scramble as he did himself, a bird should come to live with her and make her happy.

He went down to the birdshop with his mother, simply bursting with benevolence. He had the entire contents of his money-box with him, five shillings and tenpence-halfpenny. He had been saving hard for the little engine that was in the toyshop window, but he would not even leave the tenpence-halfpenny behind when he went yesterday to the birdshop ; he was subject to bouts of recklessness like this.

A complex conflict seized his soul, however, the moment he was inside the crowded shop, where a wallaby, a paddymelon, an opossum, some kittens and puppies added to the strange unsavoury scent of fur and feathers and feed that he sniffed with enjoyment whatever his mother did.

There was a galah parrot in the window that he had had a brooding eye upon for a month or more, it looked so bitterly unhappy. No one attempted to buy it, its tweaked out feathers too entirely spoiled its appearance. No other parrots were put in its cage to keep it company. The boy even suspected that it got less than its share of food, and that

its water was often left unchanged. He had often stood at the window wishing wildly that he had money enough to buy all the birds and let them go, but he used to realise sadly that the ways of the grown-up world were too much for him.

Actually inside the shop, however, with his mother, the thought came flashing that here was a chance of happiness for the wretched little creature. He had money enough for once, not, alas! to set it free, since a bird of some kind must be bought for Bluebell, but to change its surroundings.

His mother was drawing his attention to redheads, green parroquets, blue-wings.

"I want the pink and grey galah out of the window," he said steadily.

Even the bird-man tried to dissuade him; it was out of condition, he said, better have something else. What about a pair of redheads?

"I want the pink and grey galah out of the window," said Ian.

"Look here, Sonny," said the man, "here's a Blue Mountain parrot I'll do you at three-

and-sixpence—tame as a kitten; that's a bad-tempered little cuss in the window."

"So would you be if your cage wasn't big enough and they didn't give you clean water every day," said Ian hotly.

"Eh, what's that?" said the man. "You're a funny little chap, aren't you? What about a canary, then—I could do him a canary, ma'am, at seven-and-sixpence, if you'd go that far. It's got a black feather or two, to be sure, but that's no great drawback."

A red wave rose into the face of John of Daunt.

"I want the pink and grey galah out of the window," he said. "Quick, please."

Mrs. Daunt had never regarded her children as so many pieces of clay upon which she must mould her own image; here was some vital problem at work within her son's breast; she stood aside.

"Let him have it," she said. "How much is it?"

The man produced it, looked at it, shrugged his shoulders.

"Say two bob," he said. His sense of

honesty was unimpeachable, even if he had not imagination enough to enter into the soul-conflict of a small boy.

"What about a cage?" said his mother, and thoughtlessly approached a pretty little green affair that had a gilded perch. She had really no experience whatever of birds, beyond a canary she had once kept.

"Mother!" said Ian in an explosive burst.

"Don't you like it?" she said innocently.

The boy made an effort to control himself.

"It's even smaller than the one *he's* been keeping it shut up in," he said, and glanced bitterly at the man. He stalked to a huge affair built for a cockatoo.

"It could get a bit of a fly round in this," he said. "I'll have this."

And he had it, despite discouragement.

Its price was five shillings, but that did not deter him.

"It is one and a penny-halfpenny more than you have, dear," said his mother, who had to keep him from the insidious vice of generosity at her own expense.

Ian deliberated—gave the result of his deliberation.

"Advance my next sixpence," he said. "And Con can have my Allies' tie for sixpence; his is all bust up."

"That makes a shilling of it," said his mother, keeping her face as straight and earnest as his own.

"Black the grate for Daisy, a penny. Do the knives, a ha'penny, that does it," said her son. "We'll take it, Man."

They took it.

In fact, there it was in the car on its way to Bluebell now, every doubt in the boy's mind set at rest. It was not handsome, he knew, but kindness would soon make the feathers grow again. Bluebell would understand. When she saw how miserable it had been she would love it and be glad that he had not taken one of the prettier ones.

He could hardly wait for the car to draw up at his aunt's splendid house to leap out and rush in, cage in hand.

"'Shut up, you silly ass, no one's going to hurt you.'"

CHAPTER XIV.

HIGH HARMONY.

DIANA had been having her drawing-room redecorated in the very latest of styles. The walls were white, the pictures on them being monotones in grey, framed in black. The carpet was black. The chairs were upholstered in chintz of a black background blurred over with a design in greys and whites. Black curtains, with a band of white, hung at the windows; black silk cushions were piled on the sofa. A tall black vase held a great clump of faintly pink stocks. A squat black vase that stood on a white table was filled with violets so deeply purple they were almost black.

Nothing disturbed the high harmony. Bluebell was in black velvet sitting silhouetted against the white wall as if placed there by

Whistler himself. Diana was in trailing white, sitting on a black sofa; the three little girls were in white muslin with sashes of the precise faint pink tint of the stocks.

Into this symphony burst Ian, Ian attired in a pair of crumpled cricketing trousers and a coat that had one sleeve dangling empty over an arm that was in a sling. By his right hand he dragged the great cage, scattering bird seed and drops of water from it all over the new carpet.

But the glow on his face! The shining of his eyes! The eagerness of his tongue that had so much to say it kept tripping him up and making him stumble.

"Here you are, Bluebell, you'll get to like it awfully soon, they'll grow again fast as anything now it's in a big cage. Mind you change its water every day yourself; don't let that silly young Hilda do it. You do like it, don't you? Redheads go and die, and you soon get sick of parroquets. Notice its eyes; when it's not angry they look at you ever so nicely. Hasn't it got nice claws? When you teach it to talk it won't make that noise. Shut up, you silly ass, no one's going to hurt you."

The uproar was deafening. Out of it emerged the soft little voice of "that silly young Hilda."

"I don't think it's very good for the new carpet, Mamma; look at the water?"

Diana was constrained to interfere, for her nephew by now was trying to force the cage on to the delicate sofa.

"Run and tell Emma, quickly, Hilda; tell her to bring a cloth and a handbrush," she said. "No, Ian, not up there. Yes, yes, it's a very nice present, but take it out quickly, please, into the yard."

Ian fell back a pace. Bluebell had her hand to her ears, and was certainly shrinking from the cage. Calm Aunt Diana was manifestly upset.

He looked round and saw the changed aspect of the room that had been a blush of rose colour, carpets, curtains, cushions and all when he was last in it:

His jaw dropped; awe came into his eyes.

"Who's dead?" he said in a loud whisper.

"You will be, in another moment," said his mother and wiped her eyes. She never could keep laughter in when it really would

out, and though she was genuinely distressed at such a rough breaking up of harmonies, she could not help finding it funny too. Also there was a grip at her heart ; she had suffered so much herself as a child from checks like this on her impetuosity, and now she tasted Ian's suffering.

" I'm awfully sorry, Di. Little boys never stop to think, you know. No, you don't know." Her eyes swept the three pink sashes. " He thought mother would like it, and, he was in such a hurry to. give it. You must forgive him. I hope the damage isn't very great."

" Rub it very dry, Emma," said Diana. " Black shows every mark on it. He is eight, isn't he, Helen ? Isn't it time you began to teach him to think ? I say it entirely for his own sake."

" Ian," said his mother gently, " now that you have given it to Bluebell, will you take it out in the yard or on the verandah ?—it will be happier there."

" But Bluebell can't see it then," objected Ian. " 'Sides, it would catch a cold out there

after living in that stuffy shop. I'll put it in the window, Bluebell, then it can see the sun. Move those silly old plants away, please, Auntie Di."

He started to drag the cage across to the vast bay window. But Diana took charge definitely of matters now.

"Take the bird out in the yard at once, Emma," she said. "Give it into Smith's care, he will look after it. Sit down quietly, Ian. Hilda, get Ian some cake and a plate. What's he been doing to his arm, Helen?"

The bird was borne away. Ian sat down, overcome. Aunt Diana could always reduce him to speechlessness sooner than any one else. He sat and stared at the great slice of passion fruit cream cake that Hilda had given him with a subtle smile. "There is something in the misfortunes of our best friends that is not actually displeasing to us," said the subtle smile.

Bluebell was talking to him now. She was far too gentle and well-bred a person to hurt any one's feelings, much less those of a loved grandson.

"Thank you very much, darling," she said; "it was very kind indeed of you to get it for my birthday. I think it is a beautiful bird, and we shall soon be great friends."

But Ian's blue eyes looked right into the middle of her fading blue ones. It was not a beautiful bird; he knew it and she knew it. Why did Bluebell say untrue things like this? But then, yes, he often had heard her say untrue things like this, he remembered. He filled his mouth violently full of cake to ease the choking at his heart. It made him catch his breath and splutter and cough; he found Aunt Diana and all three pink sashes looking steadily at him.

"Run out on the verandah, dear," suggested his mother hastily.

He bolted.

Now it might reasonably have been expected that Dee at least would do her mother credit on this auspicious occasion. She was ordinarily a most engaging little mortal, with naturally sweet manners and very loving little ways. And she was a beautiful little thing; she had the rich colouring of her

parents, the warm cheek glow of Ian. And she was still clean, Mrs. Daunt observed with intense relief; her little muslin frock was hardly crumpled, her socks were beyond reproach—she had nobly refrained all the way from rubbing the soles of her shoes alternately upon them; her hair hung sweetly curling below her demure little muslin bonnet; she had even been kind enough not to lick the dusty glass screen in the car and transfer the result to her cheeks. When the maelstrom produced by Ian had subsided her mother pushed her gently forward.

"Go and give Bluebell your present, darling," she said.

But Dee hung back.

"Come and wish me happy turns, little Dee," said Bluebell, holding out her arms.

But Dee stood stock still.

"Dee," said her mother in a firm whisper in her ear, "go to Bluebell at once."

Dee knew what obedience was; her father at least had been her teacher.

She sighed heavily and went.

"You can have zese," she said, and

presented the two balloons. The red one was shrunken to half its size; the green had caught in something as she got out of the car and had collapsed into a bit of elastic skin in her hand.

"It's broked," she said, "but you can suck up little 'loons and tie 'em wif cotting. Like zis."

She demonstrated by sucking up a piece of the green skin and triumphantly closing the opening with her tiny finger and thumb.

"Get some cotting, girls," she said peremptorily to the pink sashes.

"There might be arsenic in that green stuff—I wouldn't let her put it to her mouth," said Diana. "I never let my children buy those things."

Dinky hastily went to the rescue and washed out her daughter's mouth with a clean handkerchief and some hot water from the tea-tray. She threw the bit of green skin into the slop-basin.

Dee at once threatened tears. "I hasn't got any uvver happy turns present now for Bluebell," she said, with drooping mouth.

"But you haven't given her the Teddy-bear yet," said her mother, and added, *sotto voce:* "You'll understand the funny present, Mother dear, I know. She chose a Teddy-bear like her own Boodle one that you gave her, because she felt there was nothing in the world anyone could like so well. You'll notice she has even taken one of its eyes off to make it just the same."

"Oh, how sweet of her!" said Bluebell, really touched. Her heart was glad at the knowledge that "Boodle," her own gift, was so dear to the child, and the tribute of one back seemed a most beautiful thing to her. She held her hand out for it. Whether it harmonised or not, it should hang in her bedroom for ever. Yes, it should hang over the looking-glass where she could never fail to see it.

But Dee was retreating, clinging passionately to the little animal.

"No," she said, "No, no. Boodle wants it. Poor Boodle has no little Boodle, Mummie. I take zis sweet little Boodle to poor old Boodle at our house."

And nothing would move her. She was not kith and kin to Ian for no purpose. When her mind was made up, well, it took Dr. Daunt himself to unmake it.

The attachment to the animal had grown more passionate, once it was out of its tissue-paper and denuded of an eye, with every mile the car went. When it came to the actual point the sacrifice was altogether too great to be endured.

"*Zat's* your present, Bluebell," she announced, and presented at arm's length the shrunken red balloon. Then she beat a hasty retreat across the room and entrenched herself behind a settee, Boodle the second held in a deathless grip. Diana covered the situation by pouring out tea.

They were handsome, upstanding children, this little couple of her sister's, doubtless better-looking and healthier than her own trio. But they were undoubtedly little savages.

"Sugar, Helen?" she said with uplifted tongs. "I think you said you'd given up giving up sugar, didn't you?"

"One lump, please," said Helen steadily.

She had caught her sister's faint, subtle smile, mother to the smile that had played round little Hilda's mouth when she did not know that she was thinking Rochefoucauld.

"And now tell me how the poor darling hurt his hand, Helen," said Bluebell, to relieve the tension.

But at this point a pink sash that had disappeared came dashing back.

"Oh, guess what that bad boy's done now," she said. "He went out in the yard, where Smiff had hung the cage, and he 'liberately opened the door and let it fly away. I sawed him myself."

"Saw," corrected Diana.

"Saw," agreed Hilda cheerfully.

Dinky succeeded in making her face as perfectly expressionless as a face should be at an afternoon tea-party in a very modern black drawing-room.

CHAPTER XV.

CHILDREN'S QUARTERS.

"Very spacious was the wigwam."—*Hiawatha.*

THE breeze passed over. It was Bluebell's birthday, and the calm of it must not be ruffled for many reasons. Every one exercised magnanimity.

Even Ian covered over the savage in him and came back into the drawing-room and handed plates of cake with a gentlemanly demeanour that would have done credit to the prize pupil at a dancing-class. And Dee, assured that Boodle the second was not going to be reft from her, and that a slowly-dwindling red balloon was exactly what Bluebell had most wanted, came from behind the settee and consented to sit upon knees and play with the pink sashes.

Hilda, the eldest pink sash, was seven, and

was a seemingly colourless little thing with a power of organisation and executive derived from her mother that was surprising, and that, given free play, would enable her some day to overcome the danger to which she was continually exposed, that of being shaped, body and soul, by her mother, until she was a nonentity. But the other sashes, Betty, five, and Laura, four, would never have even a chance at individuality, so capable and so powerful was the combined organisation of their mother and Hilda.

The excessive cleanliness of the two smaller ones, of course, annoyed Ian, but he had, otherwise, no particular objection to them.

Hilda, however, had been antipathetic to him since they were both babies and used to be put on the floor together to play. Even then they had snatched at each other's india-rubber ducks and gone red in the faces in their struggles to make the other yield some particular wooden brick.

There had been some satisfaction, however, in warfare with her in early days ; he could hit her and pummel her just as hard as she

hit and pummelled him, which is saying a good deal.

But when she grew to be four and he five, the eternal and unjust differences in sex came into play. She was a girl, he a boy, and he must not hit her.

"Not even when she hits as hard as anything!" he said incredulously.

No, there was nothing for it; differences must be settled in other ways; she must not be hit. It was final.

So there had been less healthy strife between them for the last three years. He still persisted passionately in his desire to make her knuckle under, and whatever seemingly amiable game they all played together, this desire never left him. He kept her in moderate fear of him by advantages that grown-ups had not yet taken from him since they were in ignorance of them. When she ran through and scattered his rings of marbles he twisted her thumbs back until she understood not to do it again, and when she broke up his patiently amassed standing army he put a strongly booted foot round her slender

ankle with a sudden twist and brought her down to her knees.

But she gave him plenty to do to outwit her. She had a way of defying him with a flick of an eyelash that no one else could have seen; he would have given all he had to change her sex and stand up to her.

Yet how strong are the conventions of life even with the youngest and most savage of a community!

When Bluebell asked him this afternoon what he would rather have than anything in the world, he did not answer with the answer that was in his soul, "A chance to thump Hilda," he merely sighed and said, "A machine gun."

"Where do they sell them?" pursued Bluebell. "At any toyshop?"

Ian sighed again. He did not want a toy one. He wanted a real one that he could hide in the motor-car till he came to the Turks or Germans, and then hoist up on the seat and fire with, and fire with, till the entire force of the enemy was lying horribly dead before him.

Of course, Bluebell would not give him this though he knew her to be incredibly wealthy; he would have to put up with a toy one, he realised. Well, after all, it would come in quite nicely.

"I don't like the tinney sort that goes and gets broken first time you fire it," he explained. "Con's got one like that, the Silly Rabbit gave it to him. But a boy at school's father gave him a real beauty. Heavy as anything and fires stones or bits of lead or anything, and doesn't get smashed a bit."

Bluebell took out a little silver note-book and made a pencilled memo in it; she had a feeling that she had not risen to the occasion of the parrot as she might have done, and she was anxious to make amends.

Hilda knew the note-book well, and thought the chance too good to be missed.

"I know what I want more than anything in the world," she said plaintively.

"A doll!" said Ian witheringly.

"'Tisn't, then. So there. It's something lots usefuller than a silly gun to shoot bits of stone."

"Bet it isn't."

"What'll you bet?"

But Bluebell interfered at this point. "Hilda," she said, "what did mother say about you using that expression?"

"He teaches me," pouted Hilda.

"But you needn't learn, my child."

"Has to copy me," jeered Ian. "Well, what's this usefuller thing?"

"A scent squirt. In the bottle there's scent, eau-de-Cologne or anything; you just press the bulb thing and it squirts in the air so fine you can hardly see it. And the smell! All over the room. Simply lovely."

Ian considered it a moment. He had seen one himself and been much impressed by it. Squirts are irresistible until one has passed the age of eleven.

"Tell you, Bluebell," he said, "if you give it to her I'll work it for her; girls never do it right."

But Bluebell was no doting grandmother to whom a request was irresistible; she shut the spring of the little silver book with much decision.

"You have far too many things, Hilda,"

she said; "I shall give you nothing else till your birthday."

Ian looked at his foe out of the tail of his eye.

Upstairs they all went to the "Children's Quarters," as they were called. It was always an interesting visit. Visitors used to implore to be shewn over them. It was one of the sights of the suburb.

Six rooms and a vast glassed-in balcony comprised the "quarters." There was a gymnasium fitted up with a marvellous medley of small-sized apparatus for physical culture. There was a comfortable sitting-room shared by a French governess, a kindergarten governess, the Norland nurse and the lady sewing-maid. No uneducated person, such as Daisy or Gertrud, was allowed contact with the three pink sashes. The mere cook and housemaid and parlourmaid and scullerymaid of the establishment might have been in another hemisphere, so remotely apart were they kept from the children.

Three small individual bedrooms opened out on to the splendid balcony.

Laura's was all white, with just a drift of pink rose-petals on the wall-frieze and the curtains and the white carpet. There was a tiny white wardrobe and dressing-table and washstand that she would have grown out of completely in another year or two, but that drew exclamations of keen admiration from all beholders.

Hilda's room had white walls with purple violets drooping from the frieze. Her bed and her furnishings all made to fit her years, were in silver-grey ash ; her tiny white satin eiderdown had clumps of violets embroidered upon it. Not one thing in the room clashed ; she would have been as seriously disturbed as Diana herself if anyone had brought a blue vase or a green clock into the room.

Betty's apartment was all in apple-green and white ; no mere pinks and blues and reds for any of Diana's children ! But Betty's taste was evidently painfully slow in development ; she had herself gathered some orange-coloured zinnias and blue convolvulus and recklessly enshrined them on her dressing-table.

"Oh, Mamma, *look* what Betty's done," cried Hilda, positively shuddering. "It doesn't match or even go."

And even though her mother, talking to Helen, took no notice of the remark, such was Hilda's influence that Betty, looking like a detected criminal, began to sullenly take the shrieking flowers from the vase.

"Don't be such a silly goat, Bet," said Ian, ever on the side of the oppressed when the oppressor was Hilda, "they look bonser."

"Ian," said Diana sharply, "how often must I ask you not to use your ugly schoolboy words before your little cousins!"

Ian plunged away into the gymnasium to work off his feelings on the little horizontal bar.

The schoolroom nursery almost baffled description; miniature tables, miniature chairs, miniature cupboards, miniature blackboards, met the eye. Costly and exquisite toys stood about; not in untidy profusion but exquisitely selected and in exquisite order. There was a perfect little laundry in one corner with water laid on over enamel tubs; there was a

miniature kitchen so complete it took the breath away.

All this for three pasty-faced little girls under eight, unshared, never dreamed of as to be shared, with any of the world's empty-handed little girls!

"Does it make them better than other children, do you think—all this?" Helen had once asked, anxiously, not of Diana, but of the kindergarten governess.

She was feeling just a breath of jealousy at the time, remembering her own crowded balcony that served as day nursery and night nursery and sewing-room and boot-blacking apartment. She was wondering for a second whether her babies, whose only miniature table had been the machine lid, had been really defrauded of anything.

"Does it make them kinder to each other, easier to manage, all this?" she pursued.

The kindergartener, deeply happy as any kindergartener would be in absolutely perfect apparatus, was forced to confess that it did not seem to make very much difference after all. They still quarrelled and slapped

each other and cried and sulked like any other little girls, she confessed—which curiously comforted Helen.

She relieved her feelings to her husband in one of her characteristic sentences.

" Diana makes an artistic and systematised orgy of motherhood," she said.

A loud shout, a perfect yell of joy downstairs brought every one hastily away from the children's quarters.

" Here's Uncle John," yelled John of Daunt, clean mad with joy.

"'Uncle John,' he said, 'I like her too. But you can have her. You're going to the war again.'"

CHAPTER XVI.

BIG JOHN.

SO here was some one else come to kiss Bluebell and wish her many happy returns.

This was her only son John, a young man of nineteen who, wounded at Gallipoli, had returned to the lines too soon and had been stricken with fever. After weeks in the hospital at Ghezirah he had been granted ninety days' leave and sent back with a batch of sick and wounded for the sea voyage and a spell of home to complete recovery.

Mother and son kissed twice, and then a third time, for both of them knew he might never wish her happy returns again. He was in khaki once more, and at camp preparing for his return.

Ian vibrated about him, passionately ad-

miring the way his puttees were adjusted, the way his trousers bagged above them, his pockets with buttons on, the stripe on his arm, the fact that his colours were sewn down on his sleeve and not left loose, as they were with the soldiers who had not yet gone.

The boy shot into the hall to have a look at the well-worn cap, and to finger the heavy khaki overcoat that was tossed down on a chair. He rushed back again so that he might lose no word that his hero was speaking.

The hero rubbed the top of his head in an understanding fashion two or three times; he called him "Littlejohn," and "John of Daunt," and kept beside him even when Dee and Betty and Laura and Hilda were all storming the fortress of him and struggling to be the closest.

After he had been away with his mother, quite away in another room, and after he had chatted with his sisters in a less chaffing way than was his custom, he fought free of all four girl worshippers.

"Down you go," he said to them, and scattered them left and right. "Big John and

Littlejohn are going down the garden to have a cigar in peace from all petticoats."

And such was the swelling of heart of Littlejohn that he forbore to give even as much as a glance of triumph at Hilda.

So they went down the garden, down the garden they went side by side. The long figure threw itself down against a grass bank. The little one did the same.

"Well, and how's Con?" said Big John. Anyone could see that the question was no idle one; he was genuinely anxious for an answer.

Ian averred that Con was all right, and wanted to know whether it was a Turk or a German Big John had shot first shot of all.

"Really quite well? Not measles or whooping cough or a single thing?"

Oh, no! Con was all right. Oh, yes, he had a bit of a froat, but it would soon be all right again. Did Turks always wear red trousers and crawl on their stomachs and shout "Allah" when the Australians attacked?

"Are his sisters all right?"

Oh, yes, his sisters were all right. Why didn't Sir Ian Hamilton pretend to fall back and pretend to fall back till he got all the Turks to the edge of the cliff and then push them into the sea and then march on to Constantinople ?

" All of his sisters ? Eh ? "

" Yes, all of his sisters, only May had a tooth nearly coming out."

" May ? That's the tall, eldest sister, isn't it ? " said Big John, forced to Machiavellian cunning.

This arrested Littlejohn. " Well, you are a silly, Uncle John," he said. " May's just one of the others. Barbara's the eldest sister." He spoke the name quite reverently.

" Ah, yes, so she is," said Uncle John. " Well, how is Miss Barbara, then ? "

" I think she's all right," answered Littlejohn broodingly. " I saw her this morning, and——" He choked back the bitter fact that she had referred to him as a little demon.

" Er—er—how did she look, Ian, old chap ? " said his uncle;

"She hadn't done her hair up, it was all hanging down after washing," returned his nephew slowly.

"Yes—yes——?" said Big John.

"An' it was just like sovereigns," said Littlejohn, warming to the work, "and she had a blue sort of thing on with tassels, and she had blue shoes and she had—oh, you ought to have seen how nice her teeth looked, Uncle John."

"Yes," said Uncle John eagerly, "yes, old chap, go on."

"Uncle John, that jagged bayonet that Turk stuck into your shoulder, aren't we ever going to use jagged bayonets too? And poison gas and 'splosive bullets and things like that; we'll have to, you know. When's Kitchener going to let us begin?"

"Er—er—I don't know, old chap. I'll find out. You were saying—about Miss Barbara, you know?"

"Uncle John, when they took you to the 'Gyptian hospital, did they give you cig'rettes to smoke and toothbrushes? Me and Con didn't have any sugar on our things for a

week, and no chocolates, and we had the money instead, an' we got two packets of cigarettes and two toothbrushes instead—oh, we didn't mind a bit, we liked doing it. Did they get there safely ? On Con's packet there was a picture of a fish with its mouth open, and on mine there was a picture of the Queen Lisbeth warship. It isn't really sunk, is it ? Daisy says it is, but Daisy's always saying things happen that don't."

"Yes, yes. But what was Miss Barbara talking about when you were there this morning ? "

"Oh, the Silly Rabbit was there too, and you know how they talk when *she's* there. Hats and things. Uncle John, you ought to have seen the Silly Rabbit's hat. Just like in the pictures of soldiers, only black velvet stuff."

"Ian, old chap—you're there a lot, aren't you ? Every day, you told me. Do you meet other people there much—other men —like me ? "

"There aren't any men like you, Uncle John."

"I mean—young men, you know—not old ones who go to talk to her father—young men who sit in the drawing-room and listen to her playing and things like that."

Oh, yes, Ian attested cheerfully to the fact that the drawing-room at Con's was frequently quite thickly inhabited by young men who came to show their new uniforms or to say good-bye.

"Who goes the most? Isn't there a fair sort of chap, named Horlick, there a good deal?"

Yes, there was a fair sort of a chap named Horlick there quite a lot. Nearly every day. "Me and Con call him 'Malted Milk.'"

"'Malted Milk'? Why?"

"Horlick? Don't you see? Like on the tins of stuff they gave Dee when she was a baby."

"Um, yes. He can't help his name, though; there's nothing wrong with his name. And you think Miss Barbara likes him to come so often?"

"Of course. Uncle John, I wish you weren't going back yet. Why don't you make some

of the others go instead till you get quite strong? S'pose your wounded place burst out bleeding again when you are going up a precipice. Daisy says——"

"Look here, old man. Never mind Daisy. Daisy be hanged! What makes you think Miss Barbara likes him to be there so much?"

"Oh, I don't know. She says nice things to him, and gives him afternoon teas. Daisy says the Germans are even letting germs loose up at your camp here, you know, like Daddie cures. Are they, Uncle John?"

Big John threw his cigar away, sat up, flung himself unreservedly on the mercy of his nephew.

"Littlejohn," he said, "I'm going to tell you something because you're such a good old chap, and I know you'll keep it to yourself."

Littlejohn looked quite moved. An uncle wounded at the Dardanelles to be telling him a secret!

"My honour. As a gentleman," he said, with intense emotion.

"It's like this, old man. Uncle John has—well, he—that is to say—well, in fact Uncle

John lo—liked Miss Barbara very much indeed, but she—well, she didn't seem as if she liked him, and he, well, you see, he thought he might get knocked over and it wouldn't be right for him to say anything to her before he went. And now he's come back he's only seen her once, and she seemed as if she'd forgotten him. And he has heard that she likes this other chap, Horlick, and lets him go to the house. And now Uncle John's going back again to the war next week for certain—no need to tell Bluebell that just yet, mind—and he just had the feeling that he'd like to be quite, quite sure about Barbara liking Horlick! And that's why he's asking your advice, old man."

To think of it! A man in khaki, a man with a still red and raw-looking seam zig-zagged on his shoulder, to be asking advice of him, Ian, and about Barbara.

His face twitched; he moved one inch closer to his uncle.

"Uncle John," he said, "I like her too. But you can have her. You're going to the war again."

A hard, big hand squeezed a hard little one.

"But about Horlick, Littlejohn—if you tell me she's engaged to him—I thought Con might have told you—well, of course, there's an end to things. But if—if I thought she wasn't so sure after all, well, I'd—I'd——. It would help me a lot if you could tell me anything. Does she look pleased, for instance, when he comes in?"

"Oh, yes—she smiles like anything."

"And what does she say?"

"Last time she said, 'Well, there's one man left to come to afternoon tea.'"

"Ah!" said Big John, pricking up his ears.

"An' she sang songs for him an' he stood by the piano and turned over."

"Ah!" said Big John, his face falling. "What songs, Ian? Did you notice?"

If Littlejohn answered, "Remember or Forget," the song he had once himself made her sing, he would go back to his war without one other word, knowing that all was lost.

Yes, Ian had noticed, and more than that, remembered. Barbara had sung "Off to the Dardanelles."

"Ah! And did Horlick seem to like it?"

"I don't know, Uncle John. Me and Con had to keep marching our soldiers in the hall."

Big John pondered deeply, very deeply. Could it really be after all that a girl with a spirit like Barbara's was in love with a fellow like Horlick, who, with a fine physique and perfect health and no ties, made no move to go to the rescue of his country?

"And Con never told you they were engaged?"

"No, Uncle John. She likes our name for him very much."

"Your name? I don't know what you mean."

"Why, I just told you, Uncle John. You do forget—'Malted Milk'—she said it fitted him like a glove."

John of Daunt was never clear about the happenings of the next few minutes; he knew he was thumped on the back and gripped by the arms; he knew he was rushed back to the house with his feet hardly touching the ground. He knew his uncle had tears in his

eyes, although he was shouting hurrah as if a battle had just been won.

The well-worn motor-car of Dr. Daunt was at the front door again, and the paid-by-the-hour chauffeur was in his seat. The arrangement was that Mrs. Daunt and the two children were to go on and visit the Doctor's parents for an hour, since they were already within five miles of them, and it would be a difficult matter for the Doctor to spare the car again for another afternoon.

Big John made a straight line for Helen, who was just getting in.

"I'm coming to dinner with you and the Doc. to-night," he said. "Pick me up here on your way back."

"Very glad, of course, John—but—won't Mother be hurt—she thinks you are dining with her."

"Yes, sorry. Got to come to you. I'll go and stay with her now for the next hour. And I say, Nell!"

"Jackanapes?"

Helen would never know when John grew up. Sisters who have been big when brothers

have been little generally feel that way. In fact, she did not regard him as very much older than Ian.

"See here, Nell. You've got to get Barbara to dinner too. It's no good me going to her house; those sisters and that little wretch Con are everywhere. I've got to get her by herself for an hour. Do you see?"

"Yes—I see."

"Well, what are you speaking slowly for, like that?" demanded the young man fiercely.

"I wasn't speaking slowly," said Helen, very quickly. "She is the dearest girl I know."

But she had spoken slowly.

Jackanapes—Barbara—just out of school the two of them. Ah, why were young things in such mad haste to take up real life when careless play life might be made to last a little longer? Oh, this war, precipitating everything! She rubbed his sleeve sympathetically, however.

"She shall be there if I have to drag her down by her hair," she said, "her lovely golden hair."

CHAPTER XVII.

A HOME ON THE HILLSIDE.

"In Nature's infinite book of secrecy
A little I can read."—*Antony & Cleopatra.*

"His talk was all of woodland things.
Of little lives that pass
Away in one green afternoon,
Deep in the scented grass."—LE GALLIENNE.

A HILL ran down to the roadside; or up from the roadside, if you prefer to put it that way. It ran down from nature, wild bush and trees against the sky, to civilisation in the form of a little home, or it ran up from civilisation in the form of a little home to nature and the wild trees, if you prefer it put that way. It does not matter. Just so long as these things run harmoniously into each other instead of shrinking apart, aliens and enemies, just so long, and only just so long, is the balance of the world in equipoise.

It was the most modest of little homes ; it had the air of a naïve and healthy child playing among the trees.

You almost felt it had grown up out of the earth, it belonged so rightly to the spot. Its shingle roof and walls were the warm brown colour of the young gum shoots ; it had a white, peaked front door, and the knocker, low enough for children's hands, had come from Switzerland, a splendid bit of antique brass in the shape of a bear's head.

When her grandchildren came to see her it was etiquette for Mrs. Daunt not to be on the verandah to greet them and not to answer the door until two lots of knockings had come, Dee's eager, hurrying rat-a-tat-a-tat, then the thundering knocks with which Ian strove to make the house vibrate.

All round the little house ran a little garden, the sort of little garden one sees in water-colours and in books, but too rarely by the roadside. The paths running everywhere were of smooth clipped grass ; they were flanked by tall white lilies, lavender bushes, forests of larkspur and delphiniums. Thousands of

pansies and daisies and primulas and nemophila, seemed striving to smother the soil round the taller plants with a creeping carpet of colour. The air was full of mignonette and old-fashioned pinks, and stocks and freezias.

Motor-cars passing used to sniff it, used to slow down, lean sideways and look at the little place. They felt that it had some sweet yet simple secret trembling on its lips that they would never learn and yet longed to do so.

It was the house of a strong woman and an amazed man.

No grandfather or grandmother of the once approved fashion belonged to Ian and Dee on their father's side any more than on their mother's.

Mr. Daunt, senior, was a long, lank man, who had never got over a certain look of schoolboy awkwardness, and even though at five-and-fifty he no longer clumsily knocked over palmstands and outstanding occasional-tables, it was really mainly because they had been removed from his life.

He was not awkward in a tree ; those long,

angular legs and arms of his seemed expressly made for climbing trees. Quite frequently when Ian arrived he was met by the highly stimulating statement that Grandpa was up the red gum-tree and had been there for an hour.

"The Jacky Winter's nest?" Ian would ask excitedly. "Can I 'sturve him?"

"No, he's watching the native bees; better not go; we'll run the flag up to let him know you're here."

And the boy would prowl about in the garden restlessly watching for the quiet tweed figure in the tree to move, or to catch the sound perhaps of the click of the camera.

Or it might be that the tweed figure would be found face downward at the top of the hill, one eye shut, one with its enlarging glass on it, watching something on a stalk of grass.

"What's its name, Grandpa?" Ian would ask reverently.

And his grandfather would answer with punctilious care, "I believe it to be the larvæ of margaropus annulatus," or whatever the thing might be. He never defrauded the boy

even of the name of the order or family of the thing under observation, and would often add details about the number of mouths it had or the large plurality of eggs and eyes or legs.

There was no drawing-room in this home on the hillside, but there was a whole apartment given up to glass cases and numbered boxes, and nests of drawers and thousands of cards upon which were careful drawings of insect life enlarged from the microscope.

On Ian's seventh birthday Mr. Daunt emptied a large cabinet, that stood in one corner, and presented it to the boy, adding as a nest-egg for it a potato beetle, an antlion, and the larva of a wasp.

Not an inch in it to-day was vacant; the elder naturalist often stood in front of the chaotic and all-embracing collection of the younger one and smiled. But he made few suggestions and few additions to it himself; in this sort of thing one followed one's own bent.

There had one day been a fierce contest between Jimmie Field and Littlejohn.

Jimmie bragged of his grandfather, who had once in the ring knocked out the champion of the day, and the odds ten to one.

"Pooh, that's nothing to what my Gran'-faver does," said Ian, after nearly bursting with jealousy for a minute; "my Gran'faver's discovered things about a simply awful friful thing."

"Yah!" said Jimmie sceptically.

"Tell you he has," shouted Ian; "you might be dead if he didn't, or all your old cows and sheep might. It gives them spotted fever, and millions of pounds get lost, and you can get it and drop dead like anything."

This seemed worth inquiring into, since young Daunt seemed so positive.

"Yah!" said Jimmie, but a shade less sceptically.

"All right," said Ian, his colour rising dangerously. "It has twenty thousand eggs at a time, and the young one only has three pairs of legs to start with, an' it climbs up a stalk of grass and holds them out till a sheep or something goes by, and then it grabs hold and gets on it and sucks its blood

and when it's had enough it drops off and it gets another pair of legs and gets out of its skin, and then it goes on and has twenty thousand eggs itself, and they climb up grass and get on to cows and things. Isn't it all dead true, Con ?"

"Yes," Con shudderingly attested to the unvarnished truth of the entire statement.

"How do you know ?" Jimmie pursued, turning sharply upon the fidus Achates.

"Ian told me," said little Con trustfully.

But Jimmie was not a fidus Achates; he was a plain boy with a desire for the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. And anyway the slight cast on his own grandfather had to be avenged.

"I've never heard of it. What's the name of the awful, frightful thing ?" he said, and his intonation was distinctly insulting.

Ian absorbed facts faster than he did those names on the little boxes in his grandfather's room. He would have liked to dash Margaropus annulatus, or Rhipicephalus appendiculatus or Hæmaphysalis leachi into his com-

panion's teeth, but the fear of failing with them kept him back.

"It's a tick," he said.

"Ha, ha!" shouted Jimmie, "a tick! I've had dozens of them in me, and they never gave *me* spotted fever."

"Not the sort of tick my Gran'faver's discovered," said Ian, his colour dropping a second, as it generally did before it rose finally.

"He never discovered it," said Jimmie.

"He did."

"He never."

"Tell you he did."

"He never."

"All right."

Two small boys were rolling in the dust locked in each other's arms for the further vindication of the honours of their several grandfathers.

Jimmy Field was right in the matter.

Mr. Daunt had not discovered Margaropus annulatus at all; he had merely spent much of his leisure for many years in observing its habits and in writing the results of his deductions for the learned society to which he

belonged. But he had towering ambitions; he began to believe that he might eventually discover enough about Margaropus to outwit it, and so be a benefactor to his race and his country.

One hears of suttee still at times, though such ceremony seems slowly dying out of fashion, but it is rare to hear of a woman sacrificing her life on the altar of a tick.

Mrs. Daunt had achieved the deed, however; at least she had climbed cheerfully up into the position for sacrifice, and it need not be deducted from the merit of her fine act that the altar turned out to be the pleasantest and most peaceful corner that she had yet come to in life.

If you had been intimate with Bluebell and had asked her as between woman and woman what was the reason that her daughter's husband's parents lived "in such a poor way," she would have had sad things to tell you. She would have told you what a large house they once lived in and what large parties they used to give and how they were able to go to Europe every five or six years, and keep

two sons at the University and two daughters doing nothing but look pretty. And she would have told you how the two daughters married naval men and went to England to live, and she would have paused sympathetically to add, that of course no one knew where naval men were just now. And she would have told you how the other son, an engineer, had come back from his work on the Across Australia railway and had gone as a sapper with the second battalion.

To all of which you would have listened patiently, knowing that Bluebell always was a little slow in reaching the point of things, and then at last you might have pressed your questions—but why had the parents been living in that poor little cottage stuck away in the wilds for six long years? Why had an active man, not much over fifty, given up a Government position that brought him in a thousand a year? and why had he never attempted to get another position and continue to keep up appearances and give his wife the comforts and the servants to which she had been accustomed?

Bluebell would not have openly ascribed it to the grounds that the man was mad, because that would in a way have involved the immaculacy of her own family; but she had secretly little doubt of the matter when she saw all the little boxes filled with ticks. She would have told you that it was because he was a grossly selfish and lazy man, and had grown tired—at fifty!—of working as other men worked, and had retired; and because his wife was a fool and gave in to him and never asserted her rights.

Mr. Daunt himself would have endorsed this story, would have seriously vouched for the facts that he was a grossly selfish man who had retired twenty years too early, and that his wife was indeed a most foolish woman who never asserted her rights.

But Mrs. Daunt would have made a tenderer matter of it. She would have told you that he was a man born a naturalist and made a Commissioner for Traffic. He had never complained; had served traffic faithfully for thirty-two years; brought up four children on it, given them a splendid time,

started them in life, ministered to all the furniture and finery passions of a wife; never dreamed, indeed—except when he was feverish or otherwise not himself—of doing anything different to the end of his working days. It was only in his dreams that he chased butterflies and beetles and ticks perpetually, and had time to continue on a Monday the exciting discoveries he had made about them on his one holiday, Sunday.

And suddenly his wife released him. She had long seen into the heart of his dreams and had been forced to look away because she felt helpless.

But now there was no one but herself to be considered, she forced him to resign. Even though they had had little chance yet to begin to save for their own future, she forced him to resign.

Twenty years before they had bought for a song a hillside of five acres in a far-away suburb that had promised to boom and failed utterly to do so. It was still only worth a song. They would spend a tiny sum, she insisted—four or five hundred pounds at

most—on building a little house on it, and would go and live there for the rest of their lives if it would make him happy.

Happy ? A hut, a butterfly net, a few boxes and—time to himself—were the utmost gifts he would himself have asked of Fate.

But she ? Ought he to let her sacrifice herself like this ?

She professed herself worn out with the struggle of housekeeping and of keeping up with the world, and he believed her thankfully.

And so—at last, at last—he had leisure ! Leisure to really look into things after all these years. Not just an hour or two to himself on a Sunday, when his girls did not want to go out in the car, or a fortnight once a year at a mountain hotel where the maids swept his finds away, but Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday all to himself, and the bush right at his door, and an entire empty room for his boxes.

After six years he was still an amazed man, amazed at his stupendous good fortune.

After six years she was still a strong woman, but had also become an amazed one.

For she had been so busy and happy all the time embroidering her altar cloth, that she had totally come to forget the altar underneath.

Rat-at-tat-at-tat went the sharp little knocking.

She smiled and waited a minute.

Thud, thud, bang bang, boom, boom, went Ian's virile summoning.

She ran to the door.

CHAPTER XVIII.

GINGER-BOYS AND A BILL OF FARE

"WELL, young Dauntless, and in what particular branch of warfare have you been engaging?" was the elder Daunt's question when his grandson came somewhat carefully into the little museum instead of bursting in. The main use of a sling in the case of small boys is, as all doctors know, to keep an injury in remembrance.

"Oh, just a dog, Gran'pa," said Ian. "It chewed me a bit." He was about to pass to subjects of keener interest when he recollected the scientific attainments of his grandfather.

"Can you die if poisoned dogs go mad, Gran'pa?" he said. "It didn't really get poisoned, only tried."

A little more of the story came out, and the naturalist was so swiftly reassuring, with a

judicious mixture of science and sense, that the boy's last fear died. But he lingered one second longer on the subject ; one has to have the respect of the elders—the male elders—of one's tribe.

" I didn't have chlorryform, Gran'pa," he said.

" Chloroform," said the old man mechanically.

" Chlr'form," assented Ian ; " I just let it hurt."

The old man rubbed the top of the bullet head.

" You're not sorry ? "

" No. Nex' time aren't even going to say ' Oh ! ' 'Spose Daddie stopped saying ' Oh ! ' at about six, didn't he, Gran'pa ? "

" About," said the elder Daunt, unsmiling. He carefully fetched out an incident of his son's early courage and plainly he must have told it with dramatic power for the little boy's face was warm and moved, and he said after a whole minute's silence :

" Gran'pa, I just *like* Daddie. Don't you ? "

" I do," said the elder Daunt.

Then they got back on to the more comfortable plane of everyday things. A gum leaf with little swellings on it like red miniature apples was taken from Ian's pocket, admired and commented on and very briefly explained.

"That young Dee wanted it to make a doll's pie with, but I knew it was valu'ble, and I kept it for the c'llection," said Ian, and opened one of his drawers for it. Several other urgent matters were discussed like the makings of clouds and the true reason for the flies on window-panes being silly goats.

The naturalist, deeply, tenderly happy in his listener, added two or three words more than he need have done to a statement. Ian began to fidget, then to sniff.

"I b'lieve Gran'ma's making something else in the kitchen," he said.

"I believe she is," said his grandfather, and was alone again, humbled in a moment.

A kitchen with a servant in it is just any sort of a place; dinner is cooked in it, and washing-up is done, and though you may find opportunities for trying the eggbeater that has a wheel to it and the newest thing

in knife-cleaners, it really does not count greatly in the scheme of life.

A kitchen with two servants in it is a foreign land. Even if one of them will permit you to heat glue on the gas stove, the other one objects and says that it gets on the irons. You cannot help yourself to the sugar that comes free in the candied peel or to macaroons that went down from the drawing-room on the afternoon tea-tray, or to the long end of the roly-poly pudding that was left and that your system urgently required; they have eaten these things themselves. They even make an alliance against you in the matter of borrowing the implements you absolutely cannot get on without, like the ice pick, and the corkscrew, and knives, and the hammer, and the sausage machine.

But a kitchen without a servant in it at all! A shining little place with mignonette and lobelia on the window-sill and a canary on the wall just outside, and a cat on the hearthrug, and all the beautiful, the fascinating drama of food preparation being carried on in every act by your grandmother herself!

Meals were not just meals here; to help get lunch ready on this hillside was to assist with a festival that was Olympian in its splendid simplicity.

You knew the origins of everything you carried in without needing to ask a word of anybody. Had you not been out in the fowl-yard and yourself brought in the warm brown eggs from the nests in the hay there? The jug of milk? Why, you had watched the youth, William, milking the red and white cow, and had given him all manner of advice and hints on the better management of cow bails. You had been in the dairy and helped shake up the butter in the glass churn, and you had watched the cream for the baked apples being skimmed off the big yellow bowl of yesterday's milk.

The baked apples? You had been up the cooking-apple tree yourself and selected them after trying with your own teeth and rejecting a few unripe ones. You had brought them in and cored them yourself with that handy little arrangement that was on the other end of the nutmeg-grater; you had rubbed a bit

of butter on them and poured a little water in the dish round them and opened the oven door and put them in to bake yourself. No mystery about baked apples and cream for you!

The pot of honey? When you have had a fly-veil on, and been on the hill with your grandfather and helped empty the hive and been stung in two places because you took the veil off too soon, and had the sting extracted and been rubbed with earth, there is not much you do not know about honey.

You are able to roar with laughing at the little city boy in your story book who went on a visit to a farm and said, "This *is* nice honey. I *do* like this honey. Oh, I wish *we* kept a bee."

Yes, a meal was a feast on the hillside; and a movable feast. There was a round table in the garden, very easy to move, and you helped to drag it wherever seemed the pleasantest spot in the world at the moment.

To-day the sharp rat-a-tat and the sonorous hammering had hardly died away before both children were making a request.

"Make some ginger-boys, Gran."

"Dinger-boys, Dran."

"Don't you do any such thing, Grannie," said their mother. "They've had afternoon tea at Bluebell's, and afternoon tea with such a lot of frills to it, as it was her birthday, that I know I'll have them both in bed to-morrow. They made perfect little pigs of themselves over the birthday cake."

"But that was ever so long ago, Mother," said Ian indignantly. "We've come all that way since. I'm hungry as *anything* again."

"Hungry as *anyfing*," said Dee plaintively.

"And we have much less than an hour, Grannie dear," said young Mrs. Daunt. "Bluebell had tea for us at half-past three as we were so short of time, but it's half-past four now. Even if we leave here at a quarter past five we shan't get home till a quarter to six. And I've to pick John up on the way and take him home with me. And I've to rush out again to another house to get hold of a girl with golden hair and take her home with me. And dinner's at seven, and I know there won't be anything fit to eat or even enough of it. And if there isn't enough Steve will

be certain to have brought a man in unexpectedly to take pot-luck. He has an unerring instinct in choosing the day when there's next to nothing in the pot."

"Seven o'clock!" said Mrs. Daunt senior with serenity. "Why, that is hours away! The children shall have their proper tea here before they go, and that will save trouble at home. There will be nothing to do for them but see them to bed."

"But they couldn't eat a proper tea yet!" objected their mother.

"Oh, couldn't they!" said Ian. "I'm just starving again."

"Chust 'tarving," asserted Dee.

"There's nothing to really *bite* on in that sort of birthday cake," said Ian.

"Nofing to *bite* on," said Dee.

"Make some ginger-boys, Gran," said Ian in a clench-the-matter tone.

"Dinger-boys, Dran," said Dee, her intonation precisely that of her brother.

"The oven's so beautifully hot," said Mrs. Daunt senior, pleadingly.

Mrs. Daunt junior had been endowed with

far too acute a power of putting herself in other people's places; she saw in a moment, most vividly, the interiors of her offspring —yawning chasms that nothing in the world but ginger-boys would fill.

She laughed and pulled off her gloves.

"Go on," she said, "go on. I always know when I'm beaten. Well, I'll go and ring Gertrud up a minute."

So Mrs. Daunt senior rolled up her sleeves and put on a large apron; and Miss Daunt junior rolled up her sleeves and put on a little apron; it always hung ready for her on a hook in the pantry. And Ian consented to having a tea-towel tied round him to protect him from the flour, and then they all three worked most earnestly with flour and butter and sugar and a little ginger, and just enough currants for eyes and buttons down the front. As an accompaniment to these deep and subtle joys, they could hear Dinky's voice at the telephone.

"That you, Daisy? Ask Gertrud to come and speak to me." Ian, engaged in the delicate operation of flouring his board saw the scene vividly—Daisy with her mouth

pursed up going to the top of the basement steps and calling "Gert," if it were a day of peace, or "Gertrud," if war were raging between them. He could see Gertrud coming ponderously upstairs in the black and white check frock she always wore in the kitchen in the afternoon. He could see her slowly taking up the large receiver and putting it to her ear, and then the small one, and then breathing heavily a minute while she repressed the desire to say "Ja?" or "Hein?" said instead, in a tone calculated to make the ringer-up realise he had no trifler at the other end, "Yes!!!"

"I am bringing two visitors home for dinner, Gertrud," said Mrs. Daunt, just successfully repressing the strong inclination to say "Gertrud, please."

"Nein," said Gertrud with much decision. "It iss not possible. The cutlets there are only seven and the pudding it iss in the schmall dish."

"Yes, I know, Gertrud. But you must do your best. Make some soup for a first course."

"Ach, nein," said Gertrud, "it is five

o'clock—I haf no soup-vater in the pot—I not am able to make soup at five o'clock."

"If you put some soup-powder to it, Gertrud, it would be strong enough," pleaded Mrs. Daunt, well realising that neither of her guests would taste the faintest difference, at such a time, between the strongest stock and hot water flavoured with Worcester sauce.

"Nein," said Gertrud inflexibly; she was the soundest of cooks and her principles were life and death to her. "It would not at all do."

Mrs. Daunt bowed to the voice and will nine miles away.

"Very well then, please do this, Gertrud. Open a tin of that mock turtle soup that is on the top shelf of the pantry. And there are some tomatoes in the safe; please make four savouries; you know how, a neat little piece of bread and butter and then a slice of tomato and on top of that an anchovy. It will be very little trouble. You can hear me, can't you Gertrud?"

A guttural sound came along the wires.

"Also open a tin of that curried fowl and

serve it very hot in the second entree dish. Of course boil some rice with it. Nonsense, Gertrud. I never heard of such a thing, we can't be out of rice!"

"Nein, there iss no rice."

"Gertrud," said the voice nine miles away, and there was now a note of inflexible determination in it that carried all the way, "There will be rice there by the time I come home. If we are out of it you will go at once up to the shops and buy it. Do you hear me? And you will make pineapple fritters and dampfnudeln and an apple charlotte and a good custard for extra puddings. Do you hear me? And very good coffee. Remember, nothing is to be forgotten."

Gertrud answered, with instant respect and resignation, that nothing should be forgotten.

"And now," said Dinky, joining the happy band in the kitchen, "give me a bit of paste and let *me* make a Ginger-Boy."

"Mother," said Ian, "can I stay up for dinner to-night? Go on. It sounds a bonser one."

CHAPTER XIX.

MORE ABOUT GINGER-BOYS, AND A LITTLE ABOUT WILLIAM.

DINKY, who had an unconquerable habit of working furiously fast at whatever she was doing, had her Ginger-Boy finished and ready for the oven while the others were still shaping and trimming.

So then she had time to idle and she sat on the edge of the little knife-table and filled the time by studying her mother-in-law. The rolled-up sleeves, the apron, the simply done hair, the hands no longer smooth and white, —she studied them all.

"I wonder do I like you so much because your dress only cost ten and sixpence," she said.

"Eleven and threepence halfpenny, dear," said Mrs. Daunt reprovingly. "I had for-

gotten the buttons and the Petersham belting when I told you ten and six."

"Eleven and threepence ha'penny," said Dinky, looking lovingly at the pale grey zephyr with its muslin collar. "Do you ever think about the dresses you used to wear before you came here?"

"Once in a way," said Mrs. Daunt, rolling energetically. "Put a little more flour on, Dee, you're getting it too sticky."

"I wish you'd worn a ten and sixpenny, —I mean an eleven and threepence halfpenny dress when I met you first," said Dinky. "I was horribly nervous of you. You've no idea what a haughty sort of woman you seemed when Mrs. Markham introduced us that time at the University tennis party. I don't know whether it was your instinct up in arms that I had designs on your son, or whether it was just your very fashionable clothes."

"Quite probably my clothes," said Mrs. Daunt. "It grows harder and harder to find out which is the woman and which the clothing. I think that's one of the reasons why there is more real loneliness to-day than

there ever was. People simply can't find one another."

"I certainly couldn't find Di this afternoon," said Dinky with sudden childish resentment.

"She had a dress on that I'm going short of yet. Really you know, Grannie, I'm just as good looking as Di, and only a year older and quite as nice. I repeat it, *quite* as nice. And yet she contrived to make me feel a clumsy, uncultured sort of person who didn't count at all. Just because she'd a frock on of that exquisite simplicity that only Paris can make, and I'd this last year's coat and skirt that cost five guineas ready made—and betrays the fact brazenly."

"Silly little Dinky!" said Mrs. Daunt. "Well, here are some more eyes, Dee, but you mustn't eat them again before you put them in."

Dee had no notions of schoolboy honour yet. She pointed a floury finger at Ian in self-defence.

"He eated his buttings," she said, "I ony eated mine eyes."

They both were given fresh supplies of

both buttons and eyes and warned that it was the very last time.

"Oh, of course I know it's silly," said Helen, "but that's just it. Ought people like Di to be let loose in the world stirring up silliness and littleness in ill-balanced persons like myself? I'm *sure* it's not clothes themselves that women are so mad about. It's just that they hate to feel inferior. If people like Di and Bluebell were kept in a paddock all to themselves with a high fence round them so that the rest of the world couldn't see them, the rest of the world could be *so* comfortable and happy. Look at you, you're as happy as a queen and look sweeter than one, in a frock at eleven and threepence ha'penny. But you know you wouldn't have the moral courage to go and call on Bluebell in it."

"But I've the courage not to go and call on Bluebell in it," said Mrs. Daunt opening the oven.

"But Bluebell's a person well worth knowing," insisted Helen, "you lose a lot if you pass her by."

"Oh, Mother!" said Ian, "do stop talking 'buts' to Grannie. Grannie wants to talk about nice things, don't you,,Grannie? How long shall we leave them in the oven, eh? Shall I put another bit of wood on to make it quicker?"

The Ginger-Boys came back to their rightful place in the scheme of nature.

Dee had made two, one for herself and one for her father.

Ian had made two, one for himself and one for his uncle. A desire had stirred for a moment to make a third when he was passionately admiring the way he had cut the legs; he saw himself offering it to Barbara, watching the marvellous teeth bite down on the thickly-sugared coat. But he only made two; Barbara had to be given up.

The extra piece of wood made the oven a little too quick. The Boys came out, half of them done to a turn, half of them rather deeply burnt.

Dee claimed her own two and regarded them steadfastly a moment; the burnt one and the crisp and beautiful one.

"Oh!" she said with extreme mournfulness, as she put her teeth into the beautiful one, "poor Daddie's Dinger-boy all burnt up!"

Ian had the same problem to face; it was really a horrid one until he remembered that in the trenches there would be no such things as Ginger-Boys. And then he ate the burnt one cheerfully, Still, sacrifice makes a vacuum in the boy-economy that needs to be filled very quickly.

He began to fidget for his pendulum to swing back again; he felt suddenly a little worn and strained with goodness. Where was William?

He looked towards his mother and his grandmother, but they were deeply engaged in talking "buts" again. He looked at Dee. She was profoundly occupied in trying to make crumbs of her Ginger-Boy adhere to the black stitches that stood for the mouth of Boodle the Second.

He stole on tip-toe out into the garden to look for William.

Now, while Mrs. Daunt senior might be permitted to perform the lighter tasks of

her domestic economy, even though such took from the smoothness of her hands, she could not be permitted to scrub potatoes or chop the wood, or milk the cow, or do the really heavy tasks in the garden, and this is where William came in.

William had been in mortal peril of "coming in" too often.

They had never been able to teach him to read as a boy, and hardly to write, but he had never failed to keep his mother's wood-shed full of neatly-cut wood and to grow potatoes and onions for her and to wipe his feet on the mat before he came in to his tea. In fact, out of six sons, five of them quite able to read and write, William was the one who gave the most real comfort to his mother and, in consequence, she had a very poor opinion of him.

The vice of his life was obedience and faithfulness; he did whatever anyone told him to do and continued doing it to an indefinite extent.

Consequently, when he grew to be seventeen or so and began to realise that he was not

fully appreciated by his mother, chop he quite unceasingly, he became hurt; they had never been able to teach him not to feel. So he began to look round in his village for some one else to obey and be faithful to, and he chose a professional burglar who happened to be there visiting his old home. This gentleman had asked him to have a drink at his, the professional burglar's, expense. They were soon great friends and William wrapped up his clothes one night in a sugar bag; his best suit, that his mother hardly ever permitted him wear, and one of his best boots (the other one pinched him so he left it behind as a sort of punishment for it) and all his thirteen ties—the passion of his life was ties—and he went away to the city with Collins the professional burglar who was so very kind as to pay half his fare.

And then began his entries. He "came in" through pantry and such unconsidered windows with much success on four or five occasions, his habit of implicit obedience standing him in great stead. Collins became kinder and kinder to him.

But on the sixth occasion he let his personal equation come into play and there was an end to things.

Sent merely to abstract a gold watch from the table of a gentleman who selected a visible spot on a boarding-house balcony for his slumbers, William conceived the independent notion of also abstracting a tie, which even the faint light of dawn betrayed to be of unusual splendour.

Indeed, so overcome was he by the beauty of the pattern that he became confused and gave the wrong signal at the window; he fluttered his handkerchief, which meant that an excellent opportunity existed for Collins himself to follow in person and secure a haul.

Collins followed. Also, at least eight or nine shots from revolvers; the gentleman with the gold watch contributed two, another excited boarder two more, a determined middle-aged lady, in a purple kimono, and with her hair in a long thin plait, put a bullet into William's left ankle, and Collins added two or three remarks from his own firearm in pure self-defence.

Collins was deterred from visiting his native village for a term of seven years, but the judge had no difficulty in deciding as to William's share in the matter, and after two years' invaluable discipline and genuine improvement he was released.

A member of the Discharged Prisoners' Association happened to be an old friend of Mrs. Daunt senior; she sought to interest her in the career of the youth who would do what anybody told him and continue to do it indefinitely. In the end, Mrs. Daunt, in need of a youth to help her in the garden, consented to try the discharged prisoner who had at least two years' blameless record behind him and a face rather touching in its emptiness.

So William came to the hillside and he chopped wood and milked the cow, and grew potatoes, and dug in the garden with all the passion of faithfulness that he had given to his mother, and to Collins, and to the prison authorities, but with the amazing difference, that he now got fifteen shillings a week for doing it and all the neckties that could be collected from Dr. Daunt and from Mr. John,

and much kindly sympathy and guidance in the matter of choice of new ties.

Much of the reason why motor-cars slowed down and looked wistfully at the hillside garden was due to William's faithfulness in the matter of digging and fertilizing.

After five or six years he was still obeying and had only one other vice besides his passion for neckties, that of going to a roller rink three miles away two evenings a week. He still walked slightly lame from the middle-aged lady's bullet, but on skates he totally forgot the injury.

Still, one naturally trembled to let a tender grandson, with angelic eyes, be exposed to the breath of evil from such a youth.

Mrs. Daunt was unwearying in her endeavours to keep Ian from any contact with this, her gardener, on the not frequent visits to the hillside. In fact, she was too unwearying. Ian had long suspected the continual frustrations he met with in this respect and now at last he was in possession of all William's history.

Mrs. Daunt had been unwell a few weeks

before, and her daughter-in-law had sent Daisy to her to help her for a week. Daisy and William had meals together four or five times a day, and Daisy, fat and really of much kindliness, had consented to look at the entire collection of ties and pass her opinion upon them.

In return William confided in her all the history of his life from the time his brothers used to make him do their work for them, to the incident of Mr. Collins, and the results of the incident.

And Daisy told Ian as a matter of course. When you have an active boy in pink pyjamas with hardly anything to do before breakfast, while you are polishing floors, and when you realise even better than his parents the unquenchable thirst he has for all kinds of information, you naturally do your best in the matter of news.

William's story had immensely excited Ian.

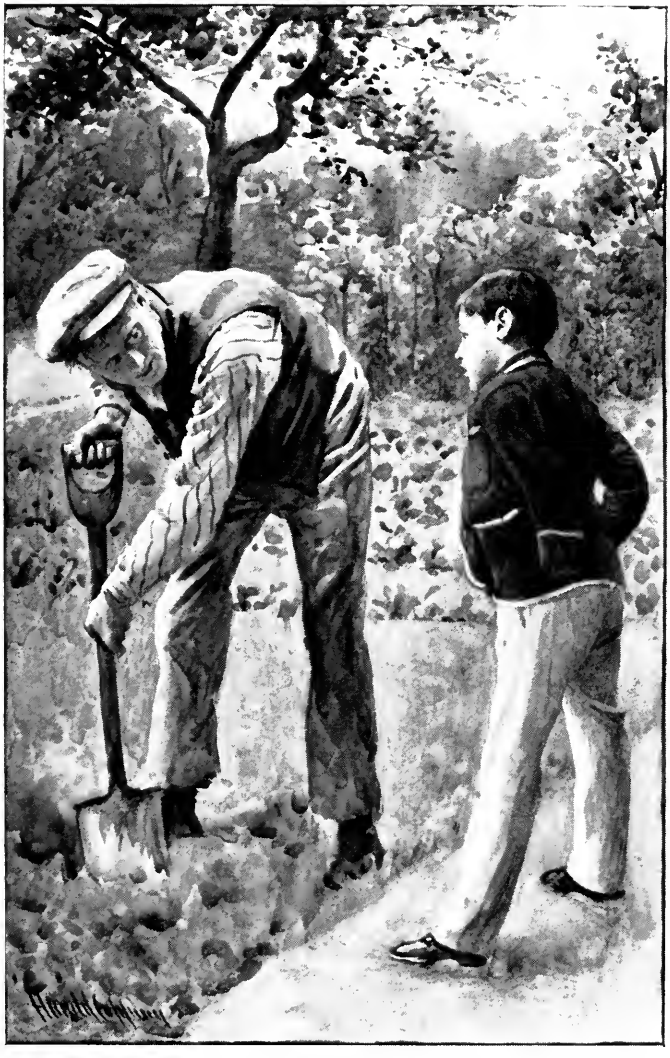
When his grandmother said, in that careful tone of hers just as he made a move to the garden, " Don't hinder William this afternoon, please, Ian, I am anxious for him to get that

bed dug over. Grandpa will be glad to have you," Ian answered, as in duty bound, "Yes, Grannie."

He had no intention whatever of hindering William. William could dig as much as he liked; he only wanted a "bit of a yarn."

Mrs. Daunt would not have sat so calmly talking to Dinky and playing with Dee if she had dreamed that she had left a gate open to a possible corruption.

But it was not her grandson who was in any danger of corruption!



" William turned pale ; even now, after five years, he did not like any reference made to gold watches."

CHAPTER XX.

MORE ABOUT WILLIAM.

WILLIAM was faithfully digging.

First of all he removed the top-spit and laid it in a heap on the path, then he dug a trench ; then he dug another trench alongside it and put all the contents of it into his first trench ; then he dug a third trench, the material of which he deposited in his second trench and so on *ad infinitum*.

No better way of digging new land exists.

"Hullo," said Ian.

William touched his cap : here was one of his betters even if only a small and determinedly friendly one. They attend to your manners very well when you go to prison.

"Digging ?" continued Ian genially.

William plunged his spade into fresh, hard ground and worked furiously; he was genuinely anxious to be admired; he knew that he was a past-master in the art. He kept glancing out of his eye-corners at Ian for signs of approval and then tempestuously tearing again at the earth.

But Ian did not seem admiring; merely thoughtful.

"I say, William," he said, after looking carefully around to see that no one was about, "I expect you've got a lot of holes dug somewhere about here?"

William respectfully testified to the fact that he did the entire digging of the garden unaided.

"Oh, *you* know what I mean," said Ian, dropping his voice, "holes you put your gold watches and things in. You know."

William turned pale; even now after five years, he did not like any reference made to gold watches.

The hand on his spade shook.

"You needn't be afraid of *me* knowing,"

Ian said reassuringly, "I never let things out. Peanuts, I don't."

Still William looked about in an upset fashion and entirely ceased to dig.

Ian sat on his haunches on the path.

"What *I* should do," he said, "would be to dig my hole at the foot of a tree, and then put a secret sign, not on that tree but three trees away. You know, an arrow thing in the bark. I'll show you how to make them if you like. Then no one knows but yourself. I should put moss on top of the hole again and scatter old leaves on so no one could guess."

William looked more terrified than ever; in this sort of vein had talked his one-time friend, Collins.

"When you can't get gold watches, William," said Ian, "what's the next best thing? Forks and things? I expect you know how to boil forks down and make shillings and half-crowns of them? Do you put them in a saucepan or just lay them in the coals? Once when I was toasting I dropped Dee's fork right in and it simply

sizzled up to nothing. You couldn't have made a threepenny-bit of it. What do you do, William?"

These were depths of infamy that not even William had sounded: he merely looked paler still. Ian came closer, became more brotherly than ever.

"William," he said, "what's it like in that Black Maria? Jimmie says it's so full of you you can't breathe and you're all chained to one another by your legs and arms. Are you?"

William looked at him in helpless fascination.

"Are you?" repeated Ian.

The man gave a shudder.

"Well, what's it like in prison, then?" said Ian. "What's the cat-an-ninetails like really? Do you get it every day? How often do you get put on the triangle? Jimmie says——"

William was feebly putting the top spit at the bottom of one of his trenches; a thing he had never done before in his life; he felt as if he stood in a sea of trenches, all of which

were trying to suck him down to prison again, where there were no neckties. With his jaw dropped and a piteous sort of look in his eyes he looked indeed a poor kind of hero.

Ian found himself encouraging him in the kindest way. "Burglars weren't half as smart as you'd think," he told him; "lots of times Daisy had forgotten to lock the kitchen door and he (Ian) had found it wide open early in the morning and not a single one had broken in."

He paused a minute: a boy must not endanger the safety of his own family.

"My father's watch isn't gold," he said, "just gun metal; and our forks are only that electric stuff, not real silver; I asked mother. And she puts her rings and things in the burglar safe, so no one will ever be able to steal those."

William's eyes were taking a curious, remembering expression; he was beginning to breathe a shade more quickly. It had ended badly, certainly, but those days with Collins had been some of the most genuinely happy

ones he had ever spent ; he had felt that he was a man and alive.

" Does she—Daisy—does she ever forget to lock the pantry window ? " he said in a whisper.

But this was making it far too much a family matter.

"It's got wire stuff nailed on it," Ian replied craftily, " and besides, my father's got guns and swords and sticks, and so have I. They'd better not come to *our* house."

William wilted somewhat at that ; the thought of Daisy being there had seemed for a moment to make a simple and friendly matter of the just conceived idea. He abandoned it sadly.

But Littlejohn was still athirst.

" If I was a burglar," he said, " I wouldn't go and break into plain houses. I'd go for jewellers ! All you've got to do is to get a real diamond and cut a hole in the glass and just fill your pockets up with watches. Down at Bright and Peterson's there are fifty-nine gold watches in the window, and twenty-two diamond rings, and a hundred and four

bracelets and chain things to hang round women's necks. Con and me counted them."

William listened to him with eyes and mouth.

"Then there's the bank," said Ian, "I've been in often with father. They get sovereigns out of the drawers with shovels, and only keep them just under the counter, not in safes. Hundreds and thousands of them there must be; and half-crowns! Why I expect they keep *them* in buckets they've got such lots."

"Buckets!" echoed William.

"Con and me's often thought how easy it would be to attack that bank," pursued Ian, "after three no one's there getting money —and only just those two men behind the counter beginning to lock up. Jump over the counter very suddenly, knock the big one over, I'd be doing that; tie his hands with rope and put a cloth over his mouth so he couldn't scream. Con hold the other chap till I was ready; take out my revolver, hold it to his head till he gave me the keys. Fill all our pockets and bags up with the gold and

slip out locking the big doors behind us. They wouldn't be found till next day, it doesn't open till ten! By then we'd have it all buried in our hole and could just go and get some when we wanted."

William breathed hard; his eyes grew more and more intelligent. "'Spose there were three men though," he said.

Ian had met this contingency in thought also.

"If there were three," he said slowly, "it would be harder but we could do it. Con would have to take the big one then and be keeping him still with a chlor'form mask, while I gagged the mouths of the other two. I might have to shoot if they fought hard, but only at their legs, because they're nice men. Did it hurt getting the bullet out of your leg that time, William? I say, William, take your boot off and let me see it. Daisy says there's a big hole there."

But William's thoughts moved slowly.

"'Spose there were *four* men there," he said and breathed hard and plunged his spade again in the ground.

"Oh, you'd wait then, crouched down, till some of them went home," answered Ian, carelessly.

"In buckets!" reiterated William in a choked sort of voice.

"Ian! Ian! Come here at once," called his grandmother from the verandah, "I thought you were with grandpa. My dear, I thought I particularly asked you to let William get on with his digging!"

"He is getting on with his digging," replied Ian, "Aren't you, William?" He's digging like anything, Grannie, all the time. Good-bye, William, I've got to be going now."

William forgot to touch his cap; he stood staring with wistful, dog-like eyes at the retreating figure of the small boy.

He watched him being kissed good-bye, saw him climb into the front seat of the car, heard him giving the chauffeur suggestions about new and better ways of starting. He leaned on his spade and sighed profoundly.

"I do hope William did the dear child no harm," thought the fond grandmother, anxiously looking at him.

CHAPTER XXI.

CON AND CON'S SISTER.

CON'S morning jaunt with Ian seemed to have served as a priceless tonic for him; his temperature was normal, the light of health was in his eyes; his throat was a plain, calm passage again, instead of an angry little Dardanelles that bristled with foreign guns at any attempt to get food through.

But he was strictly confined to his bed still, and strongly redolent of the turpentine with which Barbara had so faithfully rubbed him.

He was quite happy however. He had three model submarines, five gunboats, two men-o'-war and the Queen Elizabeth disposed about the counterpane waves of the Ægean Sea. His own chest was the beach upon

which many a mortal conflict took place when the matchbox containing a soldier or two had ridden safely over the turbulent waters of his knee and gained the harbour.

The pillow of course was the heights of Gaba Tepeh, and every match that you saw strewn in the deep ridges of it was a fire-eating Turk.

But the subtlest, most dramatic action going forward from time to time was in connection with the high half circle of iron that supported the mosquito nets.

The idea of it was originally Ian's, born out of the sheer necessity of something to do on an occasion when he had been sent to his bed, for the good of his soul, at the terrible hour of five o'clock.

A long piece of string was passed over the curved rod of the high canopy and its two ends dangled at a height convenient to the person enforcedly occupying the pillow.

To one end of the string was tied from time to time the most gallant and battered and beloved soldier in the regiment, and up he was hauled, hand over hand, to perform

perilous and breathless deeds, often lost completely to sight in the heavy folds of the valance. Sometimes two, or even three, veterans were tied together for the task and sent up to the far heights, and then the springs of the bed leapt aloud with the excitement of the far conflict.

It had been a task of no small difficulty for Con to pass the string over the high canopy rod.

When you have behaved with such thoughtlessness and cruelty to your well-loved eldest sister that she has to disburse a sovereign of the housekeeping money to satisfy the police on your behalf, you are shy about asking favours of her that would involve her having to get the step-ladder from downstairs.

And when she is determinedly staying actually in the room with you all the time —a totally unnecessary precaution seeing that Ian would not be in the least likely to come again that day and tempt you out, you do not get a chance to climb into a standing position with one foot on the head-

iron and with an arm clutched round the post, swing yourself forward and pass the string over the requisite spot.

Con watched his sister with patient eyes for some time, as she sat knitting so steadily in the window, and for some time he contented himself with the evolutions of the landing party; but presently he could see that she had ceased to know that her work had fallen on to her knee, that she was sitting as still as a girl in a dream, her golden head a little dropped forward.

Something of Ian's far-seeing spirit stirred in Con; he realised that now was the accepted moment for his chance, and very, very quietly he disengaged himself from the bedclothes, drew himself up on the pillow, got into kneeling position, standing position, climbing, clutching position. It was not until the moment when he was strained perilously forward with the string, like a grey pyjamaed spider clinging by one right leg to a branch, that Barbara was sufficiently awakened by the creaking iron to turn round.

"And now what are you doing, you bad little boy?" she said, starting hastily forward.

"Just straightening the curtain thing for you, Barb darling," said the bad little boy in the very voice of the friend who led him astray.

"I've a great mind," said Barbara, "a very great mind to give you another rubbing. And a much harder one than the last." She looked threateningly at the turpentine bottle. "Cover yourself up."

"Yes, Barbara."

"Right up to the neck."

"Yes, Barbara."

"Don't you dare to let me see you doing that again."

"Oh no, Barbara."

Why should he? The string was delightfully in position.

Barbara went back to her dispirited gazing into space at the window, and the scaling of the heights of Gaba Tepeh and Suvla went magnificently forward.

Space was too vast, too cold a place to be gazed into by girl-eyes. Girl-eyes ought to

have concrete things at which to gaze—or things at least that are as much concrete abstractions as are sunshine and happiness.

Life that lies so lightly on young things they never realise the touch is there at all, had suddenly clutched with heavy fingers at Barbara.

That boy, John, or that man John as he would have called himself,—Ian's uncle, who had teased her, and carried her school bag for her—it was not a year since she had been carrying a school bag—and had played tennis with her and rowed her in boats, was going back again to the War.

What was that? Were not all the boys and men who had teased her and played tennis with her and rowed her in boats either at the War or going to it for the first or second time—with the exception of "Malted Milk," or those held back by physical disabilities or unavoidable responsibilities.

But this boy's eyes had looked deep into her own one little moment, and with her own she had looked back deep into his: one moment, just one little moment.

That was all, quite all; the next minute the quick, clumsy world had crashed in between them and it had continued to crash ever since. He had seemed pushed hither and thither blindly by life, and she had been jerked, by the same hands, into a waiting position; there seemed nothing for her to do but to be feverishly foolish with the "Silly Rabbit," and to pour out afternoon tea for the perpetually calling "Malted Milk," and to keep Con away from the corrupting influence of Littlejohn; and to read the War news in the papers—eternally to read the war news in the papers. But this ache at her heart, this dull, strange, ache! This gnawing, this perpetual gnawing at her pride! He had not looked into her eyes like that at all; she had imagined it; he had not even come to wring her hand and say good-bye before he left.

He had come back on a short furlough to recover from his wound, and he had not attempted to seek her out. He was going back again almost at once and again he had not come to say good-bye. He had forgotten,

she told herself, in his new excitements, that she existed.

She looked away from space. Space was too bitterly empty to be looked at any more.

She looked down on to the friendlier roofs and then into the familiar street.

There was the Doctor's well-known car at the door, filled, not with the Doctor's well-known form, but full to overflowing with forms known so very well.

There was Littlejohn, one arm in a bandage, the other frantically waving to her.

There was Mrs. Daunt stepping down on to the pavement: there was Dee's inquisitive little face poked over the door. There was a figure in khaki sitting very still and looking with a set young face at the front door.

Then all was gone again in a flash: the car and its occupants moved off to the other end of the terrace, then vanished away behind the scenes.

Just Mrs. Daunt remained down there on the doorstep, ringing at the bell.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW SHORT ALL A DAY IS.

"And her face so fair
Stirr'd with her dreams, as rose leaves with the air."
—BYRON.

BUT you do not in the least betray yourself even if you are only eighteen and there has been a sudden convulsion of nature.

Summoned down by Bella, to Mrs. Daunt in the drawing-room, kissed and asked to dine, Barbara was by no means sure if it could be managed.

"You see I really ought to stay and mind my little brother," she said "you know what happened when I wasn't minding him this morning."

"But I promise you Ian shall be under your own observation all the time" said Mrs. Daunt, "then you will be certain that Con is safe."

"Perhaps I oughtn't to leave Mother," said Barbara, sticking up a new defence.

"Amy and Flora between them, supported by Effie and Noela, will be able to take your place for once," smiled Mrs. Daunt.

"Father," said Barbara, clinging desperately to her defence—"he doesn't seem to like me to be away for dinner too often."

"When were you away last?" smiled Mrs. Daunt. "Run along. Run and tell your mother that I have come to ask for you because my brother is dining with us for the last time before he goes again to the Front and the Doctor and I are not young enough company any longer to keep up a young man's spirits."

So much one mother felt she owed to the other. Barbara's face was deeply dyed by this; she only made one more stand.

"I'm not even dressed," she said; "I'm only in my morning blouse; after all this upset I didn't feel up to changing for dinner and you say you have visitors. Wouldn't it be better if I come some other night, Mrs. Daunt —when you are alone?"

"No," said Mrs. Daunt, "it would not be better. You look quite pretty enough for anything in that blouse. Go and ask your mother this minute."

The girl went.

When she came back—and really the time occupied was barely eight minutes—not only had consent been gained, but the morning blouse had vanished. There was a young and shining vision in a fresh white muslin frock, with a pink rose, hastily snatched from the dinner table, stuck in its belt; it had even had time to take down its hair and pile it up afresh, and change into fine silk stockings and its very best shoes. Certainly its colour was heightened with the extreme haste.

Big John had gone upstairs to wash his hands.

Littlejohn was solemn and somewhat repressed. He had an instinct of great things pending.

Big John looked rather strange; a sort of sick look was on his face. He washed his hands two or three times just to pass the

time and he combed his hair, though really the barber at camp had hardly left him a bit to comb.

"Ought we to be going down," he asked Littlejohn, nervously, from time to time.

Littlejohn reassured him. Gertrud's Damfew pudding—not swearing dam, just German—hadn't turned out too well and she was frantically making nudeln to take its place, which would make things late. Also Daisy had forgotten to put on the best cloth with the lilies on and had set the table and was now having to unset it again. Besides this, the tinned fowl had turned out nearly all bones, so those ball things were being added to make it look more.

"But I'm going to say "No fowl, thanks," said Ian, "and that will leave more. If there's any over though I'm going to have it to-morrow. I *like* that kind of fowl—don't you?"

"Very much," said Big John.

"Well, you needn't say you won't have any," said Ian, "there's plenty for you and Barbara. Of course Mother gets asked before

you, doesn't she, but she's sure to say she'll have a cutlet. I don't think the rule ought to be asking ladies first when they're the Mothers, do you ? They'd rather wait and see how things are going."

"No doubt," said Big John inattentively, "was that the bell, old man ? "

"No ; telephone," said Ian. "We usen't to be able to hear the bell up here before but now we're on the automatic you can hear it everywhere. I like the automatic, Uncle John ; you don't always want Daisy and Gertrud knowing who you're ringing up, do you ? "

"No doubt," said Big John. He was standing on the balcony now, his hands in his pockets gazing straight ahead.

He looked more sick than ever.

Three times he failed entirely to answer his nephew's remarks.

Then he found that nephew at his elbow, looking up at him with eyes that had no imp in them at all.

"Uncle John," said the little fellow in a whisper.

"That's me, old man."

"You can have this, Uncle John, to keep."

Big John found something rather sticky was being pushed into his hand. He looked at it and found that it was about half a chocolate, wrapped in silver paper, and flattened as if by being sat upon.

"She gave it to me, Uncle John," said Littlejohn in a whisper. "You can take it back with you to the war." The big hand and the little one gripped hard.

Dinner passed in all its four courses. The savouries were excellent. The mock turtle soup deserved, and had indeed won, it said so on the tin—a medal for pre-eminence. The seven cutlets, the tinned fowl—and the rice—stood up nobly against all attacks. Ian's heart swelled with the warmth of hospitality as all the puddings were carried in: he looked from the pineapple fritters, to Barbara, from the nudeln and cherries to Big John, from the apple charlotte and the devilled almonds to his parents and felt bathed in the pleasant vapour that exhales from great hosts.

Dinner in all its four courses passed.

Even when there are two young hearts all a-quiver with the keenest, the finest, ah, the purest emotion that life holds, if there are four courses to dinner, such are the rigid rules of etiquette, they must first be all partaken of before the hearts can be listened to.

There was the coffee, too. The very best of coffee—Gertrud had been quite faithful.

This, of course, was carried up to the drawing-room and the Doctor, of course, had to bring out cigars—more delay.

Dinky, pitying Barbara's pink cheeks and her nervous attempts to converse with her host, the Doctor, carried her off while the cigars were being discussed, to look at the latest pattern in collars that Diana had brought from Paris. Ian followed them hurriedly; he was not interested in the latest collar from Paris but he was keenly interested in Uncle John.

"I say, Mother," he said in a loud reproachful whisper at the door, "don't go and take her away from Uncle John. He wants her like anything."

The cigars were smoked, smoked to their last ash.

Hardly a word was spoken between the two men, but no understanding could have been deeper. Dee, chose to go from her Father's knee to her Uncle's; gradually she ceased to fidget, her little hand closed fast round one of his big fingers; she leaned her head against his khaki coat and fell to sleep there.

Big John looked down at her with brooding wistful eyes.

"Doc," he said in a low voice, a very low voice, "A man would like to be a father before he dies."

And then the others came back. Indeed, Ian had simply forced them back.

"Ah, well," said the Doctor, stretching himself after his loved hour of leisure, "I rather guess there are some patients down below thirsting for my blood." His footsteps died away down the staircase.

"And I must see the children to bed," said Dinky, "give me Dee, Jack,—I can undress her without waking her up. Come, Ian."

Ian followed her instantly. But on the

threshold he paused one dramatic moment, smiled tenderly at Barbara, looked at Big John with deep significance and—closed the door.

When he was in his bunk the sight of his pink pyjamas seemed to recall to him the only crime he had on his conscience, and he decided to clear it away.

"Mother," he said, "I slided down all the banisters this morning but the rugs were there and I didn't get killed."

He submitted cheerfully to the maternal warnings and cheerfully undertook not to do so again.

His mother kissed him, put out the light, kissed him again.

"It's the funniest thing," he murmured.

"What is?" said Dinky.

"How short all a day is. It only seems half a jiffey since it was morning and I was sliding down. And now it's night. Isn't it funny?"

"Very funny," said Dinky.

THE END.

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